Pavement Politics:
Community Action in Leeds, c. 1960-1990

David John Ellis

PhD

University of York

History

September 2015

Abstract

Community action, centred on everyday issues affecting life at neighbourhood level, was a new form of political activism that flourished across urban Britain from the 1960s to the 1980s. Existing historical narratives of politics in late twentieth century Britain overlook this development due to the low profile of community action nationally and activists' lack of interest in recording their work for posterity. This thesis recovers part of the forgotten history of community action through a case study of Leeds. In so doing it rebalances a historiography concerned largely with established political institutions. The thesis builds upon the work of historians who have sought to broaden our understanding of the political and scholars who have stressed the importance of the local and the quotidian. In 1960s and 1970s in Leeds, the growth of community action was a response to the failure of traditional political organisations to represent those who disagreed with various aspects of urban policy. Community action challenged the centralising tendencies of the British state, pushing for more direct citizen involvement in policy making. Over the 1970s, activists re-shaped policy on urban renewal, housing and transport. The Leeds experience shows how community activists forged a partnership with local government and together they pioneered new forms of urban policy. Activists developed an infrastructure of grassroots institutions managed by local people, only for it to wither in the 1980s as the Thatcher governments advanced a neo-liberal policy agenda. With the exception of a handful of full-time organisers, Leeds activists were unable to act local and think national. As such, community action was unable to mature into a true social movement. It lacked strong national networks, a set of unifying institutions and a clear ideology. It did, however, survive as an approach to politics and its contribution to public policy remains visible today.

List of Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

All the work contained within this thesis represents the original contribution of the author. None of the material presented within this thesis has been published, nor has it been submitted for consideration for publication. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Introduction

1. A forgotten mobilisation

Writing in *Community Politics* in 1976, Peter Hain, the Young Liberal and anti-apartheid activist, commented on the rise of a new political movement:

> It is impossible to pick up a newspaper these days without reading of people up in arms about some community issue. This may be a planning decision, housing problem, traffic jam-up, children's playspace, environmental destruction, or any other of the countless problems afflicting local communities. The cumulative effect of this eruption of activity has been to signal the emergence of a new style of political action, constituting an alternative to orthodox party politics. The community action movement has challenged local government, swept aside the pontifications of politicians and promised new hope to the poor, the dispossessed and the powerless.[1]

Hain was not alone in believing the growth of community action was politically significant. This view was shared widely across the political spectrum as revealed in the diverse range of contributors to this edited collection. Political activists had observed the growth of community action from the beginning of the decade. In 1970, it was the subject of a Fabian Society pamphlet in which Ray Gosling, then a detached youth worker, contributed a chapter on community action in Nottingham.[2] In 1972, a group of radical planners based in London with contacts throughout the country established the bi-monthly publication *Community Action* which functioned as a national journal and information exchange for community activists.[3] The national media covered the emergence of community action. In 1973 an article in *The Observer* magazine by Des Wilson, the founder of Shelter, profiled the rise of community action, focusing in particular on Notting Hill in London.[4] Wilson wrote of the 'ongoing community action movement,' which he believed 'has created a new confidence in areas which before felt beaten.'[5] Between 1974 and 1983, community action was the subject of a series of eight books written by professionals working in local

---

[1] Peter Hain, 'Introduction,' in Peter Hain, ed., *Community Politics* (London, 1976): 9. See also: Peter Hain, *Radical Regeneration: Protest, Direct Action and Community Politics* (London, 1975)

[2] Anne Lapping, ed., *Community Action,* Fabian Tract 400 (London, 1970); Ray Gosling, 'St Ann's, Nottingham,' in Lapping, *Community Action,* 22-27; Ray Gosling, 'St Ann's, Nottingham,' in Lapping, *Community Action,* 22-27

[3] 'Editorial,' *Community Action,* No. 1, February 1972, i

[4] Des Wilson, 'Neighbourhood muscle,' *Observer Magazine,* Sunday 26 August 1976, 17-22

[5] Wilson, 'Neighbourhood muscle,' 17, 22

government, planning, social work and community work.[6] This series profiled local examples of community action across urban Britain. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, several activists wrote historical accounts of their experiences as community activists in particular districts.[7] Seasoned activists wrote self-help guides for budding community activists.[8] Community action was the subject of scholarly analysis. As early as 1970, Ken Coates and Richard Silburn concluded their study of inner city poverty in Nottingham with a discussion of the potential of community action.[9] They were followed by several other sociologists and political scientists.[10] The work of Manuel Castells, who used the term 'urban social movement' to describe community action groups and similar urban political actors, was particularly influential.[11]

This literature generated lively debate among activists from different backgrounds regarding the role of community action and its relationship with more established political movements. For advocates of community action like Hain, it was an insurgent movement that would increase the political leverage of the poor and dispossessed. Many writers, while excited by the rapid ascent of community action, were concerned by its apparent parochialism.[12] Marxist critics challenged the notion that community action could be distinguished from the wider struggle of working-class people.[13] For some left-wing sceptics, community action was at best an appendage to the working class labour movement and at worst an attempt by the capitalist state to defuse class conflict.[14] O'Malley's book on

---

[6] David Jones and Marjorie Mayo, ed., *Community Work One* (London, 1974); David Jones and Marjorie Mayo, ed., *Community Work: Two* (London, 1975); Marjorie Mayo, ed., *Women in the Community* (London, 1977); Paul Curno, ed., *Political Issues and Community Work* (London, 1978); Gary Craig, Marjorie Mayo and Nick Sharman, ed., *Jobs and Community Action* (London, 1979); Leo Smith and Dan Jones, ed., *Deprivation, Participation and Community Action* (London, 1981); Gary Craig, Nick Derricourt and Martin Loney, ed., *Community Work and the State* (1982)

[7] Jan O'Malley, *The Politics of Community Action: A Decade of Struggle in Notting Hill* (London, 1977); Cedric Jackson, *The Lambeth Interface: Housing, Planning and Community Action in an Inner London Borough* (London, 1975); Nick Wates, *The Battle for Tolmers Square* (London, 1976); Terry Christensen, *Neighbourhood Survival: the Struggle for Covent Garden's Future* (London, 1979); John Ferris, *Participation in Urban Planning: The Barnsbury Case* (London, 1972)

[8] Tony Gibson, *People Power: Community and Work Groups in Action* (Middlesex, 1979); Des Wilson, ed., *Citizen Action: Taking Action in Your Community* (Harlow, 1986)

[9] Ken Coates and Richard Silburn, *Poverty: The Forgotten Englishman* (Nottingham, 1983): 236-247

[10] Peter Leonard, ed., *The Sociology of Community Action* (Stoke-on-Trent, 1975); Sean Baine, *Community Action and Local Government* (London, 1975); *Martin Adeney, Community Action: Four Examples* (London, 1972); Stuart Lowe, 'Local Politics and Community Groups in Sheffield' (Department of Political Theory and Institutions, University of Sheffield, 1978)

[11] Manual Castells *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-cultural theory of social urban movements* (London, 1983); Stuart Lowe *Urban Social Movements: The City After Castells* (New York, 1986)

[12] Irene Binns, 'What are we trying to achieve through community action?', *Community Action,* No. 6, Jan-Feb 1973, 11-12

[13] John Cowley, Adah Kaye, Marjorie Mayo and Mike Thompson, ed., *Community or Class Struggle?* (London, 1977)

[14] Cynthia Cockburn, *The Local State: The Management of Cities and People* (London, 1977): 158-63

Notting Hill was a rejoinder to this view; she aimed 'to force socialists take seriously the experience of community struggle' rather than focusing purely on industrial struggles.[15] The lesson for O'Malley and others advocates was that workplace campaigns were not the only valid form of activism. Both O'Malley and the editors of *Community Action* argued that alliances between community and labour activists would be integral to its long-term success.[16]

Most of those who wrote about community action in this period agreed that it was an innovative and disruptive political mobilisation that challenged existing approaches to and assumptions about politics. The ubiquity of community action was viewed as one of its most striking features. It was seen to be reconfiguring the relationship between people and government, especially at the local level. While it generated considerable excitement and prompted extensive analysis in the 1970s and 1980s, there are no comprehensive scholarly historical studies of community action. It has received no more than a passing mention in the mainstream histories of this increasingly popular period and it has not been considered a suitable candidate for a television documentary.[17] The starting point for this thesis is the observation that a political phenomenon considered significant in the 1970s and 1980s has largely faded from the national memory. This raises several questions. Why did community action excite contemporaries? Did it reinvigorate politics in this period? If so, why is it absent from histories of this period? What is the long-term legacy of community action and why should it interest us today?

In addressing this neglected topic, this thesis fills four significant gaps in the political history of twentieth-century Britain. First, while the field has diversified greatly in the last decade, politics at the local and neighbourhood level has been overlooked by historians working on twentieth-century Britain. Historians have privileged organisations, institutions and movements with a national presence. National government, the politics of the welfare state and the major political parties remain popular subjects for historians of post-war Britain.[18] While politics beyond the ballot box is a historiographical growth sector, national

---

[15] O'Malley, *The Politics of Community Action,* 173

[16] O'Malley, *The Politics of Community Action*, 179-80; 'The Last Five Years: The Struggles Ahead,' *Community Action,* No. 30, March-April 1977, 16

[17] Alwyn Turner, *Crisis? What Crisis?: Britain in the 1970s* (London, 2013), Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties, 1964-1970* (London, 2009); Dominic Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974-1979* (London, 2013). Community action in London did feature in 'The Secret History of Our Streets,' Series 1, June-July 2012, BBC2, television broadcast

[18] Lawrence Black, Hugh Pemberton and Pat Thane, ed., *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester, 2013); Laura Beers, *Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (London, 2010); Andrew Thorpe,

pressure groups, national campaigns and activists with a national profile are the dominant topics.[19] Perhaps guided by the availability of source material, historians have prioritised organisations and individuals who sought to influence national government, engaged with the national media and possessed a strong nationwide organisation.[20] Community action, which operated at the grassroots level and engaged mainly with local government and the local media, has been largely passed over. The major exception to this national bias in the historiography is the more extensive literature on activism in London, but community action was a nationwide phenomenon. Matthew Hilton has acknowledged that the activities of non-governmental organisations operating at the local level deserve 'separate treatment,' but even his work has largely focused on national and transnational NGOs.[21] This thesis redresses this imbalance by focusing on politics at the neighbourhood level. This was the level at which most people encountered politics and a place where most people's experience of politics was particularly meaningful and intimate.

Second, historians working on political activism have tended to focus on the more visible and dramatic forms of political activism – those which left a deeper impression on the national consciousness and subsequently the national memory.[22] There has been extensive research into the radical political groups associated with pan-European uprisings of 1968, which cast a shadow over the 1970s.[23] Far left groups have been the subject of numerous studies.[24] Student activism in the post war period is well-documented.[25] Trade union

Parties at War: Political Organisation in the Second World War (Oxford, 2009); Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London, 2012); Oliver Daddow, 'New Labour: A Witness History,' *Contemporary British History,* 29:1 (2015): 106-36

[19] Nicholas Crowson, Matthew Hilton and James McKay (eds.), *NGOs in Contemporary Britain Non-state Actors in Society and Politics Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2009); Christopher Moores, 'The Progressive Professionals: the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Politics of Activism in 1960s Britain,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 20:4 (2009)

[20] Nicholas Crowson, 'Re-visiting the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act: Westminster, Whitehall and the Homelessness Lobby,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 24:3 (2013), 424-447

[21] Matthew Hilton, 'Politics is Ordinary: Non-governmental organisations and political participation in contemporary Britain,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 22: 2 (2011), 233

[22] Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural and Social Transformation in Britain, France, Italy and the United States* (Oxford, 1998); Sheila Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties* (London, 2001); Katrina Navickas, 'Protest History or the History of Protest?' *History Workshop Journal,* 73:1 (2012): 302-307; John Davis and Anette Warring 'Living Utopia: Communal Living in Denmark and Britain,' *Cultural and Social History*, 8:4 (2011): 511-28; Klimke Klimke and Joachim Scharloth, ed., *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–1977* (New York, 2008); Nick Thomas, 'Protests Against the Vietnam War in 1960s Britain: The Relationship between Protesters and the Press,' *Contemporary British History*, 22:3 (2008): 335-354

[23] Robert Gildea, James Mark and Anette Warring, ed., *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford, 2013)

[24] Evan Smith and Matthew Worley, *Against the Grain: The British Far Left from 1956* (Manchester, 2014); N. Redfern, 'No Friends to the Left: The British Community party's Surveillance of the Far Left, c.1932-1980,' *Contemporary British History,* 28:3 (2014), 341-360

militancy in the post-war period has begun to interest historians and there is a growing body of work on the 1972 and 1984-5 miners' strikes.[26] Community action groups usually operated under the radar of the national media and, although they left a significant mark in their localities, their activity was rarely glamorous or dramatic. Historians researching political activism have focused on a narrow range of sites – central London, large factories, conference halls and university campuses – and they have overlooked more quotidian locations. We need to look to housing estates, town centres, schools, residential streets, playgrounds, bus stops and community centres across Britain to fully understand political change in this period.

Third, there has been a strong emphasis in recent literature on the politics of identity and other post-material causes. The rise of the new social movements was a defining feature of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Accordingly, movements concerned with women, ecology, sexuality, disability and peace have received extensive treatment.[27] Community action has yet to find a place in this narrative. It does not fit neatly into the frameworks normally used to classify and describe social movements. It is not clear whether community action was a movement, as we shall discuss later. Community action groups were not usually associated with a particular identity group or post-material cause: they tended to straddle these categories. Community activists were concerned with material issues, such as housing and transport, post-material issues such as community and heritage, but they also championed the interests of particular social groups like council tenants, women and working-class people. Social movements remain popular amongst political historians because issues like the environment, civil liberties and peace remain salient in the early twenty-first century.

---

[25] Nick Thomas, 'Challenging the Myths of the 1960s: the Case of Student Protest,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 13:3 (2002). L. Black, 'The Lost Worlds of Young Conservatism,' *Historical Journal*, 50: 4 (2008): 911-1024

[26] John Callaghan, 'Industrial Militancy 1945-79: The Failure of the British Road to Socialism,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 15:4 (2004): 388-409*;* Jack McGowan, ''Dispute,' 'Battle,' 'Siege,' 'Farce' – Grunwick 30 Years On,' *Contemporary British History,* 22:3 (2008): 383-406; Jim Phillips, 'The 1972 Miners Strike: Popular Agency and Industrial Politics in Britain,' *Contemporary British History,* 20:2 (2006): 187-207; Jim Phillips, 'Workplace Conflict and the Origins of the 1984-5 Miners' Strike in Scotland,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 20:2 (2009): 152-172

[27] Lucy Robinson, 'Three Revolutionary Years: the Impact of the Counter-Culture on the Development of the Gay Liberation Movement in Britain, *Cultural and Social History*, 3 (2006), 445-471; Jeska Rees, ''Are you a Lesbian?' Challenges in Recording and Analysing the Women's Liberation Movement in England,' *History Workshop Journal,* 69:1 (2010): 177-187; Cook, Matt, '"Gay Times" Locality, Identity, Memory in the Brixton Squats in 1970s London, *Twentieth Century British History,* 23:2 (2012): 84-109; Eve Setch, 'The Face of Metropolitan Feminism: the London Women's Liberation Workshop, 1969-79,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 13:2 (2002): 171-190; Sarah Browne, ''A Veritable Hotbed of Feminism': Women's Liberation in St. Andrew's, Scotland, c.1969-79,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 23:1 (2012): 100-123; Matthew Waites, 'Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual NGOs in Britain: Past Present and Future,' in Crowson, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain;* Jane Campbell, Mike Oliver, *Disability Politics: Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future* (London 1996); Meaghan Kowalsky, *Disability and British Social Policy Since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke, 2003)

The gay rights movement continues to make legislative progress and feminism has enjoyed a renaissance in the last decade.[28] This has motivated several historians to explore the antecedents of contemporary political concerns. Several recent studies have used historical analysis to contextualise present day politics.[29] By contrast, community action is a less obvious candidate for the history of the present day. There are numerous parallels to be drawn between contemporary concerns and the issues raised by community activists in the long 1970s, but they are not as well understood. The history of community action also helps us to understand the origin of contemporary political culture and aspects of public policy.

Fourth, historians of political radicalism and developments in political thought since 1945 have tended to favour organisations and individuals with a clear ideology. The political Left looms large in this historiography: there is an extensive body of work on the New Left, British Communism and the multitude of non-aligned left groups that flourished in the 1960s and 1970s – socialists, communists, Trotskyites and libertarians.[30] There is a burgeoning historiography of the New Right, too, which traces the rise of neo-liberal thought and its impact on public policy.[31] Labour Party history remains popular, as we saw above. The history of the Conservative Party and conservatism is an expanding field.[32] Post-war Liberalism is beginning to attract attention and, as we saw above, new ideologies like feminism and environmentalism have received extensive treatment.[33] Community action was intellectually heterogeneous and the ideas that animated community action do not map onto the standard matrices of political ideology. Community action was not associated with

---

[28] Kate Banyard, *The Equality Illusion: The Truth about Women and Men Today* (London, 2011); Laura Bates, *Everyday Sexism* (London, 2014)

[29] Janet Clark, 'Sincere and Reasonable Men? The Origins of the National Council for Civil Liberties,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 20:4 (2009): 513-537

[30] Celia Hughes, 'Young Socialist Men in 1960s Britain: Subjectivity and Sociability,' *History Workshop Journal,* 73:1 (2012): 170-192; Madeleine Davis, 'Arguing Affluence: New Left Contributions to Socialist Debate, 1957-63,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 496-528 (2012): 496-528; Alistair Reid, 'The dialectics of liberation: the Old Left, the New Left and the counter-culture,' in David Feldman and John Lawrence, *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 2011); Scott Hamilton, *The Crisis of Theory: EP Thompson, the New Left and Postwar British Politics* (Manchester, 2011); Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn, *Communists in British Society 1920-1991* (London, 2007); Keith Laybourn, *Marxism in Britain: Dissent, Decline and Re-emergence, 1945-c.2000* (Oxford, 2006)*;* John Callaghan, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict: The CPGB 1951-68* (London, 2003)

[31] Noel Thompson, 'Hollowing out the State: Public Choice Theory and the Critique of Keynesian Social Democracy,' *Contemporary British History,* 22:3 (2008): 355-382; Ben Jackson, 'At the Origins of Neo-Liberalism: the Free Economy and the Strong State, 1930-1947,' *Historical Journal,* 53:1 (2010): 129-151; Ben Jackson, 'An Ideology of Class: Neo-Liberalism and the Trade Unions, 1930-79,' in Clare Griffiths, James Knott and William Whyte, *Classes, Culture and Politics: Essays on British History for Ross McKibbin* (Oxford, 2011): 263-281; Mark Pitchford, *The Conservative Party and the Extreme Right, 1945-75* (Manchester, 2011)

[32] Tim Bale, *The Conservative Party from Thatcher to Cameron* (London, 2011); Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders, ed., *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge, 2013)

[33] Tudor Jones, *The Revival of British Liberalism from Grimmond to Clegg* (Basingstoke, 2011)

a canon of theory or any individual theorists. Community activists were pluralists and pragmatists. Their ideas were purposefully elastic and few community activists elaborated a political philosophy. The history of community action complicates our understanding of the ideas that drove activism in this period.

Fifth, there is an emerging historiography of the new generation of voluntary organisations that rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, but this too has overlooked community action. This body of work has covered organisations like Shelter, Greenpeace, Release, Gingerbread and the Child Poverty Action Group.[34] These organisations framed the national discourse on social issues and pioneered new forms of service provision. This literature nuances the traditional historiography on the welfare state by emphasising the role of non-governmental organisations in the provision of welfare in the post war period.[35] It emphasises the links between political activism and alternative service provision in the 1960s and 1970s. There were close links between the new voluntary organisations and community action groups, but the latter have so far been omitted from this story. The tendency to focus on bodies that remain active in the present day has militated against the inclusion of community action groups in these histories. Community action groups were often short-lived and their long term impact on public policy is less obvious. As grassroots organisations, the records of community action groups tend not to appear in archives of NGOs.[36] Community activists made interventions into service provision that nuance our understanding of non-state actors.

2. Foundations for the study of community action

This thesis explores a form of political activism which occupies a smaller space in the shared national memory of the period and one that is missing from academic histories. It covers new historiographical terrain, but it does not travel in entirely unchartered waters. In introducing community action to narratives of British politics since 1945, the thesis will follow the precedent set by Curtis and Sanderson who studied examples of political

---

[34] Christopher Rootes, 'Environmental NGOs and the Environmental Movement in Britain,' in Crowson et al, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain*; T. Evans, 'Stopping the Poor Getting Poorer: the Establishment and Professionalisation of Poverty NGOs 1945-95' in Crowson et al., *NGOs in Contemporary Britain*; Alex Mold, '"The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?" The work of the Drug Voluntary Organisation Release, 1967-78,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 17:1 (2006): 50-73

[35] Katherine Bradley, *Poverty, Philanthropy and the State: Charities and the Working Class in London, 1918-1979* (Manchester, 2009); Matthew Hilton and James McKay, *Ages of Voluntarism – How we got to the Big Society* (Oxford, 2011)

[36] Database of Archives of Non-Governmental Organisations (DANGO), University of Birmingham, http://www.dango.bham.ac.uk/, accessed 11 June 2012

activism and 'social innovation' in the 1960s that were previously overlooked.[37] Their collection covers organisations like Centrepoint, the Pre-School Playgroup Association and the North Kensington Law Centre. These organisations, which had links to community action groups and used similar methods, were often moderate, consensual and self-consciously 'non-political' in the sense that did not choose to affiliate to political parties or align themselves with particular ideologies. These attributes make them no less worthy as subjects for the political historian. Building on this theme, the thesis follows Hilton and McKay's call for historians to adopt a 'broader notion of the political,' one that extends beyond party politics and government to encompass 'all those seeking to influence society in some way.'[38] Individual community action groups had little direct contact with Parliament or government ministers, but in providing alternative forms of service provision, challenging the status quo and agitating for more resources for housing, education, transport and children's play, they were significant political actors and their activities at a grassroots level filtered up to national policy making. At the neighbourhood level, community action groups easily rivalled the political party as a focus for the political activity. In developing this argument, the thesis is informed by Hilton's notion of 'ordinary politics.'[39] For Hilton, the bulk of political activity in the post war period took place in 'ordinary' organisations, not the more militant, radical or confrontational groups that loom large in historiography and national memory. Community action groups mobilised those who were not overtly or self-consciously "political." Like the more famous social movements, community action politicised areas of everyday life, which had lain beyond the realm of party politics.

Although existing historiography does not explore community action directly, the wider themes and critical issues it addresses are pertinent to the study of community action. The thesis contributes to the body of work that stresses the significance of the civil society, the voluntary sector and NGOs in the post war period.[40] Despite the development of the welfare state in the post-war decades, non-statutory bodies remained major service providers and civil society remained vibrant. As McKay has argued, the voluntary sector became a 'major

---

[37] Helene Curtis and Mimi Sanderson, *The Unsung Sixties: Memoirs of Social Innovation* (London, 2004). See also: Pat Thane, 'The 'Big State' versus the 'Big Society' in twentieth-century Britain,' in Chris Williams and Andrew Edwards (eds.) The Art of the Possible: Politics and governance in modern British history, 1985-1997: Essays in memory of Duncan Tanner (Manchester, 2015): 32-44

[38] Matthew Hilton and James McKay, 'Introduction,' in Crowson, et al, *NGOS in Contemporary Britain*, 9

[39] *ibid*

[40] Nicholas Deakin, 'The perils of partnership: The voluntary sector and the state, 1945-1992,' in Justin Davis Smith, Rodney Hedley and Colin Rochester, *An Introduction to the Voluntary Sector* (London, 1995). See also: Curtis and Sanderson, *The Unsung Sixties;* Crowson et al, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain*; Melanie Oppenheimer and Nicholas Deakin, ed., *Beveridge and Voluntary Action in Britain and the Wider British World* (Manchester, 2011)

player in British politics' by developing 'new forms of social welfare.'[41] This thesis applies this argument to the neighbourhood level where community groups helped to run community services. The thesis draws on Mold's argument that the innovative voluntary organisations of this period were characterised by 'a continuous interplay between 'old' and 'new' politics.'[42] Community action campaigns bridged the gap between older political issues like the distribution of wealth and new concerns such as community and the environment.

A wide range of historical literature has discussed the complex and evolving relationship between the state and the voluntary or non-statutory sector. Rowbotham has observed in the 'do-it-yourself-politics' of the period engaged in 'innovation against the state' while recognising that 'people need the state – or…the resources, skills and protection which are tucked away in bits of the state.'[43] Through her work on Release, Mold has shown that campaigning charities were able to challenge government policy while working with it to provide a service.[44] Community action groups also performed this dual function. Deakin contends that the state's tolerance for radical voluntary organisations, and its willingness to fund them, waned in the 1980s when grant-aided bodies were penalised for criticising the government.[45] The thesis investigates the way in which the changing relationship between the state and civil society influenced the fortunes of community action groups.

Crowson, Hilton and McKay's extensive body of work on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which emerged from the Database of Archives of NGOs (DANGO) project at the University of Birmingham has invigorated the study of socio-political activism and provided historians with a wealth of source material.[46] The term NGO is defined by these historians as those 'bodies seeking or exerting socio-political influence, while belonging to neither the government nor business sectors,' which provide a bridge between the state and

---

[41] McKay, 'Voluntary Politics,' in Oppenheimer and Deakin, *Beveridge and Voluntary Action,* 89

[42] Mold, 'The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?', Alex Mold and Virginia Berridge, *Voluntary Action and Illegal Drugs*: *Health and Society in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2010): 53

[43] Sheila Rowbotham, 'Introduction,' in Curtis and Henserson, *Unsung Sixties*, xii

[44] Mold, 'The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?'

[45] Deakin, 'The perils of partnership,' in Davis Smith et al. *An Introduction to the Voluntary Sector.* For a more recent articles on this subject see: Nick Crowson, 'Introduction: the Voluntary Sector in 1980s Britain,' *Contemporary British History*, 26:1 (2012): 491-498; J. McKay, 'Voluntary Politics: the Sector's Political Function from Beveridge to Deakin,' in Oppenheimer and Deakin, *Beveridge and Voluntary Action* and Georgina Brewis and Anjelica Finnegan, 'Volunteering England,' *Contemporary British History, 26:1* (2012).

[46] James McKay and Jean Francois Mouhot, DANGO: Database of Archives of UK Non-Governmental Organisations since 1945,' *Contemporary British History* 21:4 (2007); Crowson, *et al*, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain* (2009); N. Crowson and M Hilton, *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2012); Matthew Hilton, Nick Crowson, James McKay and Jean Francois Mouhot, *A Historical Guide to NGOs: Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector Since 1945* (Oxford, 2012).

society. [47] They distinguish NGOs, which are 'socio-political actors,' from more politically passive voluntary sector bodies.[48] Hilton and McKay have claimed that in the post-war era 'the essence of voluntary sector power developed from being primarily applied to primarily discursive' as organisations shifted from providing services to conceptualising problems and proposing new solutions.[49] This argument overlooks the fact that voluntary organisations, including community action groups, remained important service providers, as we discussed above. Nonetheless, this emphasis on discursive function of NGOs helps us to understand a key function of non-state actors. The thesis explores how community action groups sought to change social attitudes and re-frame public policy problems. A broader limitation of the NGO approach is that these historians have based their research around organisational archives rather than tracing the broader, but perhaps more elusive, networks of activism.[50] Another omission in the work of the Birmingham group is that these historians have not applied their insights to the community level: their focus so far has been on national or transnational NGOs. To study more ephemeral, less clearly constituted grassroots organisations historians must go beyond an institutional approach. This thesis focuses on the people, networks and groups that constituted community action. Organisations are a key part of this story, but this thesis is not a study of particular organisations or institutions. It is a study of a form of political activism. The approach taken in this thesis is closer to the methodology adopted by the 'Around 1968' project at the University of Oxford, which was structured around 'activists, networks and trajectories,' rather than formal institutions.[51]

In seeking to explain the rise of new forms of political activism, historians have drawn on insights from social and economic history. Offer has argued that the producer identity of the working class was eroded in the post-war period as citizens were recast as consumers.[52] Political historians have taken a more positive approach to the rise of consumerism and related political activism to the emergence of several consumer identities in the post war

---

[47] Hilton and McKay, 'Introduction,' in Crowson, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain,* 4
[48] *ibid*
[49] Hilton and McKay, 'Introduction,' in Crowson, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain,* 10
[50] DANGO, Birmingham
[51] 'Around 1968: Activism, Networks, Trajectories,' accessed 14 June 2012, https://around1968.modhist.ox.ac.uk
[52] Avner Offer, 'British Manual Workers: From Producers to Consumers, C. 1950-2000', *Contemporary British History*, 22 (2008), 537-571

period.[53] Daunton and Hilton have explored the rise of 'a more politically involved consumer activism.' [54] For Shapely, consumer consciousness applied not only to goods and services consumed in the commercial marketplace, but also to public services in the welfare state, such as housing, education, healthcare and social security.[55] He argues that tenants increasingly saw themselves as consumers of public housing with entitlements and when problems emerged they challenged public authorities for failing to guarantee their rights. Echoing Shapely, Hilton has argued the growth of consumer consciousness is linked to the welfare state, which challenged paternalistic, hierarchical social attitudes.[56] For these scholars, consumerism was the key discourse through which discontent with services was expressed and the rise of a consumer consciousness was a key driver of activism. Consumer rhetoric did sometimes feature in community action campaigns and community activism was associated with the decline of deferential attitudes to public office holders. However, community action does not fit neatly into the framework of consumer politics and the consumer model does not provide a complete explanation for its development. Community action groups drew on a range of other discourses and they did not always see themselves as consumers. Community activists did not simply want to consume improved public services: they wanted to participate in the policy-making process and in the management of services.

Although community action has not been studied systematically, this thesis will build upon the work of a small number of historians who have examined community action in passing as part of research into related issues in post-war British history. This literature includes Brewis's study of the organisation Student Community Action; Davis's work on the politics of the Greater London Development Plan; Shapely's study of tenant activism in Manchester; Hanna's work on urban preservationism and housing activism in Dublin; Jones's research on slum clearance and working-class community publishing in Brighton; and Holmes's study of the Notting Hill Housing Trust.[57] These varied works underline the

---

[53] Matthew Hilton, *Prosperity for all: Consumer Activity in an Age of Globalisation* (Cornell, 2009); Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton, ed., *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America* (Oxford, 2001)

[54] Daunton and Hilton, 'Introduction,' in *The Politics of Consumption,* 5

[55] Shapely, *Politics of Housing*, 14-16

[56] Matthew Hilton, 'The Birmingham Consumer's Group and Affluent Britain, in Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (eds.), *An Affluent Society? Britain's Golden Age Re-visited* (Aldershot, 2004): 167-184

[57] Georgina Brewis, 'From Service to Action: Students, volunteering and community action in mid-twentieth century Britain,' *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 58:4 (2010): 439-449; Georgina Brewis, 'Youth in action? British young people and voluntary service: 1958-1970,' in Oppenheimer and Deakin, *Beveridge and Voluntary Action,* 94-118; John Davis, ''Simple Solutions to Complex Problems': the Greater London Council and the Greater London Development Plan, 1965-1973,' in Jose Harris, *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities and Institutions* (Oxford, 2003); Peter Shapely, *The Politics of Housing;* Erika Hanna, *Modern Dublin: Urban Change and the Irish Past, 1957-1973* (Oxford, 2013); Ben Jones, 'The Uses of Nostalgia: Autobiography, Community Publishing and Working-Class Neighbourhoods in Brighton,' *Cultural and Social History*, 7 (2009): 355-374; Chris Holmes, *The Other Notting Hill* (London, 2005)

importance of this topic in three ways. First, community action was a key component of the new political activism that emerged in the 1960s. Second, the impact of community action upon the state, public services and civil society was far-reaching. Third, studies of political parties, governments, trade unions and national pressure groups do not provide a complete picture of Britain's recent political history. The thesis will use the insights offered by these historians to answer the key critical questions.

Recent scholarship has emphasised the spatial context to political activism in late twentieth century Britain. Historians have shown that political activists of various kinds were influenced by the way cities were changing in the post-war period and they sought to alter that process of change.[58] Most of the issues that concerned community activists had a strong spatial component, such as housing and planning. Community activists explicitly questioned the way cities were governed and they sought to increase levels of citizen participation in urban government.[59] Several historians have investigated political activism and its social context through urban case studies. Carter studied the relationship between race, class and social housing in the London Borough of Southwark.[60] Hanna explored the growth of the urban conservation movement by focusing on Dublin and Wetherell investigated social change and working-class culture in a case study of Tower Hamlets.[61] These historians do not only examine the specificity of their chosen locality: they also use their case studies to illuminate wider changes in a level of detail that would be impossible in a more general national survey. Carter argues that local case studies can provide a more meaningful account of how Britain was governed and how policies were implemented and experienced, beyond party politics at Westminster.[62] This thesis will use Leeds as a case study to answer its key critical questions, an approach we will explore in more depth below. Following Hanna, the thesis will pay particular attention to the detail of built environment, planning and housing as these were key drivers of community action. It will explore the ideas articulated by community activists about how cities should function and what urban life should look like.

---

[58] Hanna, *Modern Dublin*

[59] Shapely, *The Politics of Housing Power,* 16

[60] Harold Carter, 'Building the Divided City: Race, Class and Social Housing in Southwark, 1945–1995', *The London Journal*, 33 (2008), 155-185; Erika Hanna, 'Dublin's North Inner City, Preservationism and Irish Modernity in the 1960s', *The Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), 1015-1035

[61] Erika Hanna, 'Dublin's North Inner City, Preservationism and Irish Modernity in the 1960s', *The Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), 1015-1035; Sam Wetherell, 'Painting the Crisis: Community Arts and the Search for the 'Ordinary' in 1970s and '80s London,' *History Workshop Journal,* 76:1 (2013): 235-249

[62] Carter, 'Building the Divided City,' 181

3. Towards a history of community action

This thesis is more than a work of recovery. It seeks to make community action intelligible and to situate it within the political history of this period. As we have explored above, this period was characterised by the emergence and expansion of new social movements, such as environmentalism, consumerism, feminism and gay rights, and the evolution of older movements, like the labour movement and the peace movement. The wave of new voluntary organisations, pressure groups and NGOs were closely connected to the social movements and part of the new politics. The core function of this thesis is to assess whether community action amounted to a new movement, as Hain and many of his contemporaries claimed. Were they right to place it in this category? The literature on political and social movements is extensive.[63] This thesis does not seek to interrogate or contribute to movement theory. It uses this body of work to isolate the core features of a movement in order to assess whether community action was a movement. According to this literature, activists in a movement subscribe to a coherent set of ideas about the world and how it needed to change. They peruse a set of broad goals that transcend the objectives of any individual campaign or single group. The members of a movement possess a shared sense of identity and they are aware that they are part of a movement. A movement might be composed of multiple organisations but they all work towards shared goals. In other words, inter-organisational networks are a key part of a movement. Activists and organisations are connected at the local, regional, national and even the transnational level. These networks are used to communicate information and to organise joint action. The key question for this thesis, then, is: did community action meet these criteria?

Since this is the first dedicated study of community action, the thesis must perform two basic functions before it can answer this question. First, it must describe community action. Second, it needs to explain the progress of community action in Leeds between 1960 and 1990. The first critical question it must answer is a simple one: what was community action? To describe the nature of community action, the project will tackle three subordinate questions. First, what ideas and objectives animated community action? Second, who participated in community action? Third, how did community action groups try to achieve their goals? These questions are closely connected to a fourth question, the answer to which will help to place community action in context: what was the relationship between

---

[63] Lent, *British Social Movements;* Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper, *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts* (Chichester, 2009); Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements: an introduction* (Oxford, 2006); Robin Cohen and Shirin Rai, ed., *Global social movements* (London, 2000)

community action and other growing movements and older political organisations? By engaging with these critical issues, the thesis furthers our understanding of the new forms of political activism that developed in Britain at the local level in a period that witnessed the rise of new ways of engaging with the political process and a transformation of political culture.

The second basic goal of this project is to account for changing fortunes of community action over this period. To do this, the project will engage with four related questions. First, what explains the rise of community action in Leeds in the late 1960s? Second, what influence did community action exert on public policy and urban change? Third, how did community action evolve over this period in response to challenges and opportunities? Fourth, did community action decline over the 1980s? In answering these questions, the project will contribute to our understanding of the ebb and flow of political activism in the second half of the twentieth century. The project will shed light on the changing relationship between the state and its citizens and the changing role of non-state actors in British society. The underlying question of whether community action amounted to a movement can only be tackled once the critical issues outlined above have been investigated.

In order to address these questions, we must define some key terms, explain the choice of period and examine how the thesis will approach community action. The term 'community action' originated in the United States in the early twentieth century. It was used to describe grassroots activism by people living in the same neighbourhood, though it was used less often than the closely related term community organising. The latter implied a particular approach to neighbourhood politics elaborated by influential activists like Saul Alinksy.[64] In the 1960s, the term community action was popularised by the Community Action Programme, part of the federal government's War on Poverty.[65] The term was transmitted to Britain in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[66] It is likely that British community activists and scholars who had studied activism and public policy in America helped to disseminate

---

[64] Robert Slayton, *Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy* (1986); Neil Betten and Michael Austin, *The Roots of Community Organizing, 1917-1939* (Philadelphia, 1990)

[65] Edward James, *America Against Poverty* (London, 1970); Kenneth Clark and Jeanette Hopkins, *A Relevant War on Poverty: A Study of Community Action Programmes and Observable Social Change* (1968, 1969)

[66] The Anne Lapping collection in 1970 is an early example of British activists from varied backgrounds in different cities discussing their work under the heading community action.

the term in the UK.[67] As we shall discuss below, the relationship between British and American community action deserves further research.

The thesis adopts a broad definition of community action, which incorporates a range of political actors, organisations and issues. This definition is partly based on negative assertions of what community action was not. Community action took place outside the workplace. Unlike trade unionists, community activists were not directly involved in labour struggles, but this did not preclude joint organising between community and labour activists. Community activists did not in general engage directly with electoral politics. Unlike political parties, community action was not located in or focused on elected institutions. The term community action is used to denote the way in which groups of people organised in their neighbourhoods to influence public policy and the process of urban change. These individuals are referred to as community activists. The definition is applied regardless of whether people self-consciously identified as community activists. It incorporates organisations – such as tenants associations or community associations – that may have chosen different labels.

The 'community' in community action is defined as the physical neighbourhoods where people lived, worked, used services and socialised. These communities did not necessarily have fixed edges. Instead, community denotes the place with which people identified or over which they felt a sense of common ownership. The geographical boundaries of communities were malleable but community was used by activists to describe tangible places, composed of houses, shops, streets, playgrounds, public buildings and schools. The 'community' in community action is derived from community activists' intimate connections to particular places and spaces and the people living in them. Consequently, the term 'community' does not extend to mere communities of interest or communities based on forms of identity because such communities, by definition, transcended place. Even so, activists who engaged in identity politics often also participated in community action. The 'action' in community action describes the fact that community activists sought to affect change by actively engaging with the political process beyond the electoral cycle. Community activists protested and campaigned; they lobbied and negotiated with decision makers. They sought to educate the general public and mobilise support for their cause. Motivated by an ethos of mutual aid or community self-help, community activists sought to

---

[67] For a discussion of the relevance of the American experience to Britain, see: Pru Chamberlayne, 'Community Action in the United States,' *Community Action,* No. 10, Sept-Oct 1973, 32-33

put their values into action by running their own services and institutions, participating directly in the creation of the society they wanted to see.

There was disagreement among community activists in Britain about the meaning of community action: should the term be confined to only particular types of activism and how should it be distinguished from community work or community organising?[68] The thesis will treat the terms community organising and community action as interchangeable, unless it specifies otherwise. This ignores the particular nuances that each term carried in different political and geographical contexts, but for most community activists in Britain in this period the two terms had near identical connotations. The thesis distinguishes between community action and community work: the former is a type of activism, while the latter refers to a professional discipline connected to social work.

The thesis opens just prior to the dawn of community action to examine shifts in public policy in the late 1950s and early 1960s that set the scene for community action. The main analysis begins in the late 1960s when the first community action groups emerged in Leeds. The core focus of the thesis is the long 1970s, from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, when community action flourished in the city. The thesis examines the evolution in the late 1970s and early 1980s, before investigating its decline and eventual demise in the mid- to late 1980s. This thirty year period bridges the two major political epochs in Britain since 1945: the post-war consensus and the Thatcherite consensus. These decades witnessed the country's transition from a mixed economy with a large manufacturing base and a collectivist welfare state to a largely post-industrial economy governed according to the principles of the market and individualism. The thesis straddles these eras in order and shows how community action was shaped by this transition. The rise of community action was linked to the crisis of the post-war consensus and its decline is connected to the triumph of Thatcherism. This periodisation is informed by Adam Lent, an historian of social movements, who argues that there was a 'long period of mobilisation, stretching from 1958 to the mid-1980s' during which new social movements shared people, networks, ideals, organisational forms and political strategies.[69] Whether or not it was a movement, this thesis will argue that community action was part of this 'great mobilisation.'

---

[68] David Thomas, *The Making of Community Work,* 117-139; Cowley, *Community or Class,* 185-188; *Community Action,* No. 10, Sept-Oct 1973, 27-29
[69] Adam Lent, *British Social Movements Since 1945 Sex, Colour, Peace and Power* (Basingstoke, 2001) , 5, 162, 167

Leeds is a fitting case study not only because the city hosted a wealth of community action in this period, but because a substantial body of source material on community action in Leeds survives. Since community action was a grassroots phenomenon focused on geographically specific issues and areas, it is logical to analyse it through a single city case study. Leeds is representative of other large British cities that dominated a wider conurbation, particularly those in the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland, which shared a similar urban structure, economic base and social composition. In cities like Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Glasgow and Nottingham, community action emerged in a similar political climate and engaged with similar public policies. As the pre-eminent metropolis in Britain and a key incubator of political activism, London hosted more community action groups than any other city. London would certainly offer fertile ground for the historian of community action, but London already looms large in historiography on twentieth century Britain, particularly in histories of political radicalism and urban change. In focusing on a provincial British city, the thesis joins a burgeoning group of historians who are looking beyond London to investigate twentieth century British history.[70] The thesis is not a history of community action in urban Britain as a whole, but at crucial points it seeks to show how community action in Leeds mirrored community action elsewhere. To do this, it draws on national publication and primary sources on community action in other cities, particularly London and Nottingham. It is possible to extrapolate from this study of community action in Leeds to make a number of tentative generalisations about the history of British community action, but such points must be be corroborated with further research on other towns and cities. Finally, while this thesis is not a history of Leeds, it nonetheless contributes to our understanding of the specificity, or otherwise, of Leeds history in years since 1945. In doing so, the thesis fills a gap in the historiography on Leeds, which is largely centred on the Victorian city and the early twentieth century.[71]

The main reason why community action has received so little attention from professional historians is that researching community action is methodologically challenging. The source base for community action is scattered and incomplete. As grassroots organisations with few formal structures, community action groups generated few of their own records. Unlike

---

[70] Daisy Payling, ''Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire': Grassroots Activism and Left-wing solidarity in 1980s Sheffield,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 25:4 (2014), 602-627; Peter Shapely, ''Tenants arise': Consumerism, tenants and the challenge to council authority in Manchester,' *Social History,* 31:1 (2006), 60-78; Stefan Ramsden, 'Re-making Working-Class Community: Sociability, Belonging and 'Affluence' in a Small Town, 1930-1980, *Contemporary British History,* 29:1 (2015), 1-26

[71] Derek Fraser ed., *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980); M. Beresford, *East End, West End: Leeds During the Face of Urbanisation* (Leeds, 1988); Stephen Burt and Kevin Grady, *An Illustrated History of Leeds* (Derby, 2002); F. Trowell, 'Speculative Housing Development in the Suburb of Headingley, Leeds, 1838-1914, *Publications of the Thoresby Society* LIX (1985)

political parties or national pressure groups, community action groups did not possess the bureaucratic structures that produced and retained large quantities of formal documentation such as membership records, formal meeting minutes, annual reports and records of correspondence. Many of the written records that were produced have been lost since. Since many action groups were short-lived, they did not develop a sense of their own historical significance. Many community activists did not consider their work sufficiently important to warrant depositing their records in archives. Unlike established organisations, many community activists were unaware that they could formally deposit records with public bodies, while others associated archives and libraries with the local state against which they had campaigned. An additional deterrent to depositing records was the fact that there were few specialised archival organisations available to community activists in the region in the 1970s and 1980s.

For the records that survive, several contingent events had to occur. Crucially, a group had to produce written records in the first place and someone in the group needed to take responsibility for ensuring they were stored safety. Since community action groups engaged with a wide range of policy areas, the records that survived are stored in a range of institutions and their records are rarely filed under the heading 'community action.' Primary sources are therefore difficult to identify. They are found among collections relating to diverse subjects, from housing and local government to volunteering and childcare. It is often necessary to have detailed pre-existing knowledge of particular action groups, campaigns, individuals or neighbourhoods in order to locate community action records, which is another reason why the topic lends itself to a single city case study. A large proportion of community action records were never deposited but survive in the homes of community activists or in the institutional archives of active organisations. In order to research community action, it is necessary to make personal contact with community activists, community groups and NGOs.

This thesis is based on sources drawn from a diverse range of institutions and private locations. It draws upon the surviving sources produced by community activists stored in public archives, local authority and university libraries, the archives of NGOs and the homes of community activists and retired professionals. Here, notwithstanding the problems outlined above, it is possible to find minutes of meetings, newsletters, research reports, campaigning literature, diaries, news clippings and letters. To compensate for the dearth of surviving material produced by community activists, the thesis investigates community

action through its contact with external organisations. The thesis uses documents generated by local and central government, voluntary organisations, political parties and pressure groups. The local and national press is another key source of data on community action. Mainstream newspapers covered community action, though less frequently and in less depth than the alternative or underground press.[72] Journalists working for *The Other Paper* and *Leeds Other Paper* actively investigated community action groups and their reports are a major repository of data on community action. *Community Action* journal performed a similar function for community action across Britain. Interviews conducted by the author with community activists between 2009 and 2014 fill gaps in the written source base and provide a unique perspective on community action.

The thesis draws on studies of community action written in the long 1970s, some of which we referred to above. This literature is a valuable source of information about community action, either because the original documents the authors consulted are lost or because the events they describe were never recorded elsewhere. Such texts blur the boundary between primary and secondary source material. There are obvious dangers in depending on second-hand accounts of community action produced by participants writing immediately after the events. Although many purport to analyse and evaluate community action from an ostensibly detached standpoint, this was rarely the case. Many authors were either writing as promoters of community action or seeking to make a particular didactic point about the lessons that could be learned from their study. For these reasons – and because few of these texts cover Leeds – the thesis does not make heavy use of them. There is a need for a cultural or intellectual history of how contemporaries understood community action and the debates that took place about the relationship between community action and other forms of activism, but this is not the purpose of this thesis.

4. Structure

The thesis is divided into four chapters, each of which uses a particular aspect of community action in Leeds to answer the main critical questions in this thesis. Each chapter explores a different issue addressed by community activists: council housing (Chapter 1), housing renewal (Chapter 2), transport and mobility (Chapter 3), and community services (Chapter 4). While this is a useful analytical framework, community action was not divided into neat policy silos and the thesis emphasises the links between these different areas.

---

[72] Tony Harcup, *A Northern Star: Leeds Other Paper and the Alternative Press* (London and Pontefract, 1994); Tony Harcup, *Alternative Journalism, Alternative Voices* (London, 2013): 33-52

Chapter 1 is a detailed neighbourhood case study of community action on the Hunslet Grange estate in south Leeds where activists campaigned for improved housing conditions and increased tenant involvement in managing the estate. This chapter presents the thesis in microcosm. It contains a close analysis of the drivers of community action, the people involved and their relationship with the local state. It discusses the difficulties activists faced and how they sought to overcome them, before exploring why community action on the estate faded in the 1980s. Chapter 2 adopts a wider geographical focus, examining the growth of community action across inner city Leeds in response to the city's housing renewal policies. The chapter first explores how community activists challenged the orthodox approach to housing renewal before investigating how and why community activists pioneered alternative forms of housing renewal. This chapter pays particular attention to the backgrounds of community activists and the ideas that animated community action. It also discusses the rise of citywide networks of community activists.

Chapter 3 focuses on community action concerned with transport and mobility. The chapter examines how the city's transport strategy was a key driver of community action. It discusses community action campaigns over on road-building, pedestrian mobility and public transport, analysing the extent to which community activists were able to influence transport policy and urban change. It assesses why some community activists had more success than others and comments on the ingredients for effective community action. Chapter 4 shifts emphasis of the thesis from largely negative campaigns to positive community action to show that community action was not always reactionary, but could be a creative force. The chapter analyses positive community action in the fields of childcare, children's play, advice and community facilities, looking at how community-led initiatives were organised and funded. The second part of the chapter examines how community activists built structures and institutions to support community action across the city. It then considers why community activists struggled to preserve these achievements in the 1980s.

The conclusion draws together the responses to these key critical questions, before underlining the contribution the thesis has made to the fields of late twentieth century British history and the history of political activism. It then suggests how further research might expand upon the insights offered in this thesis. Finally, the conclusion returns to the core goal of the thesis, assessing the view, articulated by Hain and several of his contemporaries in the long 1970s, that community action was a movement.

Chapter 1

A Community Born of Adversity: Community Action
on the Hunslet Grange Estate, Leeds, 1967-1987

This chapter will focus on the history of community action over the life of a single council estate, Hunslet Grange in Leeds, over a twenty-year period from the construction of the estate in the late 1960s to the redevelopment of the site in the mid-1980s. After exploring the political and public policy context to the Hunslet Grange estate, the chapter will use this case study to illuminate key themes in the history of community action in this period. Firstly, it will explore the foundations of community action, discussing how community action emerged and developed in the challenging circumstances of the estate. Secondly, it will examine what community action sought to achieve and how it pursued these goals. The chapter will demonstrate that community action was concerned not only with the material problems of the estate but also with urban governance. Thirdly, the chapter will discuss the internal and external problems faced by community activists to explain why they often struggled to have an impact on local policy makers. Fourthly, the chapter will show how community activists sought to overcome these problems. It will examine the local, regional and national level alliances forged by community activists on the estate. Fifthly, the chapter will show that community activists on Hunslet Grange eventually succeeded in forging a closer relationship with the council and the local Labour Party, which increased its influence in the early 1980s. It then explains why this partnership of the council and community action was ultimately unable to achieve the activists' broader goals by investigating shifts in national policy in the 1980s.

1. Hunslet Grange and the Re-making of the Inner City

This section will explore the local and national policy context to the Hunslet Grange estate. Community action on the estate was framed by these policies. Hunslet Grange was a system-built housing complex of 1,250 dwellings constructed for Leeds City Council between 1967 and 1970 in Hunslet, a working-class, industrial district in south east Leeds. Hunslet expanded rapidly in the nineteenth century as an engineering and railway centre.[1] The district is best known as the childhood home of Richard Hoggart: the working-class

---

[1] Ron Weiner, *The Economic Basis of Leeds* (Leeds, 1977), 10-13

culture of the area in the interwar years was immortalised in his *The Uses of Literacy* (1956). Hunslet remained a major industrial centre in the middle of the twentieth century. The urban landscape was characterised by streets of back-to-back housing, high streets of small shops, churches, pubs and clubs intermingled with factories, warehouses and railway lines [see Figs. 1.1-1.2]. Hoggart's memories of the area in the 1930s spoke of a place where every household was connected to a wider neighbourhood:

> Home may be private, but the front door opens out of the living room on to the street and when you go down the step or use it as a seat on a warm evening you become part of the life of the neighbourhood.[2]

Hoggart's account was published on the eve of a period of momentous change in Hunslet during which most of the built environment was redeveloped.

The Hunslet Grange estate was a product of the mass housing drive of the 1960s. The revival of slum clearance, population growth and an increase in the rate of household formation generated an acute need for new urban housing.[3] When the private sector failed to respond to this need, the task was allocated to local authorities. Governments set ambitious house-building targets and, in the spirit of affluence, they set minimum space standards for all new council housing.[4] However, both parties aimed to progressively reduce the central government subsidy for each new council house. This created a policy challenge: councils had to build more housing of a higher quality in a short time frame while simultaneously reducing the costs per unit. The solution would be industrialised building techniques.[5] Industrialised building, or system building, involved constructing the component parts of a structure – walls, floors, service units, living areas – in purpose-built factories and assembling them on site to form the structure.[6] The technique was depicted by governments as a means by which councils could rapidly expand their building programmes while minimising labour costs, reducing delays and enabling effective central management and supervision of a building project.[7] The ministry maintained that '40 per cent of public sector house building will need to be industrialised by 1970.' Following government guidelines, in 1961 Leeds City Council formed a consortium with Sheffield, Leeds, Hull

---

[2] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London, 1958), Second Edition, 58
[3] Peter Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State: the Development of Housing Policy in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2005), 76-100
[4] Maplass, *Housing and the Welfare State,* 93; Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* (HMSO, 1961)
[5] David McKay and Andrew C Cox, *The Politics of Urban Change* (London, 1979), 133; Peter Shapely, *The Politics of Housing: Power, Consumers and Urban Culture* (Manchester, 2007), 161
[6] Keith Ross, 'Non-traditional housing in the UK – a brief review' (2002), accessed 17 November 2013, http://www.cml.org.uk/cml/filegrab/pdf_pub_misc_NontradhousingBR.pdf.pdf?ref=3595
[7] Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Circular 75/76 in Leeds City Council, *Hunslet Grange Estate, Leeds 10* (Leeds, 1982), 1. See also: Patrick Dunleavy, *The Politics of Mass Housing: A Study of Corporate Power and Professional Influence in the Welfare State* (Oxford, 1981), 107-123

and Nottingham, the Yorkshire Development Group (YDG) to research and deliver industrialised building projects. In 1966, Shepherd Construction of York was awarded the contract to design and build estates in all four cities. At 4500 dwellings, this was the biggest single building contract in Europe at the time. Shepherd's design consisted of a series of quadrangular blocks, five to seven storeys high, with concrete decks at different levels providing access to the flats and maisonettes [see Fig. 1.5-1.6].[8]

At a local level, the need for high density urban housing in Hunslet was partly determined by the city's slum clearance programme, which resumed in the late 1950s as we will examine in Chapter 2.[9] Hunslet was radically re-shaped by the clearance programme: by 1966, 5182 houses had been cleared in the area—80 per cent of which were demolished after 1945.[10] The Hunslet Grange site, which was largely cleared in 1964, had contained 512 back-to-back houses.[11] The majority of residents displaced by clearance in Hunslet were rehoused on peripheral council estates in south and east Leeds, but as these estates sprawled outwards, there was a growing demand for housing in Hunslet. Many households wanted to remain closer to central Leeds and to stay near to friends and neighbours.[12] High density inner city estates like Hunslet Grange catered for this demand and sought to moderate the centrifugal effects of earlier rehousing policies. The council intended not only to save rural land, but also to revitalise the older parts of the city. The estate was designed to accommodate applicants from the city's growing housing waiting list. The stock of cheap private rental housing had hardly been expanded since 1914 and since many private landlords were reluctant to modernise their properties council housing presented an attractive prospect especially to growing families.

Hunslet Grange was designed to provide households from older housing with a superior standard of living accommodation [see Figs. 1.3-1.4]. The flats had not only indoor toilets and bathrooms, they were also equipped with warm air heating units, sound insulation, stainless steel sinks, and a built-in drying cabinet.[13] Furnishings, doors and window fittings were chosen with a view to minimising residents' 'outlay on furniture and decoration.'[14] The space standards were generous, exceeding Parker Morris standards by 5 per cent. Laid out in quadrangles, the estate was designed to be light, green and open—in sharp contrast to

---

[8] 'Leek Street, Leeds,' Journal Information Library, *The Architect's Journal,* 6 August 1969, 306-8
[9] Leeds City Council, *Redevelopment: Potential and Priorities* (Leeds, 1971)
[10] Michael Parkin, 'Leeds Letter,' *The Guardian,* 10 January 1966, 8
[11] Yorkshire Development Group, Promotional Booklet, ii, Alison Ravetz Collection
[12] Interview with Barbara Hancock (née Craig), Leeds and Southampton, 2014
[13] YDG, Promotional Booklet, 7
[14] YDG, Promotional Booklet, 7, 14

the narrow terraced streets of old Hunslet.[15] A high proportion of the site was devoted to open space [see Fig. 1.7].[16] Each phase of the development was portrayed as a separate "village" and the architect claimed that the paintwork was inspired by houses in the Yorkshire Dales.[17] The estate layout incorporated the latest principles in environmental planning, separating pedestrian and vehicular routes in an effort to promote safety.[18]

The planning and design of the estate sought to preserve and develop community. The Housing Director believed Hunslet had 'one of the strongest local characters in Leeds,' a facet he wished to preserve.[19] Drawing on the lessons of contemporary sociology, the council claimed it was learning from the mistakes of earlier rehousing schemes which had allegedly broken up communities by scattering them across the city.[20] The design philosophy was based on the view that the high rise block was inimical to the development of community because it removed the traditional street and isolated households from urban life. As a medium rise development, Hunslet Grange sought to counter this tendency. Following the example of the Park Hill estate in Sheffield, the raised decks were intended to function like streets by promoting social interaction between neighbours at different vertical levels, functioning as 'a natural meeting place for young and old alike.'[21] The provision of a wide variety of dwelling types from one bedroom flats to three bedroom maisonettes would enable a 'socially integrated community' to form on the estate by accommodating a range of different household types.[22]

The development of Hunslet Grange was part of the broader re-structuring of urban space in Leeds in these years [see Fig. 1.8]. As we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3, this was informed as much by economic goals as the drive to raise living standards. Like the rest of the inner city, Hunslet was transformed not only by housing clearance, but also by motorway building, industrial restructuring and commercial redevelopment. The road network was reconfigured and overlaid with new roads. Streets of small shops were replaced by a district shopping centre. Public services were centralised in new buildings. Older factories gave way to new industrial premises and distribution centres. The residents of Hunslet Grange

---

[15] YDG, Promotional Booklet, 18
[16] 'Leeks Street,' *The Architect's Journal*, 308
[17] YDG, Promotional Booklet, ii; Alison Ravetz, Meeting with Mr Clegg, 12 November 1968, ALC
[18] *Ministry of Transport, Traffic in Towns* (HMSO, 1963). See also: Simon Gunn, 'The Buchanan Report, environment and the problem of traffic in 1960s Britain,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 22:4 (2011): 521-542
The estate was the setting for a film by the Hunslet Boys Club. See: Hunslet Club, 'Super Smith! A 1970s Hunslet Boys Club Film,' YouTube, 4 November 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vI-hFd7pRc0&list=FLxTRMn5EF6v9T0EoJR35jaw&index=3&feature=plpp_video, accessed 7 September 2015
[19] Alison Ravetz, Meeting with Housing Director, 20 June 1968, ALC
[20] Peter Wilmott and Michael, Young, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London, 1962)
[21] YDG, Promotional Booklet, 4
[22] YDG, Promotional Booklet, 4

were the inhabitants not only of an innovative housing type but an entirely new urban landscape.

The construction of the estate was the product of an almost entirely top-down process of policy formulation and implementation. The direct involvement of tenants, workers and consumers was not seen to be necessary. It was assumed that residents would be grateful for the new housing it offered and supportive of the wider effort to modernise the urban landscape. The view that policy makers understood people's needs, now and in the future, was summed up by one Leeds housing official who claimed that '"[i]t would be a waste of time…to plan for pigeon keeping or other local peculiarities that may not prove to be permanent."'[23] This was a political culture characterised by paternalism and a commitment to expertise.

The Hunslet Grange estate was conceived as a means of ameliorating the housing shortage, modernising the city's housing stock and improving the living standards of those who were rehoused from clearance areas. This was part of a national housing project in which the city council was an enthusiastic participant. The form, layout and appearance of the estate were unorthodox. The designers of the estate sought to create social spaces through architectural innovations that replicated the spirit of the cleared terraces and shopping streets. The construction of the estate was part of a wider process of urban renewal that fundamentally altered the physical landscape of Hunslet, but the overwhelming majority of the people who lived in the new Hunslet had played no part in the process that had produced it. It did not take them long to find their voice.

2. Pillars of community action

Hunslet Grange was the site of community action almost from its inception. Community action on the estate had a set of interlinked foundations that can be organised under five headings. This section will discuss each of these pillars of community action in turn, emphasising the links between them. The first pillar of community action was the failure of the estate to meet the expectations of its tenants in a range of areas. The flats did not raise living standards in the way that many tenants had hoped. A high proportion of the flats – at least 40 per cent –suffered from damp.[24] Damp was caused either by condensation or, in

---

[23] Michael Parkin, 'Leeds Letter,' *The Guardian,* 10 January 1966, 8

[24] *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 27 February 1976; Hunslet Grange Heating Action Group, *Damp*: *Hunslet Grange: An Experiment and its Victims* (Leeds, 1976): 6

more serious causes, rain penetration. [25] These problems arose from defects in the design of the estate and mistakes made in the construction phase. Damp was a health hazard for tenants, especially children and the elderly. It damaged tenants' belongings and produced an unpleasant, fusty atmosphere in the flats that could not be removed through cleaning. A description of the conditions endured by a couple with three children whose flat suffered from 'both penetrating damp and condensation' reveals the effects of damp:

> Condensation on the widows is so bad that the sills have begun to rot. Wallpaper, covered in black mould, falls away from the walls under the windows. The ceilings are stained where water has penetrated through the blocks. The ceiling paper hangs loose in the hall…the four month old baby has already spent time in hospital with bronchitis. [26]

Dampness was one of the key physical problems in the city's older housing stock, but far from eradicating this problem, Hunslet Grange perpetuated it.

A connected physical problem was the high cost of heating on the estate, which was estimated to be the most expensive of any Leeds estate. [27] For structural reasons the flats did not retain heat effectively. This was compounded by the highly inefficient warm air electric heating system. [28] The estate was initially built with a gas central heating system but this was converted to electric following the Ronan Point disaster in Newham in 1968 where a gas explosion had caused part of a tower block to collapse. [29] The heating problem became acute in the mid-1970s when the price of electricity rose at a far higher rate than gas prices. [30] Tenants were unable to switch to gas. For the first quarter of 1976, electricity 'bills of £90 and above' were common. [31] By 1982, many households were paying £200 per quarter on electricity. [32] Fuel costs absorbed a growing share of tenants' disposable income, pushing many households below the poverty line. [33] Low-income households were affected disproportionately, with many spending up to 20% of their net disposable income on electricity. [34] Many tenants fell into debt and a significant minority were disconnected from the electricity supply. [35] Others suffered health complaints related to low temperatures. [36]

---

[25] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, 11-12; Yorkshire Development Group Tenants Association, *High and Dry*: *A Unique Action Guide Based on Successful Campaigns by Tenants Against Damp and Defects* (London, 1983): 2
[26] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, 6
[27] YDGTA, *High and Dry,* 4; Barbara Craig, Jillian Currey and Paul Richardson, 'The extra costs of high cost heating', *Roof*, October 1976, 127-9
[28] LCC, Hunslet Grange, 4
[29] LCC, Hunslet Grange, 4
[30] LCC, Hunslet Grange Estate, Leeds 10, 1982, 6
[31] Craig et al., *Roof,* 127; Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Reports,* 14 December 1978, 8-10
[32] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 28 April 1982, 2
[33] Craig, et al., *Roof,* 127; LCC, *Proceedings,* 14 December 1978, 8-10
[34] Craig et al, *Roof,* 127
[35] LCC, *Proceedings,* 23 June 1976, 30

The wider built environment of the estate was unpopular among tenants. Aesthetically, it was considered deeply unattractive: the dark grey concrete panels were seen to be bleak and austere and many tenants likened the estate's appearance to Alcatraz or the nearby Armley Jail.[37] Visiting in the late 1970s, Richard Hoggart described the estate as 'less humane than the old back-to-back streets.'[38] The raised decks were not, in practice, sociable spaces where tenants stopped to talk with each other.[39] The public spaces on the estate were afflicted with graffiti and vandalism from the beginning.[40] Sound carried easily throughout the estate. Residents were plagued by the noise of children playing or riding mopeds on the decks. This was an acute problem for the residents of flats positioned directly below the decks, whose ceilings joined onto the deck above.[41]

Although the estate was shorter than many high rise blocks, mothers with young children on the upper floors and the single elderly felt 'isolated' in their flats.[42] Even at this height, it was impossible to supervise the play of young children at ground level.[43] The windswept open spaces between the blocks were considered bleak and uninviting. Piles of demolition material were left on the grassed expanses around the blocks and the network of footpaths was unkempt.[44] Landscaping was perfunctory and there was very little greenery and no mature trees. The internal quadrangles were lifeless spaces used only for parking cars; the noise of a car engine starting would 'echo and reverberates' around the block.[45] Summarising the way many tenants felt about the environment, the Tenants Association noted that 'the overwhelming impression is of dark concrete and grey, drab tones, a depressing and menacing atmosphere.'[46]

On the estate itself and in the immediate area there were few amenities for shopping or recreation. No modern replacement for Hunslet's cleared shopping streets was provided until 1976. Hunslet Grange estate itself had five commercial units but many of these were never occupied.[47] The estate had only one pub and no community centre or any other social or cultural institutions. Facilities for children were limited: the Hunslet Boys Club provided a service to local children, but there was no public youth service provision. A day nursery

---

[36] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange,* 7
[37] Press Cutting: *YEP*, 5.5.978, BHC
[38] Richard Hoggart, *A Local Habitation: Life and Times, Volume 1: 1918-40* (Oxford, 1988): 13
[39] YDGAG, *High and Dry, 5*
[40] LCC, Hunslet Grange, 12
[41] LCC, Hunslet Grange, 12
[42] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange,* 4
[43] Alison Ravetz, Proposal for a Video on Hunslet Grange, 2 May 1984, 2, ALC
[44] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange,* 4
[45] YDGTA, *High and Dry,* 5
[46] YDGAG, *High and Dry,* 5
[47] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange,* 4

operated by the Social Services Department provided childcare for a small number of parents.[48] The result was that many residents had to travel to the city centre to perform ordinary tasks.[49] Paradoxically, though population densities were relatively high, the area lacked the vibrancy that might have been expected in an inner city area. Children and the elderly faced boredom and loneliness, respectively, since there were few institutions to cater for their specific needs. We shall return to this theme in more depth in Chapter 4.

Resident dissatisfaction was also connected to the more intangible issues of community, neighbourliness and belonging. Tenants frequently complained that the estate lacked a sense of community. Three years separated the final clearance of back-to-backs on the site occupied by Hunslet Grange, so the majority of families who had once lived there had been 'scattered' across Leeds by the time the first flats were let in 1968.[50] The dense network of social ties that had constituted community in the area had been broken. Whilst many of the first families to inhabit the estate came from nearby clearance areas, the majority came from further afield, since most households who had been rehoused outside the district either 'did not want to return' to Hunslet or were deterred by Hunslet Grange.[51] Public spaces designed to foster community spirit – the raised decks, staircases and open quadrangles – often had the reverse effect of driving people into the private sphere of the flats and inhibiting social contact. The relative dearth of useful amenities and attractive spaces for socialising meant there were few opportunities to meet neighbours on the estate or nearby.

Perhaps most detrimental of all to the formation of a new community was the fact that the material and environmental problems discussed above made the estate extremely unpopular. A relatively high proportion of the first tenants were young people who did not intend to settle there permanently.[52] When electricity conversion work took place on some of the flats in 1969, requiring tenants to temporarily vacate their houses, a majority of households never returned.[53] The turnover rate remained extraordinarily high over the life of the estate as residents used the transfer system to move elsewhere. There were 300 changes of tenancy in 1975.[54] Under these conditions, the meaningful and long-term connections between residents, upon which a community might have been built, were less likely to grow. As the estate's reputation deteriorated further, the council found it increasingly difficult to fill

---

[48] Interview with Hancock
[49] *Leeds Other Paper*, No. 6, July 1974, 4-5
[50] Michael Parkin, 'Leeds Letter', *The Guardian*, 10 January 1966, 8
[51] Mr Clegg, Estate Office, 12 November 1968, ALC; LCC, *Hunslet Grange*, 5
[52] Leek Street Notes, 29 April 1969, ALC
[53] Mr Hurst, Estate Office, 16 September 1969, ALC
[54] Leeds City Council, *Quarterly report of the Department of Housing,* 31 March 1976, 9

voids, which exacerbated this problem. While the estate would eventually spawn a community, it was different to the one the planners had imagined.

These material, environmental and social problems were compounded by the view that the council and other public agencies were unsympathetic and disinterested. Council officials blamed individual tenants for the dampness and heating problems, even after it had become clear that the problem was widespread. Tenants complaining about damp were routinely instructed to turn up the heating and open the windows, an approach that had some technical basis but was extremely costly.[55] Households who could not pay impossibly expensive fuel bills were disconnected by the Yorkshire Electricity Board. The council was unprepared to provide extra subsidy. Council workers were slow to attend to routine repairs and, despite repeated remedial works, the authority consistently failed to solve the larger structural problems. The Cleansing Department refused to clear rubbish from the walkways and the open spaces were poorly maintained.[56] The sense that tenants were a politically marginalised group was felt more acutely on Hunslet Grange than on most other council estates because of the quantity of material and social problems.

Overall, the estate had been found wanting on a number of levels. As a form of housing, it had failed to provide modern living accommodation. The built environment was dispiriting and, rather than functioning as an asset, it was the source of several problems. The wider setting lacked many of the desirable features of urban life, particularly spaces for shopping and recreation. The estate had not only failed to preserve the communities of old Hunslet, but its various failings had placed obstacles in the way of a new community emerging. Residents felt ill-treated by the public bodies responsible for the administration of the estate. As Shapely has shown in a study of Manchester, tenant activism was a reaction to the failure of the local authority to solve urban housing problems.[57]

Whilst the emergence of a set of social, material and political problems explains the *potential* for community action on the estate, it does not explain how or why community action actually emerged on the estate. The estate's failure to meet residents' expectations might have provided a rationale for community action, but this did not make it inevitable. Community action depended on residents organising collectively and transforming a set of grievances into a list of practical demands that could form the basis of a political campaign. As Tony Parker's oral history of a south London council estate suggests, the average

---

[55] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange,* 12
[56] Leeds City Council, Hunslet Grange, 12; Annie Armitage, *Both Sides of the Sheets* (Leicester, 2011), 235
[57] Shapely, *Politics of Housing,* 166-176

council tenant was not politically active, but merely trying to get by.[58] The majority of residents on Hunslet Grange did not respond to these problems by organising collectively. Indeed, the majority of tenants adopted an essentially individualist approach by applying to the Housing Department for a transfer to another estate on the grounds that Hunslet Grange was failing to meet their needs. By seeking replacement accommodation elsewhere, they intended to improve their housing situation and perhaps the wider social surroundings. This was a private exchange between the individual tenant and the Housing Department. It did not depend on the strength of a group and nor did it seek to improve Hunslet Grange itself.

The initiative for organising collectively over the problems of the estate with a view to improving the situation for a plurality of tenants came from several individuals who engaged in community work on the estate and who worked together to tackle the problems of the estate. Some of these individuals actually lived on the estate so they were not technically outsiders, but their socioeconomic status and educational and occupational background distinguished them from the majority of tenants. They were mainly of middle-class origin, with university degrees and other professional qualifications. In many cases, they had prior experience of community organising and understood the potential for community action on Hunslet Grange. Their intervention helped to transform a series of individual grievances into an organised political campaign. Crucially, they encouraged tenants to form a variety of groups that would represent the *collective* interests of residents and could act as a base for activism. These community groups provided a framework for community action throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but they owed their existence and much of their strength to these individuals.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Bob Shaw, a curate at the local parish church of St Mary's, and Tony Addy, a member of the South Leeds Team Ministry, got involved in community work on the estate and helped to form the Hunslet Grange Community Association in 1971.[59] In 1973, the Hunslet Parochial Church Council appointed Barbara Craig to run the Hunslet Parish Community Work Project.[60] Craig had a post-graduate diploma in Social Administration from the LSE for which she had completed work placements in Islington and Peterborough where she had 'seen first-hand how community action could be effective.'[61] In Islington, she had worked briefly at Holloway Housing Aid, a housing rights project. Craig worked with the Community Association, before setting up a

---

[58] Tony Parker, *The people of Providence: A housing estate and some of its inhabitants* (London, 1983), Second Edition
[59] Interview with Hancock
[60] Barbara Craig, 'Hunslet Parish Community Work Project', 1978, BHC
[61] Interview with Hancock

Damp Action Group in the winter of 1973 to 1974. As a resident of the estate and full time community worker, Craig remained an advocate for community action until 1978. In early 1976, Keith Mollison, a community worker employed by the Shelter Community Action Team (SCAT), a national advocacy organisation, began visiting the estate for a day or two per week as part of his work in the Leeds and Bradford area.[62] Mollison, who had a degree in Town Planning, had worked with community groups in Glasgow and Toronto, where he worked with a group influenced by Saul Alinsky's approach to community organising, before he began working for SCAT in Yorkshire.[63] Mollison came to Hunslet after Craig contacted SCAT asking for assistance.[64] He was instrumental in setting up the Hunslet Grange Heating Action Group in February 1976 and worked with the group until 1977. Both Mollison and Craig were members of the Leeds Community Workers Groups, through which community workers across the city shared information.[65] The Hunslet Grange Tenants Association, formed in 1978, spearheaded the next phase of community action on the estate; this group was formed due to the intervention of another outsider, John Gunnell, who moved to the estate in 1977.[66] Gunnell, a lecturer in Physics at Leeds University, was the Labour County Councillor for Hunslet. The emergence of a new style of community-orientated councillors will be explored later.[67]

Each of these individuals brought a different style of community organising to the estate. They all contributed expertise and resources that were lacking among the resident population. Craig worked slowly and methodically, building up a web of contacts over several years by going door-to-door on the estate and 'gathering groups of residents around shared interest and concerns.'[68] In doing so she developed personal relationships with tenants, especially the women.[69] Mollison, who did not have a permanent base on the estate, tended to work faster and drew on the relationships Craig had built up to legitimise his work and to set up the action group.[70] As a SCAT worker, Mollison assisted neighbourhoods that were already organised, rather than developing a community groups from scratch.[71] Gunnell used the traditional political device of the public meeting to bring tenants together to discuss common concerns and plan future action. Craig was able to advise tenants on how to

---

[62] Interview with Keith Mollison, Leeds, 2013
The Shelter Community Action Team later became Services to Community Action and Tenants
[63] Interview with Mollison
[64] *ibid*
[65] Interview with Mollison
[66] *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 'Flats transit camp, says Merlyn,' 18 November 1978, 1
[67] *Leeds Other Paper*, No. 499, 2 October 1987, 9-8
[68] Interview with Hancock
[69] Interview with Hancock
[70] *ibid*
[71] *ibid*

negotiate with the council and gave help on practical matters such as letter-writing, surveys and drawing up a petition. Mollison had an extensive knowledge of the planning system and the workings of local government. Gunnell had a set of political contacts in the city council, the local Labour Party and the mainstream press.

While these individuals acted as facilitators of community action, making suggestions and recommendations, offering advice and prompting action, they never made decisions for the groups and nor would they speak for them.[72] The community action groups they helped to establish took responsibility for their actions. They each ensured that the groups appointed their own spokespersons for interactions with the media. The groups were the authors of their own letters and reports.[73] Negotiating the boundary between facilitation and leadership was challenging. While Mollison called the public meetings that launched the Heating Action Group, he allowed the group to appoint officers and set the agenda for future action.[74] Later that year, Mollison drove a group of tenant activists in a minibus into the city centre, but he did not take part in the ensuing demonstration.

The role of these organisers was key to the rise of community action on the estate because spontaneous outbursts of community action were rare; when they occurred they were short-lived because they did not produce durable organisations or target the right people.[75] In general, the very possibility of organising collectively over the problems on the estate did not occur to most residents.[76] However, once the community workers had primed the pump, they invariably found that there was sufficient energy and enthusiasm among the tenant population to sustain community action without their constant intervention. Despite its problems, the estate contained a remarkable repository of skills and a latent confidence in the ability of residents to effect change.[77]

A shifting group of particularly active tenants was the third pillar of community action. They were perhaps the most important driver of community action not only because they did the bulk of the organising and campaigning, but because their involvement made it impossible for the media or the council to dismiss community action as the product of external agitators. Residents had a better claim to speak for the community. Tenant activists came from a range of backgrounds, though most would have self-identified as working-class. Most had little experience of formal education beyond compulsory schooling, though

[72] Interview with Mollison
[73] Interviews with Mollison; Interview with Hancock
[74] Interview with Mollison
[75] Interview with Hancock
[76] *ibid*
[77] *ibid*

many later continued their education as a result of their activist experience.[78] Val Hooper, a housewife whose husband was a barrister's clerk in Leeds, was the Treasurer of the Community Association and editor of the community newsletter in the early 1970s, before acting as a spokesperson for the Heating Action Group in 1976.[79] Angela Halliday, a young mother, was the 'driving force' behind the Heating Action Group.[80] Halliday's participation in community action began when she attended a public meeting on electricity bills, and after she challenged the speaker from the Yorkshire Electricity Board for criticising the miners, Mollison and Craig suggested that she get involved with the action group.[81] Few of the Hunslet Grange activists had prior experience of grassroots political activism, though a number had been members of traditional voluntary organisations. One activist had been a secretary and Treasurer of the Co-operative Congress.[82]

As we have seen, women were well-represented in the most active circle of tenants and held key positions in the community groups in the 1970s. This continued into the 1980s when the Tenants Association was chaired by Marilyn Steane and, later, Pat Tallet; Margaret Kirk was a key spokesperson for the Association. Deputations to the city council, on behalf of the community groups, were dominated by women, even though men were more likely to be the spokespersons for these groups at deputations. Women were mainly responsible for the direct action. The role of women in community action on the estate is partly explained by the fact that women were still seen to be responsible for the domestic sphere and it was in the home that problems of heating and dampness were encountered. [83] Women's encounters with the council and other public agencies were more frequent: they were more likely to pay rent, to take care of heating bills and to interact with maintenance workers. Many of the wider issues that animated community action on the estate – shopping facilities, the cleanliness of the environment, play space, nursery provision – were linked to women's responsibilities for children, food and the welfare of the neighbourhood.[84] Even though women's participation in the labour force was increasing, women retained these responsibilities and they were more likely to be around in the day when much of the organising and planning took place, either because they worked part time, or because they were housewives. This was not always the case: one group of women visited Craig one night requesting that meetings of the action group be held in the evening because they worked during the

---

[78] *ibid*
[79] *ibid*. See also: Hunslet Grange Community Association, *Bleak Street*, BHC
[80] Interview with Hancock
[81] Interview with Mollison
[82] Community Work Questionnaire, Mrs Kirk, 1, BHC
[83] Barbara Hancock, 'Changed Lives: the Power of Community Work and Second Chance Education', in Flynn et al (eds.), *Changed Lives* (Nottingham, 1986), 80-98
[84] *ibid*

day. There were a number of activist men on the estate, but politically active men were likely to focus their energies on the politics of the workplace. It is significant that at least one of the men who was actively involved in community action in the 1970s, David Southwell, was on long-term sick leave. Another active man was a mature student who could work from home.

Community organisation relied upon residents making contact with their neighbours and gradually developing personal relationships. To do this, they needed spaces and organisations where residents could meet or might encounter one another informally. In order to take collective action on behalf of the wider tenant population, activists had to feel connected in some way to a wider community. There were selfish reasons for participating in community action – individuals stood to gain from improvements to the estate – but self-interest alone does not explain why activists were prepared to make personal sacrifices for and commit so much energy to campaigning. That they did not simply focus their energy on securing a transfer to another estate suggests that activists were at least partly motivated by a concern for the common good of the whole estate. However, as we have seen, in its early years, the estate not only lacked a sense of community, tenants had to fight for shared spaces where community organisations might meet. The groundwork for the community action campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s was laid in the early 1970s through work that attempted to cultivate a sense of community on the estate through institutions and spaces. This work was both the fourth pillar of community action and a form of community action in itself, since it involved groups of residents organising collectively to improve the estate through a combination of self-help and political lobbying.

Central to this work was the Hunslet Grange Community Association, which was supported by community workers, Bob Shaw and Barbara Craig, but largely run by ordinary tenants. It sought to compensate for the feeling that the estate lacked a sense of community. Under the Community Association, a range of community groups formed on the estate during the 1970s, including a morning playgroup for toddlers, a Senior Citizens Club and a youth club, each of which was run by volunteers from the estate or from neighbouring parts of Hunslet.[85] The Association also ran social events and organised a summer play project.[86] The Community Association pressed the local authority for assistance in its efforts to build a community. The council was, as we have seen, vulnerable to the charge that the estate had failed in its stated aim of fostering community ties. In November 1971, following representations from the Association, the council agreed to provide play spaces for children

---

[85] Hunslet Grange Community Association, *Bleak Street: the Hunslet Grange Newspaper,* June 1974, 1-4
[86] *ibid*

and funded a number of environmental improvements including deck lighting, street maps, landscaping and external painting, though activists would later report that these additions had little impact on the social fabric of the estate.[87] In June 1973, the council granted the Association the lease of an unlet shop at a low rent for community use and the following year it provided an unused maisonette which was used for a playgroup.[88] In the 1970s the Anglican church was rebuilt with a meeting room and a café, which was open during the day on weekdays.[89] These spaces were also utilised by community activists.

Community development efforts such as these were unlikely to compensate for or overcome the physical and social problems that plagued the estate. However, it is clear that the social interaction facilitated by these organisations laid the foundations for community action on the estate. They provided safe, informal spaces in which residents of the estate met and discovered that their problems were shared by others.[90] Mothers at the under-fives club could discuss the lack of play provision; pensioners visiting the luncheon club discovered that many of their neighbours also suffered from high heating bills; women eating in the church canteen found that dampness afflicted a high proportion of flats on the estate. It was also in these spaces and organisations that residents met their more active neighbours and the community workers operating on the estate. People with little experience of activism began to consider that residents could take action, collectively, on shared problems. This raised the political consciousness of residents who had previously conceived of their problems in narrower terms. Moreover, the web of contacts built up in this way allowed activists to draw on the wider tenant body when organising petitions or planning demonstrations. Both the Damp Action Group and the Heating Action Group drew their strength from pre-existing community groups.

As the Director of Housing observed in 1982, a community did form on the estate, but not 'along the lines anticipated' by the city council: rather, the estate saw the emergence of 'a community in adversity.'[91] This was the product of the shared experience of difficult conditions, which incentivised mutual aid between tenants. A striking example of this sort of community emerged when families were disconnected from the electricity supply and their neighbours ran electric cables between the flats to help those who had been cut off.[92] This was motivated partly by the knowledge that any family could end up in such a

[87] LCC, *Hunslet Grange*, 19-21
[88] Leeds City Council, Minutes of the Tenancy Sub-Committee of the Housing Services Committee, 15 June 1973, 1; Leeds City Council, Minutes of the Housing Services Committee, 25 April 1974, 10(c)
[89] Interview with Hancock
[90] Interview with Hancock
[91] LCC, Hunslet Grange, 1982, 1
[92] Interview with Hancock

situation. This community in adversity provided the foundation for the political community of activists, who sought to tackle the causes of adversity.

One of the key challenges faced by community organisers seeking to build a community action campaign was the relative lack of resources on the estate, in terms of finance, experience and contacts. As we have seen, community action derived much of its strength from the work of community organisers, but their presence on the estate owed much to a set of established institutions, based both inside and outside Hunslet, that financed community organising and assisted the community groups they helped to set up. These organisations were the fifth pillar of community action on the estate. The local Anglican parish church was a key sponsor of community action on the estate.[93] The vicar, Tony Comber, was an advocate of community action. Comber believed a parish church should work with the entire parish, rather than focusing solely on the church attending congregation.[94] He conceived of the church building, which was rebuilt in the mid-1970s with a canteen, as a meeting place for the whole neighbourhood. The Hunslet Parish Community Work Project, which employed Barbara Craig, was established by Comber to fulfil this mission. The church was a focus for people wishing to make contact with the community workers.[95] The Project was largely funded by an Urban Aid grant under the Home Office's Urban Programme.[96] Comber helped to secure this funding by appealing to the MP for Leeds South, Merlyn Rees, who held a junior position at the Home Office at the time.[97] Rees himself was an advocate of community work. The Urban Aid for the Community Work Project grant was administered through the Social Services Department of Leeds City Council, which thereby lent its support to the initiative. As we have seen the local authority also provided spaces for community groups to meet and grant aided the Community Association in its early years.

The involvement of Keith Mollison was made possible by SCAT, which reveals the role of a network of national organisations in facilitating the development community action on the estate. Founded in 1973 as a registered charity, it was supported by Shelter, the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust, the Gulbenkian Foundation and the trade union NUPE.[98] SCAT provided architectural and planning advice to working class community groups and tenants organisations.[99] Its aim was to support groups which would otherwise struggle to

---

[93] Letter from AJ Comber, AJ Addy and RW Shaw, 23 February 1973, BSC
[94] Interview with Comber
[95] Interview with Mollison; interview with Hancock
[96] Hunslet Parish Community Project,' 1978, BHC
[97] Interview with Comber
[98] *Community Action,* No. 7, March-April 1973, 11; *Community Action*, No. 51, Nov-Dec, 1980, 28
[99] 'What is SCAT?' WYA: WYA564

finance professional assistance, by providing technical and political advice.[100] In Leeds, Mollison also worked on behalf of SCAT in Chapeltown.[101] SCAT did not seek to impose a particular agenda on community groups and encouraged them to be controlled by their members. This philosophy also characterised the approach of the parish church, national voluntary bodies and even central government to community groups in this period. They did not seek to exert control over or closely monitor the workers or projects they funded. Thus, despite the external support it received, community action on the estate was a broadly autonomous local political force. This allowed community action to develop and expand in response to local circumstances and accordance with the wishes of tenant activists.

This section has explored the foundations of community action on the estate. It has shown that the roots of community action lay in the deficiencies of the estate. It was found wanting as a form of housing provision, as a built environment and as an incubator for community life. These problems quickly became acute and caused significant hardship for residents. The Hunslet Grange campaign was representative of community action on scores of system built estates across Britain. Community campaigns on the Balloon Wood estate in Nottingham and the Hulme Crescents in Manchester closely resembled the Hunslet Grange experience.[102] Dampness was a major cause of community activism on housing estates across Britain. This was supported by the National Anti-Dampness Campaign which held a conference in Leeds in April 1981.[103]

The shortcomings of the estate created the conditions for community action, but the rise of community action was not an organic process. Tenant dissatisfaction was a necessary but not sufficient condition for community action on the estate. A group of active tenants and resourceful outsiders worked together to build a campaign around these grievances. They did this by forming community institutions that compensated for the lack of social connections on the estate and contributed to the rise of a community in adversity. These individuals were assisted by external organisations, from the established and innovative wings of civil society, who offered human resources, space and finance. Community action was the product of collaboration on a number of levels: between ordinary tenants and outsiders, between the community, the state and the voluntary sector, and between traditional sponsors of community work like the church and national voluntary

---

[100] Interview with Mollison. See also: Services to Tenants and Community Action, *Campaigning Against Dampness: A Set of 10 Paper* (London, u.d.); SCAT, *Public Inquiries: Action Guide* (London, 1974); SCAT and NUPE, *Up Against a Brickwall: The dead-end in housing policy* (London, 1979); SCAT, *The great sales robbery: sale of council housing* (London, 1980)
[101] Keith Mollison to Max Farrar, 14 December 1973, WYA: WYL564
[102] *Community Action*, No. 23, Dec-Jan 1975-76
[103] *CA,* No.52, Jan-Feb 1981, 8

organisations. Once organised, these activists promptly targeted the roots of the estate's problems.

3. The Anatomy of a Community Action Campaign

By the early to mid-1970s the interlinked factors discussed above had combined to produce community action on the estate. Tenant activists and community organisers established a series of community groups which co-ordinated activism. The aims of community activists were, firstly, to persuade the council that the estate had structural problems that required structural solutions. Secondly, they had to convince the council to devote the necessary resources to implementing these solutions. The third aim of the campaign, implicit in the first to goals, was to secure a greater role for the community in the governance of the estate. These goals highlight the fact that community action was concerned not only with the improvement of material conditions but with the redistribution of power.

The Hunslet Grange Community Association's efforts to build community in the early 1970s quickly evolved into more overtly political work concerning the extent of dampness on the estate and the causes of this problem.[104] This work was taken up in earnest in 1973 by the Damp Action Group.[105] In early 1976, after heating costs emerged as the major material consideration, the Hunslet Grange Heating Action Group led the campaign. From 1978, the Hunslet Grange Tenants Association assumed this. These groups translated the grievances we explored in the last section into a set of political demands and mobilised the wider resident population to apply pressure on public bodies. These groups prioritised different issues but their basic approach was the same: namely, to leverage the collective strength of an organised group of tenants to influence the decision makers who governed the estate. Leeds City Council was the key local decision maker, responsible for allocations, maintenance and determining rent levels, within a nationally agreed framework. While councils became increasingly dependent on central government for housing finance and governments became more interventionist on rent policy, councils retained wide freedoms in housing in the 1970s.[106] The council was the main focus of the community campaign. Other public agencies – such as the state owned Yorkshire Electricity Board (YEB) to which many residents became indebted – were targeted but to a lesser extent. In the 1980s,

---

[104] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, Appendix 1
[105] HGCA, *Bleak Street,* March 1973, 2, BHC
[106] Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State,* 76-115

activists turned their attention to national government when it became the key obstacle to the realisation of their goals.[107]

As we have seen, the council's response to complaints about dampness and heating costs was to place the blame on individual households. It was suggested that tenants' lifestyles were the cause of damp, or that they had misunderstood how to use the heating system. In the early to mid-1970s, then, community activists sought to demonstrate that dampness and high heating costs had structural causes. The starting point for this community research was the anecdotal evidence that these problems were so widespread and severe that they must share a common cause. In 1973, the Community Association informed the council that dampness was especially common in the gable end flats, which suggested the design of the building was to blame.[108] The council was resistant to act on these findings, but by autumn 1973, after its own research corroborated the conclusions of the Community Association, the local authority agreed to a programme of remedial works.[109]

Fearing the council could not be trusted to implement the works impartially, the Community Association formed the Damp Action Group (DAG) in the winter of 1973/74 to monitor the council's remedial programme.[110] DAG's confidence in the council diminished when the council did not follow Department of Environment guidelines, failing to install insulation and focusing only on heating and ventilation.[111] Moreover, DAG's survey of the flats identified damp where the council claimed it did not exist. The group argued that even if the council's remedial programme was technically sound it would bankrupt the tenants because the only way to keep the flats free of damp would be to make intensive use of the heating system. Dampness and heating bills were closely linked. DAG's call for a comprehensive programme was eventually heeded in mid-1974, but these works took almost 18 months to complete, during which time the group folded.[112]

By the mid-1970s, then, community activists had persuaded the council that the estate suffered from a series of interlinked physical problems, but the council's response to these issues had been repeatedly found wanting. In early 1976, evidence emerged that even the comprehensive remedial programme had failed. At this time, a sharp rise in the cost of electricity brought the heating problem into even sharper relief. In response, the Heating Action Group (HAG) was formed, placing the cost of fuel at the centre of its campaign.

---

[107] Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State,* 101-115
[108] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, Appendix, 2
[109] *ibid*
[110] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, Appendix 1
[111] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, Appendix, 2
[112] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange,* Appendix 1

From the outset, HAG adopted a more militant approach, reflecting mounting frustration. A survey conducted by the group found that 43% of the flats in the remedial programme still suffered from damp, a similar result to a survey conducted in 1973.[113] Households afflicted by damp usually had extortionate heating bills. When the council refused to co-operate with HAG to investigate the problem further, the group produced its own report based on professional advice and independent research. *Damp: Hunslet Grange: An Experiment and its Victims* (1976) argued that the problems of the estate had structural causes and that only a full structural investigation would identify whether a solution was possible. Based on the finding that tenants were commonly spending ten to 15 per cent of their income on heating, HAG recommended that the council should subsidise tenants' electricity bills until a long term solution was found.[114]

Later in the year, HAG commissioned two further studies by an architect and a structural engineer to investigate suspicions emerging from their earlier investigations that the estate might be at risk of collapsing. Alarmed by these allegations, the council commissioned its own studies from the Structural Engineer at the West Yorkshire County Council and the Chief Fire Officer. These reports confirmed the link between 'deteriorating living conditions' and 'structural faults' and identified a number of safety hazards that the council had hitherto denied.[115] As a result, the council banned alternative fuels and conducted some minor alterations. However, the council's report rejected the argument that the flats were structurally unstable.[116] HAG refused to accept this conclusion and held that the report was not sufficiently independent of the city council.[117] The council countered that to reject the conclusions of local government officers would set a dangerous precedent.[118] The council's assurances failed to calm anxieties that the structure was basically safe. The ban on alternative fuels escalated tensions on the estate because the families who had been disconnected from the electricity supply relied on paraffin and calor gas to heat and cook. The council's refusal to subsidise electricity costs underlined the feeling that the tenants had been abandoned. HAG's campaign appeared to be floundering against official resistance.

In 1977, the council conceded that further remedial work was necessary, but a study conducted by John Gunnell in 1978 for the Tenants Association revealed that dampness remained widespread and that electricity costs amounted to 20 per cent of tenants' wages.[119]

---

[113] *HGHAG, Hunslet Grange,* 6; HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange,* Appendix 1
[114] *Leeds Other Paper*, No. 26, March 1976, 1, 6
[115] *Community Action*, No. 28, Nov-Dec 1976, 8
[116] *Community Action,* No. 28, November-December 1976, 8
[117] *Community Action,* No. 27, Aug-Sept 1976, 20
[118] *LOP,* No. 36, 7-21 August 1976, 3; *LOP,* No. 37 Aug 21-Sept 4 1976, 6
[119] Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Report*, 14 December 1978, 8-10

The average heating bill was £79.66 per winter quarter for the smaller flats and 25 per cent of tenants had bills of over £100. The Tenants Association argued that the council should accept that these burdens were inevitable because of the structural problems and compensate.[120] As we shall see later, the work of the Tenants Association increasingly pointed to the fact that the problems on the estate were incurable. But in the late 1970s, the council continued to maintain that is own research suggested improvement was possible.

Throughout the community action campaign activists made extensive use of research and specialist knowledge to challenge the council's monopoly on expertise. It mattered to community activists who controlled expert knowledge. Activists were keen to ensure that, like community workers, these experts worked *for* the community group. The Heating Action Group noted approvingly that the professionals who undertook the original safety studies

> …see the campaign as being ours, and that the group is the political force to bring about change. The press…does tend to focus on them, but in reality they act as our advisers and all tactics, press releases, reports are jointly discussed and implemented.[121]

On the basis of this research they constructed a set of shifting political demands, which crystallised in the call for a structural approach to the problems in the long term and for economic aid to tenants in the short term as compensation for their hardships.

At a number of key junctures, the council was forced to concede, at least implicitly, that its own findings might be flawed. However, activists did not win concessions simply by presenting evidence and reasoned arguments to the council. Activists also had to mount a political campaign, applying pressure on the council, which forced it to the negotiating table. In the early 1980s, the activists emphasised the need for a political strategy:

> Too often it's assumed that people act in a rational way which just isn't true. Having a rational case is very important but you need a political case as well; you need to make a lot of nuisance or to work through the normal political channels.[122]

Central to the political campaign was the need to communicate their message, both to the council and the wider population. The groups developed close relationships with a variety of local media outlets which raised awareness of their reports outside the estate and throughout the city. They issued press releases and invited the media to attend demonstrations and public meetings. Activists were frequent letter writers. This resulted in extensive coverage of the campaign on local radio and television, in the local press and in

---

[120] *ibid*
[121] *CA*, No. 27, July/August 1976, 21
[122] YDGTA, *High and Dry*, 35

the national newspapers like *The Guardian*.[123] By seizing the initiative with the media, the groups ensured that the issues were framed in terms that supported the campaign: tenants who had been let down by architects, planners and their municipal landlord were endeavouring to find solutions to the problems that plagued their everyday lives. Engaging with journalists generated sympathetic newspaper coverage in which the story was told from the residents' perspective.[124] This was a considerable achievement given that activists were competing with the council's public relations officers. Beyond the mainstream media, the action groups also developed links with *The Leeds Other Paper,* the city's key alternative publication, for which Keith Mollison and Barbara Craig contributed information for articles about the campaign. Through this publication, the groups developed contacts with other activists across the city. Mollison forwarded information about the Heating Action Group's campaign to the national *Community Action* journal.

The groups used direct action to raise awareness of the campaign, both among councillors and in the media. In early 1976, the Hunslet Grange Heating Action Group organised a three-hour demonstration at the local rent office, which received favourable coverage from print, television and radio journalists.[125] The demonstrators presented the council with a petition signed by 698 residents from the estate supporting the need for a more thorough investigation into the problems of damp. In October 1976, a group of women affiliated to the Heating Action Group partnered with activists from the Chapletown Heating Action Group to organise a march through the centre of Leeds.[126] The demonstration ended at Merrion House where the group occupied the office of the Director of Social Services. Armed with a petition signed by over 500 residents the activists demanded a meeting with the Director to discuss the impact of the ban on alternative fuels on tenants who had been disconnected from the electricity supply.[127] In another example of direct action, in December 1976 activists from the Leeds Anti-Freeze Campaign, which contained many Hunslet Grange activists, sang a satirical Christmas Carol outside the offices of the Yorkshire Electricity Board in the Merrion Centre in Leeds, while handing out leaflets documenting cases of disconnections.[128] Public spectacles such as this generated media interest and embarrassed public bodies.

---

[123] *The Guardian,* 26 November 1973, 7; Val Hooper, Letter, *The Guardian,* 26 July 1976, 8; *The Guardian,* 31 October 1983, 2

[124] See, for example: *YEP*, 24 February 1976 and *YEP,* 27 February 1976, BHC

[125] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, 8

[126] *Leeds Other Paper,* No. 40, Oct 2-16 1976, 1-2

[127] *ibid*

[128] *YEP,* 22 December 1976, BHC

Direct action frequently pushed the council into a negotiating position. The occupation at Merrion House persuaded the Director of Social Services to meet the tenants and, following a 45-minute conversation, he agreed to arrange a joint meeting with the Yorkshire Electricity Board. The *threat* of direct action could often produce a similar effect. It was probably no coincidence that after the Heating Action Group announced that they intended to occupy the local rent office following the council's failure to engage with their concerns, the council announced, whilst they condemned the proposed sit-in, they were preparing a report on the issue.

By raising their profile in the media and in the city's political landscape, the groups managed to secure meetings with the council. It was at such a meeting in 1974 that the Damp Action Group managed to secure the Housing Chairman's commitment to a full remedial programme.[129] Activists also used the more traditional, formal channels of communication to negotiate with the council. The groups sent deputations to full council meetings to present their case and the campaign generated debate in the council chamber on several occasions.[130] Activists also attended meetings of the local Housing Consultative Committee. The committees were particularly well-attended in south Leeds.[131] While they were essentially a forum for airing grievances with limited political clout, the committees offered activists a means of keeping an issue on the council's agenda.

To persuade the council to listen to them, community activists had to demonstrate that they enjoyed the support of the wider tenant population. The groups used petitions to demonstrate the extent of their support and basic public opinion surveys to confirm they enjoyed local support. The groups drew on social networks orientated around the various self-help and recreational groups on the estate to generate support for the campaign. For larger actions, activists leafleted the estate and for one or two particularly significant events key activists went door-to-door inviting tenants to support an upcoming demonstration. As a result of one canvassing effort over a three hour period, activists leafleted all 1250 flats and collected 698 signatures.[132] Since it was only ever a minority of activists who were active in the campaign, there was a constant danger that the action groups would become detached from the tenant population. Acknowledging this risk, the Tenants Association chose to hold meetings in public places rather than in members' flats in an attempt to involve more residents.[133] The Community Association ran a newsletter, *Bleak Street*, in the early to mid-

---

[129] HGHAG, Damp, 4
[130] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 17 November 1976, 394; LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 2 February 1977, 554
[131] LCC, *Quarterly Reports of the Director of Housing,* 31 March 1975, 12
[132] *Community Action*, No. 24, Feb/March 1976, 4
[133] YGDTA, *High and Dry*, 10

1970s which informed tenants of upcoming demonstrations and the work of the action groups.[134] The Heating Action Group posted newssheets on walls around the estate to inform residents of their activities and making activism a visible part of the fabric of the estate. These communication efforts raised residents' awareness of issues and events that otherwise received little coverage in the mainstream media and helped to generate support for the campaign.

Throughout this period, community action was driven as much by the refusal of the council to allow organised groups of tenants to actively participate in research and the formulation and implementation of policy as it was by material problems. As the period progressed, community activists increasingly began to emphasise the political dimensions of the struggle. Activist rhetoric stressed the ways in which tenants were the subjects of public policy, rather than its authors. A HAG report opened by stating bluntly that the tenants were 'the victims of a Council House building experiment carried out by the Building [sic] professions' after which they had been 'abandoned by the authorities and the architectural profession.'[135] A report in the early 1980s echoed the idea that the tenants were victims of policies imposed from outside when they held that 'we've been neglected and abused by officials and councillors over the years.'[136] This served to emphasise the fact that the local community lacked agency in the management of the estate: they had been the subject of local and national policy, rather than the authors of those policies. As their lack of control was seen to be the cause of the problems, the groups increasingly began to argue that the long-term solution lay in changing the balance of power.

This argument first emerged as a request for more tenant involvement in the remedial programmes, but it later morphed into a more radical demand for resident involvement in the running of the estate in general. HAG wrote to the Director of Housing in April 1976 insisting that any report on the estate must consider structural problems and that the remedy must include 'resident involvement'.[137] The group's report, in May 1976, argued that any remedial programme must be evaluated not only to according cost, timescale and the likelihood of success, but with regard to the 'methods of implementation' which should include 'resident involvement.'[138] In making such demands, the action group was asserting its right to influence the way the council researched and identified policy problems and formulated solutions. As community action on the estate matured, activists began to

---

[134] HGCA, *Bleak Street,* February 1973
[135] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, 1, 3
[136] YDGTA, *High and Dry*, 5
[137] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, 9
[138] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, 17

formulate more radical proposals for the re-structuring of relationships between the tenants and external agents. In the early 1980s, the Tenants Association supported a set of recommendations with far-reaching implications for the balance of power in public housing:

> Most important of all is the control that tenants and building workers must exercise jointly over all new building, modernisation, maintenance and repair schemes. Joint tenant and worker committees need to be involved not only in planning the design of new houses but in choosing the heating system, in establishing levels of insulation to cut fuel bills and also in planning all amenities on the estate. The planning process, the building process and the subsequent management of estates needs to be taken out of the hands of professionals. There will be a role for professionals within housing…in carrying out the decisions of council tenants.[139]

Community activists not only sought to solve particular housing problems, they also sought a permanent transfer of power to the community. This political analysis distinguished the community action from earlier forms of tenant activism and other community or voluntary organisations.

In their efforts to change local policy, community activists on Hunslet Grange advanced on two fronts. First, activists sought to change the terms of the debate about the problems of the estate, shifting responsibility for high heating costs and dampness from individual tenants to the design of the estate. They did this by challenging the council's interpretation of the problem and generating new information by conducting research. Second, they applied political pressure on the council, utilising the media, direct action and other forms of protest. They aimed to demonstrate that the resident population was united behind their campaign. The implications of the campaign transcended its local context. Community activists placed increasing emphasis on the political causes of the estate's problems. They advanced the argument that the physical problems ultimately stemmed not from technical mistakes but emerged from a form of urban governance that increased the likelihood that such mistakes would be made. Translating this critique into tangible results was to prove difficult.

4. Obstacles to Community Action

By the end of the 1970s, community action had succeeded in raising awareness of the problems on the estate. Community activists had defined the nature of those problems and framed the terms of the debate. However, decisive action to solve those problems did not appear to be forthcoming. Whilst the council had accepted that the estate suffered from structural flaws, it seemed unwilling to address these problems systematically. Politically, community activists remained on the margins of the decision-making process. The council

---

[139] HDGTA, *High and Dry,* 45

was prepared to communicate with them at moments of crisis or after intensive lobbying; but it did not involve them in policy making as a matter of routine and the community action groups had no direct role in estate management. There were two major obstacles to successful community action in the 1970s: first, the response of the council to community action and, second, the strength and cohesion of the community upon which community action was based.

Undoubtedly, diminishing public resources for public housing partly explains the council's reluctance to implement the recommendations advanced by community activists. However, the subsequent history of the estate would reveal that the council retained extensive room for manoeuvre in housing matters. A more significant explanation for the relative lack of tenant input into policy making is to be found in the local political culture. Despite making a number of concessions on consultation, there was a lingering resistance in the council – both among officers and elected members – to more extensive community participation in policy making and administration.

There were promising signs that a new relationship between activists and the council may emerge as early as April 1974 when the Labour Housing Chairman, Kevin Gould suggested that the tenants might nominate a member of the Community Association to act as a liaison between the council and the tenants, but no such consultative mechanism was ever implemented.[140] This was perhaps because the officers feared the precedent such a policy might set for the management of other estates, implying that residents had a right to formal representation in the policy-making process. However, under Gould, the council did set up a citywide system of Housing Consultative Committees, which met quarterly and brought together ward councillors, officers and tenants' representatives to discuss problems and suggest solutions which could be forwarded to the Housing Committee.[141] This reflected the expansion of mechanisms for tenants' participation across the country at this time.[142] The growth of tenant participation in Leeds stalled somewhat when the Conservatives took control of the city council in 1976. Gould's Conservative successor as Housing Chair from 1976, Peter Sparling, refused to meet with HAG on several occasions, stating such a meeting would have 'no useful purpose.' On the Housing Committee, Sparling was not prepared to discuss Hunslet Grange in particular, but only the problems of all-electric estates in general. Again, it is likely that Sparling feared that making a concession to one organised group of tenants would unleash a flood of other demands.

---

[140] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 15 April 1974, 79-82
[141] LCC, Minutes of the Tenancy Sub-Committee of the Housing Services Committee, 21 December 1972
[142] Julia Craddock, *Tenants' Participation in Housing Management: A Study of Four Schemes* (London, 1975)

In the late 1970s, the council continued to raise questions about the legitimacy of community action groups: in particular, it challenged community activists' claim to speak for the tenant population. The council suggested that community groups on Hunslet Grange might not be representative of the wider tenant population—or merely as only representative of one particular faction. In February 1977, in a debate on the Hunslet Grange remedial programme, the Chairman of the Housing Committee, Peter Sparling, raised the case of one tenant who believed her ''home was fit for a queen'' and declared she would ''not exchange [her flat] for any new house in the Leeds area.''[143] This illustrated his wider point that there were many 'tenants in Hunslet Grange who are perfectly happy there and whose flats are all right.' [144] The implication was that the action group was not speaking for the whole community, but merely one interest group within it. The council might therefore consult with community groups, but it could not elevate them to a policy making position, because their views had to be balanced against the wishes of other interest groups on Hunslet Grange. This charge struck at the heart of the community action campaign, since its authority depended on its ability to represent accurately the views of the tenant population.

Of course, it was difficult for community activists to prove that they were representative, especially in the context of an unstable community in which active political participation was limited. As we have seen, the activists sought to buttress their legitimacy by conducting surveys of tenant opinion and organising petitions. However, since many of these research projects were sponsored by either Labour or the Liberals, the community groups were vulnerable to the council's claim that surveys were electioneering devices, designed to drum up support for candidates before elections. In November 1978, Sparling dismissed the accuracy of one Liberal-sponsored survey, claiming that another survey might produce a different result.[145] To counter this charge, community activists sought to distance themselves from party politics. In July 1976, one activist declared before councillors that we refuse to 'play your political party game.' [146] In 1979, the Chair of the Tenants Association, criticised a Liberal-sponsored survey, declaring the results ''spurious'' and arguing that there was 'a danger of the flats becoming a party political football.''[147] This was despite the fact that the Liberal survey revealed support for demolition, a position the Tenants Association was leaning towards. Community activists had to balance their need for external support with their desire to be seen as politically neutral.

---

[143] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 2 February 1977, 555
[144] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 2 February 1977, 584
[145] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 14 November 1978, 29
[146] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 21 July 1976, 159
[147] *YEP,* 24 January 1979, 4

The council's suspicion of community action was epitomised by its reluctance to accept the argument that the problems of the estate had structural causes, despite the mounting body of evidence. The council persisted in arguing that dampness and high heating bills were still linked to tenants' lifestyles, even when its own research suggested otherwise. HAG discussed one council report which explored a range of structural flaws, only to conclude that

> everything is the fault of residents for not using the heating system properly, for not cleaning the extractor fans, or generally not adapting themselves adequately to the living technology of the 1970s.[148]

In February 1977, Sparling presented this argument particularly forcefully in a council debate on the estate:

> it is possible to reside in Hunslet Grange without any condensation of the drainer holes, providing adequate ventilation and maintenance of the drainer holes in the window frames and the usual precautions one normally associates with good housekeeping are adhered to [149]

The TA reported that, on the ground, officials offered fantastical explanations for tenants' problems:

> they'll blame it on the fact you've got a foam backed carpet or try and say someone has left the bath running. One YEB spokesman said the big bills were due to "housewives standing on the doorstep talking.[150]

To suggest that the problems were the fault of individual tenants not only absolved the council of blame, it also undermined the basis for collective action by tenants. By blaming and stigmatising individual tenants for their poor housekeeping standards, the council was denying the need for estate-wide solutions. The community action campaign struggled to dislodge this frame.

Throughout this period, community activists' efforts to negotiate with the council were often undermined by the authority's unwillingness to share information openly and transparently with the community groups. The Tenants Association described council officers' as 'defensive and secretive.'[151] An opaque approach to decision-making often characterised the work of the Housing Committee. The Housing Chairman frequently transferred sensitive items to the agenda of the Housing Committee's confidential Tenancy Sub-Committee, which was closed to the public. This tactic was used to conceal reports on structural safety and dampness, though it was thwarted at least once when a Labour member

---

[148] *CA*, No.27 Aug/Sept 1976, 19
[149] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 2 February 1977, 584
[150] YDGTA, *High and Dry,* 5
[151] YDGTA, *High and Dry,* 6

raised the item outside the confidential sub-committee.[152] By concealing information in this way, the council effectively froze activists out of the negotiations. The council was not averse to targeting individual activists in an attempt to remove them from the estate and thus the campaign. Marilyn Steane, an active member of the Tenants Association claimed 'the council offered her a house anywhere in Leeds in order to shut her up.'[153] Activism remained risky: opinion on the estate was divided on whether the council used the transfer system to remove troublesome activists or whether it would deprioritise their transfer requests to punish them for campaigning.[154] Either way, this suggests that the council viewed community action as a problem to be contained where possible, rather than an important part of the wider democratic process.

If external political factors limited the capacity of community action groups to influence policy, the nature of the community itself constantly militated against the emergence of a community action campaign in the first place. This was the second key obstacle to community action on Hunslet Grange. The tenant population was politically inactive and socially unstable. Apathy on the estate, despite the existence of such acute problems, was widespread. Most tenants were never active in the community campaigns. Mass participation only ever extended to petition-signing and a handful of public meetings. The committed community activists were a tiny minority. The majority of tenants who took some form of action sought *individual* rather than collective solutions to the problems of the estate by applying for a transfer to another estate, or even, in some cases, by moving back into the private rented sector in an improved back-to-back.

That so many tenants made recourse to the transfer system meant that the tenant population was highly transitory. As we have seen, this had been a characteristic of the estate since the late 1960s, but the problem became even more pronounced over the course of the 1970s. Social instability was the second major obstacle to community action on the estate. By 1976, residential turnover at Hunslet Grange reached 30 to 40 per cent, far higher than on most other estates.[155] In his June 1976 report, the South Area Housing Manager, Mr Peverrell, described a worsening situation: there had been 300 changes of tenancy in 1975 and this figure had been surpassed in the first six months of 1976.[156] The trend continued with scores of terminations every quarter until the early 1980s. Demand for housing on the estate was so low that not all of the empty flats were filled. In the mid-1970s there was an

---

[152] *LOP,* No. 74, 17 Feb-3 Mar 1978, 3
[153] *LOP,* No. 196, 6 November 1981, 2-3
[154] Interview with Mollison
[155] Alison Ravetz, 'Forgetting the lessons of 30 years,' *Yorkshire Post,* 15 July 1976, 12
[156] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing*, 30 June 1976, 10

average of 100 vacant flats on the estate and this figure spiked to over 200 in June 1978 and March 1982.[157] Many vacancies were the result of 'abandonments' rather than transfers, which indicated a heightened level of desperation.

Hunslet Grange might have become almost wholly depopulated, like Liverpool's interwar walk-up flats, had there not been a severe housing shortage in Leeds. Families migrating to Leeds from other parts of Britain and students from Leeds University helped to plug the gap. That so many prospective tenants rejected offers of tenancies at Hunslet Grange in the context of a housing crisis reveals how poor its reputation had become. The Housing Department was driven to advertising vacancies in Hunslet Grange in the local press.[158] The irony was that the more community activists highlighted the problems on the estate, the more unattractive it became in the eyes of prospective tenants, which, in turn, reduced the pool of potential activists. In 1977, the Housing Manager noted that

> adverse publicity…has not helped to enhance the reputation of the place in the minds of those seeking council accommodation. How many times one comes across people who will 'go anywhere', when what they really mean is anywhere but Hunslet Grange.[159]

Generating media attention was a double-edged sword for the campaign: whilst it helped to place Hunslet Grange on the council's agenda, it contributed to the erosion of the nascent community on which a campaign could be based.

If community activists struggled to prompt a full appraisal of Hunslet Grange, they had more impact on the city's wider housing policy. From the mid-1970s, in a tacit acceptance of many of the problems raised by community activists, Leeds City Council phased out the use of industrialised building techniques and switched to conventional methods.[160] Planning and design reverted to more traditional approaches. Council estates constructed in the late 1970s and early 1980s consisted of low rise flats, terraced and semi-detached houses, all built of brick. Density levels were lowered and many houses were provided with a private garden. Several estates of this type were built in Hunslet.[161] As we shall see in Chapter 2, the clearance programme was radically scaled back in the mid-1970s as the council accepted that the older housing stock could play a role in meeting housing need. Two areas in Hunslet – the Longroyds and the Arthingtons – were removed from the clearance programme in the mid-1970s. The challenges of improving streets of late back-to-backs

[157] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing*, 30 June 1978, 11-12; LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing*, 31 March 1982, 11
[158] *LOP,* No.224, 21 May 1981, 10-11
[159] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing,* 31 March 1977, 11
[160] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 28 April 1982, 45-6
[161] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing,* 30 June 1978, 12

paled in comparison to the difficulties the council faced on Hunslet Grange. Thus, whilst the problems of Hunslet Grange remained unsolved, large swathes of the district were being rebuilt along more traditional lines and the remainder was being rehabilitated. This vindicated the arguments advanced by community activists but it also also provided families with a clear local alternative to Hunslet Grange. In 1978, the Housing Manager reported strong demand among families resident on Hunslet Grange for houses on the newly opened estates at Pepper Lane and Royal Road, observing that 'the demand does tend to escalate once a few have moved.'[162] In March 1980, the normally under-stated official described demand for housing on the new Waterloo Road estate from Hunslet Grange families as 'phenomenal.'[163] At least two households who moved out of the estate into improved back-to-backs, noted that that the older housing was superior to the new estate. The tenants who left Hunslet Grange were not necessarily rejecting Hunslet, despite the social and spatial upheavals of the past decade, and nor were most of them abandoning council housing. Council estates in Hunslet, and in the inner city as a whole, remained 'very popular' in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[164]

If the shift in housing policy was, on the one hand, a triumph for community action in general in the city, on the other hand, it made circumstances more difficult for community activists still campaigning on Hunslet Grange. It was difficult to sustain the momentum of a campaigning community group and organise for the long term when its membership was constantly changing.[165] Community groups on all four YDG estates struggled to retain active members due to transfers. That it was always possible for tenants to seek individual solutions to their problems through the housing transfer system undermined the basis for *community* action. Residents who concentrated their energies on trying to escape the estate through transfers had little vested interest in participating in a campaign designed to tackle the causes of the estate's problems. This high turnover also undermined the other community institutions that fed into the community campaign, such as the playgroup, the Community Association and other voluntary groups.

Many of the tenants on Hunslet Grange lacked the time or energy to participate actively in the campaigns. No matter how dire the physical and environmental problems on the estate became, many tenants simply had more pressing priorities, such as work, childcare or even other political or trade union commitments. Furthermore, that tenants had to spend such a

---

[162] *ibid*
[163] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing,* 31 March 1980, 9
[164] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing*, 31 February 1980, 9; LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing*, 31 March 1982, 7
[165] YDGTA, *High and Dry*, 5

high proportion of their income on energy meant that many had to take on longer working hours, which left them with less time to get involved with the action groups. Those tenants who departed were often the most ambitious and resourceful in the community, not least because it required skill and determination to navigate the housing transfer system.

While Hunslet Grange lost many of its more upwardly mobile, resourceful families, the tenants who replaced them were often considerably more disadvantaged. In 1976, the Heating Action Group commented on the social profile of many of the new tenants on the estate:

> It was generally only those in greatest need who would accept a flat. Typically, they were the newcomers to Leeds, the young couple trying to escape from their in-laws, the single parent families…Many saw Hunslet Grange as a place to live until they could buy a house or transfer to another estate. The proportion of young families just beginning to establish themselves has always been high…It is becoming a place of last resort.[166]

Although the council policy specified that the household income of new tenants should be adequate to cover the cost of living on the estate, by 1981 50% of the newly housed had fallen into rent arrears.[167] Households facing debt and other social problems were less likely to participate in community action. The net result of the changing social composition of the estate was that the pool of organisational experience and professional expertise on the estate began to decrease. Paradoxically, then, the potential for organising was increasingly undermined by the very social and material factors which had generated the need for organising in the first place.

It was extremely difficult to sustain the momentum and morale of a community action group in the absence of concrete results. Activists needed to feel that their efforts were having an impact as an incentive to continued involvement. The persistence of all the major problems sapped morale.[168] Particularly disenchanting for the more longstanding activists was the failure of each successive remedial programme. Activists needed to feel that they had some purchase on policy makers. Certainly, important concessions were made; but even at the end of the 1970s, the council continued to maintain a rather aloof attitude. Whilst certain officers and ward councillors were supportive, activists did not develop close relationships with senior officers or political leaders. In these circumstances, it was difficult to ward off despair. At a public meeting in November 1978, Merlyn Rees MP described Hunslet Grange as a 'transit camp,' observing that '[t]he tenants who are complaining are

---

[166] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange*, 5
[167] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing,* 30 September 1981, 9
[168] *LOP*, No. 74, 17 Feb-3 Mar 1978, 3

not the same as those complaining 18 months ago.[169] The body of core activists that constituted the campaign largely changed in this period. Most of the tenants who had been most active in the action groups of the early to mid-1970s had left the estate by the late 1970s. Ultimately, even they made recourse to the transfer system when the estate became too much to bear. In the late 1970s, Val Hooper moved to north Leeds and Angela Halliday was rehoused in Middleton, south Leeds.[170]

For the community workers who had supported the campaign, burnout was perhaps inevitable by the late 1970s. Barbara Craig left Hunslet in 1978, having worked in the district, full time, for five years.[171] By 1977, Craig had become overwhelmed by the scale of the fuel debt problems of the estate and increasingly a great deal of her time had been taken up with casework. Bob Shaw had left in the early 1970s and Tony Comber, the supportive vicar, moved to another parish in 1977.[172] Keith Mollison departed in that year to focus on other community projects.[173] Although the supportive role played by these activists was taken up by John Gunnell from 1978, it was unclear how long anyone could work on a campaign that made so little progress on the key issues. It looked as if the cycle might repeat itself once again. That it did not was the result of a number of factors which illuminate, firstly, how community action evolved and adapted in the late 1970s and early 1980s and, secondly, how the political climate in which it operated became more favourable to community participation, a development that was precipitated by the work of community activists over the previous decade.

Community action was an inherently problematic enterprise. The problems that community activists sought to overcome – council intransigence and dire housing conditions – were themselves barriers to building a successful campaign. The council was reluctant to make concessions to the campaign and most residents chose individual rather than collective solutions to the problems of the estate. To succeed, community activists had to adapt.

5. The Evolution of Community Action

As the major obstacles to community action became clear, community activists began to develop strategies to overcome those obstacles. Thus, in the late 1970s, when the prospects for community action looked particularly unpromising, activists were laying the foundations for their successes in the early 1980s. This section will show that to compensate for the

---

[169] *YEP*, 18 November 1978, 1
[170] Interview with Mollison
[171] Interview with Hancock
[172] Interview with Comber
[173] Interview with Mollison

relative weakness of the community's internal resources, activists looked outside the community and made connections with a range of other organisations. This networking strategy was partly grounded in the recognition that the estate's problems were not unique and could not be solved in isolation. Alliance building was necessary to strengthen the negotiating position of the action groups. In this period, activists became increasingly aware that the causes of the problems faced by community activists were often located outside the community, so in order to be effective community activists had to organise at a local regional and national level. Alliance-building began at city level in the mid-1970s and extended to the regional and national level in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The process of linking up with activists who shared their objectives was observable in 1976 when the Heating Action Group organised a joint demonstration in the city centre with the Chapeltown Heating Action Group.[174]

The Hunslet Grange activists made links with tenants who were campaigning over heating costs and damp on estates in Osmondthorpe, Pudsey, Meanwood, Armley and Seacroft. This enabled tenants to share research, co-ordinate the campaigns and present a united front to the council through joint petitions and deputations. As we have seen the local authority often rejected activists' demands on the grounds that to devote additional resources to one estate would expose the council to charges of favouritism. Joint organisation enabled the activists to overcome attempts to drive a wedge between different local campaigns. The Tenants Association explained the results:

> when the council turned to other areas and said you can't have this and that done because Hunslet Grange is getting sorted out, there was no great outcry from [the other] groups. They understood our needs, so we weren't fighting each other.[175]

Citywide organisation on housing issues generated a series of umbrella groups, such as the Leeds Council Tenants Organisation, which lent its support to Hunslet Grange activists at public events. [176] The Tenants Association made links with and received support from institutions which were established in the city to support grassroots activism, such as the Trade Union and Community Resource and Information Centre (TUCRIC), an organisation that we will explore in more detail in Chapter 4.

Acknowledging that the problems of industrialised building stretched beyond the city boundaries, the Tenants Association forged links across the north of England. Community

---

[174] *LOP,* No. 40, Oct 2-16 1976, 1-2
[175] YDGTA, *High and Dry*, 16
[176] *LOP,* No. 170, 8 May 1981, 3

activists on the four estates constructed by the Yorkshire Development Group had very clear shared interests, since all these estates were plagued by similar physical, environmental and social problems.[177] The foundations for this networking effort had been laid in the mid-1970s when activists like Barbara Craig and Keith Mollison had made contact with other activists through networks of community workers. Mollison was connected to community organisers across the country through SCAT. Craig attended a number of community work conferences and visited activists on the Yorkshire Development Group designed estate of Broomhall in Sheffield. In May 1981, members of the Hunslet Grange Tenants Association met their counterparts from the Balloon Wood estate in Nottingham and the Broomhall estate in Sheffield. Following a series of follow-up exchange visits they formed the Yorkshire Development Tenants Action Group (YDTAG) in November 1981. This was a cross-city action group that sought to raise awareness of the estates, co-ordinate joint action and support each other.[178] Shortly afterwards, they linked up with the Hull tenants. Shortly after its foundation, YDTAG printed a leaflet containing a series of demands relating to dampness, heating, disconnections, social security; YDTAG stated that it was putting the four councils 'on trial' for the problems on the estate.[179] The leaflet was issued to the media and to the four councils. Supported by Services to Community Action and Tenants, YDTAG produced a series of more detailed reports about the common problems of the estates. The group also organised joint negotiations with representatives of all four councils in a series of meeting in the different cities.[180] The four councils agreed to the group's demands and endeavoured to lobby central government for special assistance to solve the estates' problems.

The impact of this regional co-ordination on the Hunslet Grange activists was far-reaching. Not only did it increase their bargaining power in relation to the council, it energised their organisational and campaigning efforts. Members of the Hunslet Grange Tenants Association recalled: ''It gave us a kick up the *** [sic] and we were a bit shamed when we saw what other cities had done. We had tended to react before YDTAG rather than have a strategy.''[181] As part of formulating a strategy, the Tenants Association began to think more clearly about the long term goals of the campaign:

> YTG gave us a focus. It was after one of these meetings that we, as a group, decided to say demolition was number one priority. We wanted other things like heating

---

[177] YDGTA, *High and Dry*
[178] *LOP*, No. 196, 6 November 1981, 2-3; *Leeds Weekly Advertiser,* 15 November 1981
[179] YDGTA, *High and Dry,* 40
[180] YDGTA, *High and Dry*, 41
[181] YDTAG, *High and Dry*, 42

allowances and rate reductions to make life easier in the meantime, but what we had to campaign for was demolition.[182]

From 1981, then, the Hunslet Grange activists reoriented their campaign around clearance. This was a major departure from their earlier approach. In the 1970s it was unthinkable such a new development could be cleared, so demolition was rarely discussed by the tenant activists in that decade. In 1976, HAG insisted that activists were not jumping on the 'knock 'em down bandwagon.'[183] Demolition was associated with the city's increasingly discredited slum clearance programme. In the early 1980s to advocate demolition was a logical step for community activists on Hunslet Grange. Successive remedial programmes had failed to solve the basic physical problems. The estate's image was irremediably tarnished. The turnover rate reached new heights in the early 1980s: there were 260 empty units in March 1982 and the estate was experiencing an 'upsurge in the number of abandonments.'[184] In this context, activists began to see the campaign for repairs and electricity subsidies as short-term expedients. Arguing for demolition liberated the activists from having to maintain the sometimes contradictory argument that, although the structural problems were severe, they could be solved with the right level of investment.

The Tenants Association's decision to lobby for demolition was inextricably linked to their second objective: to secure local rehousing opportunities for tenants in line with their wishes. They argued that the site should be used to build new council housing to which former residents of the estate would have priority access, if they wanted to return. A Tenants Association survey, which was corroborated by the reports of housing visitors, estate found that 60-70 per cent of people wanted to stay in Hunslet – despite the problems they had endured on Hunslet Grange.[185] In order to avoid the mistakes of the original slum clearance programme in which communities had been dispersed several years before new housing was built, the Association pressed for rebuilding to 'take place at the same time as phased demolition.'[186] The activists' aims were more closely aligned with other campaigns in the city, which sought to preserve the integrity of local communities whilst ensuring housing need was met. As we will see in Chapter 2, activists in nearby Hunslet neighbourhoods were pioneering new forms of community-based renewal in this period.

---

[182] YDTAG, *High and Dry*, 14
[183] HGHAG, *Hunslet Grange,* 17
[184] LCC, *Quarterly Reports of the Director of Housing*, 31 February 1982, 10
[185] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 28 April 1982, 1-2; Leeds City Council, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing,* 20 June 1982, 9
[186] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 28 April 1982, 1-2

By 1982, a list of organisations with which the Tenants Association had links contained over a dozen groups.[187] Their contacts extended to national organisations such the National Anti-Dampness Campaign, the National Federation of Community Organisations, Friends of the Earth and SCAT.[188] Having experienced activism surrounding fuel poverty on Hunslet Grange, Barbara Craig attended one of the founding meetings of the National Right to Fuel Campaign and helped set up the Leeds branch.[189] Like YDTAG, these national links not only furnished the campaign with information and ideas, but also emboldened the Tenants Association for they gave them a sense of being part of a national campaign.

As well as making links with other community groups and pressure groups, the Hunslet Grange activists developed a closer relationship with the local Labour Party in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Community action had been marked by a suspicion of the Labour Party, which occasionally bordered on hostility. Community activists had viewed Labour as part of the insensitive establishment that had created the problems of Hunslet Grange in the first place, before presiding over the uncaring bureaucracy that managed it. Local Labour councillors had in the early 1970s appeared uninterested in community organising on the estate. Labour was also blamed for the wholesale disruption of social and community life in Hunslet caused by clearance and redevelopment. It was partly a result of this disillusionment that caused the party to lose council wards in south Leeds to the Liberals in the late 1960s and 1970s. Hunslet's Liberal ward councillors supported the campaign, but since the Liberals had little purchase on council policy overall. The relationship between community activists and the Labour Party began to change in the late 1970s. A new generation of Labour councillors, in their thirties and forties, showed more interest in community organising. John Gunnell, county councillor for Hunslet, and John Battle, a councillor for a neighbouring ward epitomised this trend. Gunnell helped to establish the Tenants Association and conducted research for the new group.

This was indicative of a wider reassessment of the role of community groups by local Labour parties in inner city areas across the country. Community activists were increasingly seen as potential allies. The party began to recognise that it could not rely on the trade unions alone to mobilise support in urban areas: it needed to form wider alliances with groups across civil society. Many of the new generation of Labour councillors that won seats in the late 1970s and early 1980s had themselves participated in community action before joining the party; others had worked for national pressure groups such as Shelter and

---

[187] YDGTA, *High and Dry*, 16
[188] YDGTA, *High and Dry*, 16
[189] Barbara Craig, Letters, 25 October 1976, BHC

the Child Poverty Action Group. For these councillors, community action was not culturally alien or politically threatening. Community activists, too, began to reappraise the role of the Labour Party. On Hunslet Grange the action groups had always recognised that the community group lacked the power and resources to solve the estate's problems alone and the council remained the key decision-maker. Noting that an impasse had emerged in their negotiations with the council by the late 1970s, the Tenants Association recognised the need to work more closely with local councillors as a means of applying pressure on the council leadership to change policy.

The electoral fortunes of the Labour Party also explain this shift. When it was out of power in Leeds between 1975 and 1980, the party often allied with community action groups in challenging the ruling Conservatives. When Labour regained control of the council in 1980, the Tenants Association were in an excellent position to influence policy on the estate. Arthur Miller, the Labour's housing chair was more supportive of the Tenants Association than his Conservative predecessor. In 1981, the Association was granted a 'ground floor unit as a base for their operations.'[190] John Battle, who succeeded Miller, as Housing Chair, was of the new generation of Labour councillors who were particularly open to working with community groups.

The community action campaign mitigated its internal weaknesses by building alliances at a local and regional level. This increased the activists' leverage over the council. Community activists also built bridges with the Labour Party as both sides began to realise that working together was mutually beneficial. Community action first emerged as a coalition of individuals and organisations from different backgrounds so making wider alliances was a logical step for community activists. Community activists could not achieve their goals unilaterally without the co-operation of public bodies. As Alison Ravetz argued in her study of the Quarry Hill, tenants were successful in securing change when they secured the support of either the local authority or other politicians.[191] The result of this networking and alliance-building was a decision that would haven unthinkable when the campaign first began.

4. Community action and the state

On 27 April 1982, the Tenants Association achieved one of its key goals when Leeds City Council announced its intention to demolish Hunslet Grange.[192] Symbolically, this occurred

---

[190] LCC, Minutes of the Housing Committee, 7 July 1981, 48
[191] Ravetz, *Model Estate,* 214
[192] *Leeds Other Paper*; No. 24, 21 May 1982, 10-11

the day before a scheduled delegation from the Tenants Association to the Council at which the activists had planned to reiterate the case for clearance, supported by a petition signed by 600 residents [193] In the event, this deputation praised the decision as a 'victory for common sense' and urged the council to follow up with 'immediate action' on local rehousing and rebuilding. The council delivered on its pledge and the estate was demolished between 1983 and 1986 [see Fig. 1.9].[194]

Although the estate had undoubtedly become an administrative and financial burden for the council, its decision to demolish cannot simply be explained in terms of economic expediency. Rather, it suggests the council had been persuaded by the case put by community activists. Whilst the council was losing rental income from the vacant units and stood to save on future maintenance and management expenses, the net cost of the decision to demolish was estimated at £1,110,000 in 1982.[195] Under the government's new housing finance rules, these costs had to be born entirely by the city's rent and ratepayers. These expenses did not even take the cost of new building into account. While the council hoped to secure special assistance from central government to cushion the blow to the city's finances and fund new building, there was no guarantee that such support would be forthcoming. After surveying these financial implications, a report concluded demolition would be 'pursued, for the simple objective of providing decent housing for the people of Hunslet.'[196] The council had not only accepted the activists' argument that living conditions on the estate were unacceptable and beyond repair, it had conceded that the wishes of the residents on the estate should be taken into account when determining its future. The latter view represented a clear departure from the ideology that had informed the development of the estate in the late 1960s and its management through the 1970s.

The influence of community action was also revealed in the council's plans for the reconstruction of the estate. In early 1983, Bryan North, the Chair of the Planning Committee, told a public meeting that 'residents would be consulted at every stage' of the planned re-development of 375 houses. In outlining the council's plans for public participation, North adopted the rhetoric of community action to criticise the council's past record:

> The encouraging thing is that the people in the area know exactly what they
> want…These residents have suffered because bureaucracy has not consulted them in

[193] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 28 April 1982, 1
[194] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing,* 31 March 1986, 59
[195] LCC, *Hunslet Grange*, 14-5
[196] LCC, *Hunslet Grange*, 15

the past. That has been the cause of their ills – people accepting the words of so-called experts.[197]

The council had apparently accepted the community action argument that the estate's problems were rooted not only in a particular building method but in the distribution of power between council tenants and the local authority.

As the physical base of the campaign began to (literally) disappear, the Tenants Association naturally struggled to maintain its cohesion and momentum and many members of the group became ''less politically active.'[198] Despite this, a core group of activists continued to work very closely with the local authority. The council established a Liaison Committee which met regularly and gave the Tenants Association access to councillors and officers who were formulating policy. That former residents continued to play an active role in policy making was a testament to their tenacity: although the members of the Tenants Association had been scattered across Leeds

> they still managed to meet as a body to liaise with the council over the new housing. Public meetings were held to discuss things like the overall layout of the estate. Tenants had a say in everything down to the street names.[199]

Regular monthly liaison meetings continued for five years despite a series of protracted delays, which the Association feared might kill the scheme.[200] When the first phase of the new development was finally completed in September 1987, a plaque was installed on the site at the opening ceremony which sought to 'acknowledge the co-operation between Leeds City Council and the Hunslet Grange Tenants Association.'[201] Symbolically, the plaque displayed the name of the Chair of the Tenants Association alongside the names of councillors and officers. The original plaque commemorating the commencement of work on Hunslet Grange in April 1967, which was re-installed below, showed only the names of council officers and the members of the Housing Committee.

Institutionalised participation was not unproblematic and the balance of power between community activists and the local authority remained unequal. The Tenants Association described the consultative committees set up by the council as 'double edged swords.'[202] They gave the activists access to information, but the council still controlled the agenda and

---

197 *YEP*, 1 March 1983, 5
198 *YDGTA, High and Dry*, 33, 42
199 *LOP,* No. 499, 2 October 1987, 8-9
200 *LOP,* No. 499, 2 October 1987, 8-9
201 Author's visit to Prosper Street, Hunslet, Leeds LS10 2AE (8 December 2013)
202 YDGTA, *High and Dry*, 16

the flow of information. While activists gained a voice in the decision-making process, they felt that the council sometimes side-lined dissenting views in order to 'diffuse "difficult" situations.'[203] Activists were aware of the danger that consultative committees 'could very easily be used as a bypass, to fob us off.' As the work of the group became increasingly orientated around meetings, the activists noted that they began to lose the initiative and formal negotiating increasingly supplanted campaigning and grassroots organising as the key function of the group.[204] Responding to the danger of incorporation, activists sought to emphasise their independence. This manifested itself in an effort to ensure their role in the history of the estate was not forgotten. Commenting on the celebrations planned for the first day of demolition, the Tenants Association held, 'The press will say it is Leeds City Council who are demolishing. We need to show WHY they are demolishing, to show it is because of us.'[205] When the day arrived, activists made their presence felt and ensured they were included in press reports. To some extent the risk of incorporation was a symptom of the group's success. If community activism became less dynamic and more bureaucratic in the 1980s, the new partnership with the council brought activists closer to the decision-making process and this delivered concrete results. Community activists had progressed from being outsiders in the policy making process and acquired something closer to insider status.

Once the Tenants Association's goals had the support of the council, it became clear very quickly that the key obstacle to realising its objectives lay in central government. Community activists worked in partnership with the council to apply pressure on central government to fund the replacement housing for Hunslet Grange tenants. Both sides stood to benefit from this partnership since the tenants lacked the resources to redevelop their site alone and the council hoped that the active support of a body of tenants would lend legitimacy to its appeal. However, in the fifteen years after the estate was built, and especially in the years after 1979, national housing policy had changed dramatically.[206] Public funding for new council house building had been massively curtailed and the council's ability to borrow money or subsidise council housing from the rates had been restricted. As its own autonomy waned, the council had to resort to campaigning to generate resources.

---

[203] *ibid*
[204] YDGTA, *High and Dry*, 33
[205] YDGTA, *High and Dry,* 46
[206] Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State,* 101-115

The campaign was a co-ordinated effort by community activists, councillors and the local MPs for government funding to meet the costs of demolition and rebuilding. In June 1982 in Parliament, Merlyn Rees, the MP for South Leeds, argued that the government should accept responsibility for the costs of replacing Hunslet Grange since industrialised building programme had been encouraged by central government in the 1960s.[207] In July 1982 a joint delegation of community activists and elected politicians from Leeds travelled to Whitehall to make the argument directly to central government.[208] The government's response to these delegations was dismissive. In July 1982, George Young, the Junior Housing Minister informed the joint delegation that Leeds should raise rents if it wanted to fund rehousing for tenants.[209] The government contended that responsibility for the estate's shortcomings lay with the council as the local authority had chosen the industrialised building system used to construct it. The Leeds campaign made a major tactical error in sending its delegation to Whitehall before its counterparts in Nottingham, Hill and Sheffield were ready, so activists from all the YDG estates were unable to put their case to government with one voice. But the central problem remained: community activists were swimming against the tide of housing policy.[210] In February 1983, Joe Dean another Leeds MP attempted to table a Private Members Bill which sought to 'make provision for people living in industrialised and semi-industrialised built housing.'[211] Dean estimated that the total national cost of such a programme would be £3 billion. Unsurprisingly, given the government's commitments to reducing the council housing stock through privatisation and other means, his bill did not receive government support.

In December 1984, the government announced further cuts in Leeds City Council's Housing Investment Programme grant and placed additional limits on councils' ability to use capital receipts to fund new building.[212] This jeopardised the council's proposal to replace Hunslet Grange with a new estate of almost 400 houses. The Tenants Association lobbied central government in support of the council's proposals. In early 1985, Marilyn Steane wrote directly to the Environment Secretary, Patrick Jenkin, describing the government's housing policy as 'inhuman' and accusing the government of thwarting the city's plans for the Hunslet Grange site.[213] Ultimately, the new partnership between the local authority and community was too politically weak to persuade central government to

[207] HC, 8 June 1982, vol 25, cc 182-88; *LOP*, No. 228, 18 June 1982, 8
[208] *LOP,* No. 232, 16 July 1982, 5
[209] *ibid*
[210] *LOP*, No. 233, 23 July 1982, 5
[211] HC, 22 Fen 1982, vol 37, cc 804
[212] *LOP,* No. 366, 1 March 1985, 5
[213] *LOP,* No. 366, 1 March 1985, 5

release more funds or indeed to modify national housing policy. The city council was only able to build 36 of 375 houses planned for the site.[214] These were let in mid-1987 and although 20 of these houses were let to former Hunslet Grange tenants, the majority of the tenants who had expressed an interest in returning to the site had been rehoused and settled elsewhere by the time the new estate was complete.[215]

The activists' vision of local authority funded and owned housing, built and managed with the active participation of tenants, stood in stark contrast to the government's agenda on housing and urban renewal. It is possible that its alliance with a Labour council even reduced the Tenants Association's bargaining power, since central government was keen to restrict the activities of allegedly high spending Labour authorities. In Liverpool community activists campaigning to establish new build housing co-operatives in the city clashed with the centralising Militant-led Labour council, which made it politically easier for them to find common ground with the Thatcher administration and secure central government funding.[216] Where Labour councils had accommodated community activists, this distanced community action groups from the government.

Community activists from Hunslet Grange remained active in networks in the mid-1980s. At a conference in February 1985 in Hulme, Manchester, Marilyn Steane, spoke to community activists from around the country on the lessons that might be learned from the Hunslet Grange campaign for tenants campaigning on system built estates.[217] The members of the Yorkshire Development Action Group had been at the vanguard of campaigning for the demolition of system built estates and their experiences influenced campaigners in other parts of the country. Scores of system built estates were demolished in the 1980s and 1990s and in some areas, such as Hulme in Manchester, they were replaced with social housing.[218] In the late 1980s the Hunslet Grange site was transferred from the council to the Leeds Development Corporation (LDC) and it was sold to a private developer. Community groups were consulted on the LDC's plans, but their influence was limited to commenting on a set of market-led options after the key decisions had been made.[219] A private estate of

---

[214] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing,* 31 September 1987, 66
[215] *LOP,* No. 499, 2 October 1987, 8-9
[216] Libby Longino, 'The Eldonian Community Association and the Quest for Local Democracy in Liverpool during the 1980s,' New Times Revisited, University of Birmingham, 28 June 2013
[217] *LOP,* No.366, 1 March 1985, 5; Marilyn Steane 'Our Lives', in SCAT, *Dampness, Defective and Dangerous* (1985), 3-7, BHC
[218] Peter Shapely ref.
[219] Darren P. Smith, 'An Alternative Approach to the Development of Hunslet Green,' (BA (Hons), Leeds Polytechnic, 1992): 32, 35; 'Saskia Koolen, 'Power in the Housing Market: A Study of Leeds (Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht and Middlesex University, 1992-3): 55-56

traditional low rise dwellings was built on the site in the early 1990s with a section of the development reserved for housing association units.[220] This outcome was not a total defeat for community action, but it neatly summarised the post-Thatcherite contours of urban policy.

After almost a decade of political marginality, community action campaign shaped the council's approach to the estate in the early 1980s. Just as community action attained a position of unprecedented influence, a series of changes in national policy made its goals much harder to attain. Like community activists, the New Right had elaborated a critique of post-war housing policy and referred to estates like Hunslet Grange as evidence of the need for a new approach.[221] Inspired by New Right ideas, the Thatcher governments implemented remedies that were quite different to those community activists had advocated. Owner occupation and private enterprise, not grassroots democracy and municipal enterprise, became the new guiding principles. Without state support, community action was hamstrung. At the heart of community activism was a paradox: although it presented a fundamental challenge to the organisation of the state, it continued to view state intervention and public resources as essential to realising its objectives.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The history of activism on the Hunslet Grange estate is a valuable case study in the rise, evolution and decline of community action. The richness of the surviving source material has allowed us to construct a detailed account of grassroots organising on the estate, focusing in detail on individuals, relationships and the local context. We have also seen that community action on Hunslet Grange was not unique but resembled other campaigns in Leeds and beyond. This case study allows us to draw three main conclusions about the nature of community action. Firstly, community action was often a reaction to particular shortcomings of post-war policy. Many state interventions that had aimed to improve living standards often had the reverse effect. Existing political organisations were slow to respond to these issues, so community action filled the gap. Community activists organised not just over the material problems, but over political issues. They located the origin of problems that plagued Hunslet Grange not in particular building technologies but in systems of decision-making that excluded the users of housing from the construction and management

---

[220] *YEP,* 11 February 1995, 6

[221] Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture,* 200-206; Anne Power, *Hovels to High Rise: State Housing in Europe Since 1850* (London, 1993): 217-220. See also: Oscar Newman, *Crime Prevention through Urban Design* (New York, 1972); Alice Coleman *Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing* (London, 1985)

of the council housing stock. This was a challenge to the traditional model of representative democracy. They argued for a redistribution of power from elected councillors and professional officers to tenants and residents. In doing so, they challenged the traditional model of representative democracy that vested power and authority over the state in elected members.

Secondly, community action was formed of a coalition of individuals and organisations from different backgrounds. It was a socially and politically diverse. It fused local knowledge and professional expertise. As activists encountered obstacles to achieving their goals they responded by forming wider alliances at a local and national level. Thirdly, community action was not inevitable despite the existence of these problems. It had to overcome political apathy, social instability and official disinterest. These barriers did not weaken over the long 1970s: if anything, they hardened. Despite these challenges, community activists did eventually wield influence over the council's approach to Hunslet Grange. They persuaded the council to demolish the estate and to commit to redevelop the site in consultation with former residents. By the early 1980s, relations between community activists and the council had thawed and activists secured an insider role in policy making. However, shifts in government policy prevented community activists from realising their ultimate goal of building high quality, tenant-controlled public housing. They lacked influence at a national level. As the 1980s progressed, community action began to lose momentum as the government reduced the capacity of local councils to support community groups and community activists found it increasingly difficult to make allies at the national level.

This chapter presents the thesis in microcosm: it has explored the nature of community action and outlined the narrative arc that will frame the remainder of the thesis. While this chapter has analysed community action within clearly defined spatial boundaries subsequent chapters will cast the net more widely, exploring community across Leeds. If, as we have seen, community action developed into a coherent and potent political force on a single estate, did it replicate this success across the whole city? Did neighbourhood community action campaigns collectively form a Leeds community action movement?

Chapter 2

Contesting Clearance:
Community Action and Housing Renewal

This chapter uses the campaign in Leeds in the long 1970s against housing renewal policies and for a different approach to housing renewal to deepen our understanding of community action. This campaign offers a rich insight into the nature of community action and the reasons for its rise and decline. The first section begins by setting the scene, outlining housing renewal policies in mid-century Leeds and describing the local political culture in which they were developed and administered. It then explores the origins of the community action campaign against this set of policies, investigating the local and national reasons for the emergence of community action at this time. The second section examines the debate over housing policy in this period. It deepens our understanding of why this particular issue animated community activists and sheds light on the underlying principles that drove community action. The third section analyses the composition of community action groups to show who participated in community action. The fourth section picks up the narrative of the campaign from the first section; it investigates the impact of community action on housing renewal policy in the city. It focuses on particular local campaigns to show how community activists steered policy in an innovative direction. The fifth section qualifies the argument in section four by examining the limits of the community action campaign on housing renewal. It investigates why activists were unable to achieve many of their goals in the long term and considers the weaknesses of community action. This section closes by exploring the decline of the campaign in the 1980s. Throughout the chapter makes connections with campaigns elsewhere in urban Britain, considering the extent to which the Leeds case study is representative of activism on other issues and in other places.

1. Housing renewal and the rise of community action

Housing renewal refers to a set of policies which sought to revitalise the housing stock. For most of the twentieth century, this involved the complete demolition of older housing and its replacement with modern buildings. In large British cities like Leeds housing renewal was ubiquitous and pervasive between the 1920s and the 1980s.[1] It affected whole urban

---

[1] John English, Ruth Madigan, and Peter Norman, *Slum Clearance: the Social and Administrative Context in England and Wales* (London, 1976); Michael Gibson and Michael Langstaff, *An Introduction to Urban*

districts and the relationships between the people who lived there. Perhaps more than any other area of public policy in the twentieth century, it affected the most intimate areas of family and community life. From the late 1960s, housing renewal became one of the most important issues for community activists. Almost all the community action groups that feature in this thesis had some link to housing renewal. For many community action groups, it was their primary concern. They are the focus of this chapter. Community action surrounding housing renewal emerged as a reactive mobilisation of local activists who organised in response to policies and programmes imposed on neighbourhoods by external bodies. In order to understand the origins of this form of community action, it is necessary to understand those policies and programmes and the agencies that directed them. This section begins by outlining housing renewal policies in mid-century Britain and the political culture in which they were formulated and implemented.

Housing renewal originated in the late nineteenth century when housing reformers argued that working class housing had a deleterious effect on public health and social norms.[2] They held that the only appropriate remedy was to replace it with new housing constructed to a higher standard guided by professional expertise. Local authorities received powers to clear slum housing from the 1890s, but in most cities, including Leeds, clearance action was limited and piecemeal before 1919.[3] Housing legislation passed in the interwar decades granted local authorities wider powers to clear housing and provided finance for larger municipal building programmes.[4] Large-scale clearance in Leeds did not begin until 1933 following a grassroots campaign led by the priest, housing reformer and later city councillor, the Reverend Charles Jenkinson.[5] The problem of slum housing was seen to be particularly acute in Leeds because the city's housing stock contained an unusually large proportion of back-to-back houses, a housing type that housing reformers considered to be particularly inimical to public health [see Fig. 2.1-2.2]. Between 1933 and by 1939 the council cleared 15,000 properties and constructed 20,000 houses and flats.[6] Due to the Second World War and the immediate post-war housing shortage, clearance did not resume until the mid-1950s when it was reprioritised by government. Between 1955 and 1961,

Renewal (London, 1982) 18-49; Andrew Cox and David McKay, *The Politics of Urban Change* (London, 1979): 107-158

[2] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 19-22; Alison Ravetz, *The Government of Space: Town Planning in Modern Society* (London, 1986): 20-25

[3] LCC, *Older Housing in Leeds: An Assessment of Redevelopment Potential and Priorities, 1971-1991, Volume 1: Survey and Analysis* (Leeds, 1971): 6, 8; Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 248-49

[4] LCC, *Older Housing, Volume 1,* 8; Cox and McKay, *The Politics of Urban Change* (London, 1979): 110-115

[5] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal*, 248-52

[6] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 251

10,000 houses were cleared and the programme was rolled forward to 1981. By 1971, a further 20,000 had been demolished.[7]

Until the early 1960s, clearance was usually justified on the grounds that older housing was unfit for human habitation according to national legislation which established criteria for assessing the fitness of dwellings. From these origins as a component of public health policy, housing renewal was gradually reimagined as a pillar of the wider urban renewal project. Urban renewal was embraced enthusiastically by governments across the world in the post-war decades.[8] It was animated by the idea that cities needed to be radically redeveloped to meet the social and economic demands of the modern world. This entailed not only the replacement of buildings and infrastructure, but the wider restructuring of the way urban space was organised to suit new forms of living, working and mobility.[9] In addition to housing, urban renewal affected commercial districts, factories, public buildings, roads, utilities and recreational facilities. The urban renewal project precipitated community action on a range of issues. In Chapter 3, we discuss how community activists responded to other parts of the urban renewal project. Urban renewal sought 'to modernise' the image of Leeds in order to entice investment and retain highly skilled workers to enable Leeds to compete with 'the high growth areas of the Midlands and South.'[10] Older housing combined with 'run-down factories and workshops, ugly cleared sites, abandoned railway land' presented 'a depressing and neglected prospect.'[11] Project Leeds, a marketing initiative sponsored by the city council and the Chamber of Commerce assured investors that urban renewal would replace such vistas with symbols of modernity. Its brochure explained that

> New buildings born of new concepts are pushing their white rectangular columns into the sky. Dilapidated out-of-date dwellings and decaying industrial premises are falling before the bulldozer and making way for well-equipped up-to-date housing project and modern factories.[12]

As housing renewal was incorporated into the urban renewal project, the public health criteria upon which housing clearance was traditionally justified were supplemented by a broader set of criteria. Clearance was recommended not only because older houses were structurally unfit or lacking in certain amenities, but because they were seen to be incompatible with the modern world by virtue of their age and built form.[13] Older housing

---

[7] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal*, 255
[8] Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Post-war Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (London, 2011): 17-47
[9] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 12-13
[10] Leeds City Council, *Older Housing in Leeds: An Assessment of redevelopment Potential and Priorities, 1971-1991, Volume 2: Formulation of Strategies* (Leeds, 1972): 14
[11] *ibid*
[12] Leeds City Council, *Project Leeds* (Cheltenham, 1972): 3
[13] LCC, *Older Housing in Leeds,* 2-4

and the built environment in which it was situated was classified as obsolete. In 1971, the city council summarised its philosophy at an exhibition on its clearance plans:

> When houses grow old they become…out-of-date in design, space, amenities and layout, and unsuited to the needs of modern living…Like cars, houses are wearing out continuously, and as we repair and replace cars, we must improve and replace houses. Houses built one hundred years ago when life was very different cannot possibly meet the needs of people in the late twentieth century, and this covers not just houses now unfit but those which are likely to become obsolete…[14]

According to this view, the clearance programme had to be continually rolled forward, incorporating ever more of the older housing stock, as people's expectations of what constituted modern housing continued to evolve. The need for clearance was also justified on social grounds. The council maintained that redevelopment would renew communities as well as buildings, reducing the level of social instability in the inner core by providing people with homes of which they could be proud.[15] Recognising that the task of clearing all of the city's obsolete and unfit housing would take several decades to complete, the council implemented a major improvement programme in the 1950s and 1960s to extend the life of older housing for fifteen years until it could be replaced.[16] This policy was always intended as a temporary expedient.

Since one of its main goals was to improve the housing conditions, housing renewal provided a key impetus for the large municipal house-building programme that began in the interwar years. The council offered council tenancies to almost all households in clearance areas and they were prioritised over applicants from the general waiting list. By 1962, the Council owned 44,000 dwellings on 72 estates.[17] By the end of 1975, the council owned 88,773 housing units on housing estates.[18] As we saw in Chapter 1, cleared sites in the inner city were increasingly used to build high density estates from the late 1950s [see Fig 2.4]. In inner north Leeds, a network of estates built on cleared land between Little London and Woodhouse stretching over 260 acres housed about 18,000 people.[19] Its stock also included the outlying Seacroft estate in east Leeds, built between the 1930s and the 1950s, which housed some 7000 families over 1000 acres [see Fig. 2.3].[20] On these estates, the council was the sole landlord, with responsibility for management, maintenance and, within a national policy framework, rent levels. Renewal

---

[14] Leeds City Council Notice, 13 January 1973, Cliff Lane/Road Terrace and Cook Cliff Road Residents and Homeowners' Group, WYA: WYL247
[15] LCC, *Older Housing, Volume 1*, 2
[16] LCC, *Older Housing, Volume 1*, 13-15; Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 259-261
[17] Leeds City Council, *A Guide to the City of Leeds* (1963): 38
[18] Leeds City Council, *Quarterly Reports of the Director of Housing,* 30 Dec 1975
[19] LCC, *Guide to the City*, 38
[20] Leeds City Council, *A Short History of Civic Housing* (Leeds, 1954): 50

transformed not only the built environment but the housing market and the role of local government.

Housing renewal entailed intensive state intervention in the social and economic life of the inner city and in the individual lives of local people. A major contemporary study of slum clearance argued that

> [t]he clearance and redevelopment process [put] the ordinary citizen in a position of extreme dependence relative to his local authority…the Council decided not only that people [were] to leave their homes but where and in what conditions they [were] re-housed.[21]

Housing renewal was planned and administered by local government officers on the basis of decisions made by elected councillors. Local political culture tended to militate against resident involvement in housing renewal. As the elected representatives of the people, councillors believed they had the right to oversee the process on behalf of their constituents. According to this view, only elected councils had a mandate to speak for the ward and any direct consultation had to take place through councillors. Councillors tended to assume that people were not interested in discussing policy issues. A planner who worked for Leeds City Council in the 1960s, recalled Labour councillors telling officials: "'Our constituents rely on us. They won't turn up to meetings.'"[22] It was widely believed that clearance and rehousing was a 'noble social cause,' which did not need to be debated.[23] The council was satisfied that any change in public attitudes to housing renewal would manifest itself in local election results. In 1972, a policy document noted that the citizens of Leeds had consistently elected parties favouring high rates of clearance action for the last 17 years, which suggested there was no widespread opposition to the policy.[24]

Until the 1960s, citizens had few means of influencing housing renewal outside local elections. Citizens were invited to comment on the local authority's development plan, which provided the framework for planning decisions, which was subjected to a public inquiry. This only took place at fifteen year intervals and it was difficult for individuals to do anything more than criticise specific parts of the plan. Citizens had the right to object to compulsory purchase orders which were a key part of the administrative machinery of housing renewal. Public objections would be heard at a public inquiry. However, public inquiries focused on assessing the compatibility of the order with local planning policy: they did not seek ascertain whether the order enjoyed local support. The

---

[21] English, et al, *Slum Clearance*, 9-10
[22] Interview with Stan Kenyon, September 2008, Leeds
[23] Interview with Kenyon
[24] Leeds City Council, *Older Housing in Leeds: An Assessment of Redevelopment Potential and Priorities, Volume 3: The Clearance Programme and its local effects* (Leeds, 1972): 2

quasi-legal proceedings were difficult to comprehend for the average citizen.[25] Once the government had ruled on matter, their decision could only be appealed in the courts on procedural grounds.

Despite this high level of largely unchecked state intervention there was no organised opposition to urban renewal in Leeds until the end of the 1960s. At the public inquiry for the Development Plan Review in 1969 there were only a handful of objections to the council's clearance proposals.[26] There is little evidence of critical opinion in the media before the 1970s: reports in the local and national press on the progress of housing renewal in Leeds were laudatory.[27] Until 1969, the council heard no deputations from groups of residents concerning aspects of urban renewal.[28] Objections to the council's compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) were almost always submitted by property owners concerned with compensation levels. The principles behind urban renewal were rarely contested at the scores of public inquiries held over CPOs in this period.[29] The main political parties in Leeds did not voice dissent on the issue of housing renewal. Labour and the Conservatives together held almost all the seats in the council in this period and, mirroring their national counterparts, they competed over who would clear the most slums or build the most houses. In 1965, the Labour boasted that it had done more work on slum clearance than any other English council. [30] The Liberal Party, which would later mount a sustained and comprehensive critique of urban renewal, held no seats on the city council until 1968 and thereafter only occupied a handful until the mid-1970s.[31]

While the council undertook no surveys of public opinion on housing renewal policies before the 1970s, a number of academic studies reinforced the view that clearance and rehousing was broadly popular in the city. One 1963 study, based on 1040 households in official clearance areas, found 82 per cent of residents were in favour of moving, mainly due to the nature of the house and the district. Some two thirds of the sample wanted to move into council-owned accommodation.[32] A similar study of four clearance areas in

---

[25] Alison Ravetz, *The Government of Space: Town Planning in Modern Society* (London, 1986): 87; Alison Ravetz, *Re-making Cities: Contradictions of the Recent Urban Environment* (London, 1980): 39
[26] Leeds City Council, *Development Plan First Quinquennial Review, Report of a Local Public Inquiry into Objections and Representations* (1969): 59-61
[27] Joseph Minogue, 'Leeds rebuilds conservatively,' *The Guardian,* 11 April 1962, 8; Michael Denny, 'Leeds '84', *The Guardian,* 16 April 1984, 6; Michael Parkin, 'When the motorway comes to a stop,' *The Guardian,* 16 September 1968, 24
[28] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 30 April 1969, 4-5
[29] LCC, *Older Housing, Volume 3*, 2
[30] *The Guardian*, 2 December 1965, 18
[31] *Leeds Municipal Election Results, 1960-1982,* LLFHL
[32] R.K. Wilkinson, and E.M. Sigsworth, 'Slum Dwellers of Leeds', *New Society,* 4 April 1963, 12

winter 1968-69 offered no evidence of organised opposition to housing renewal.[33] The author discovered evidence of dissatisfaction with the blighting effects of clearance and the opaque nature of the process, but this did not translate into organised opposition or even formal individual complaint.[34] Both studies found a begrudging acceptance of these hardships and residents who were were pessimistic about their capacity to influence council policy.[35] However, there was evidence of a shift in attitudes at the beginning of the next decade. In 1971, a study revealed that support for clearance was declining: the majority for clearance was wafer thin in the most recently declared clearance areas.[36] This hinted at the major mobilisation over the council's housing renewal programme that would emerge in the following year.

At the opening of the 1970s, the council began to plan the housing renewal programme for the next twenty years. In late 1971, an officer report on the housing programme for the next two decades recommended a clearance rate of 2,300 houses per year between 1971 and 1977 and 1,700 per year between 1978 and 1987.[37] This option, termed Strategy D, required the council to clear all the houses previously identified for clearance action by 1977.[38] Subsequently, the programme would incorporate 17,000 houses that had not previously been earmarked for clearance. This would necessitate a council building programme of around 2,000 units per year for two decades. In January 1972, the full city council supported these proposals with little debate.[39] The strategy, which epitomised the traditional approach to housing renewal, was the catalyst for an explosion of community action across the city in the early 1970s. This mobilisation would crystallise into a community action campaign around housing renewal.

After Liberal councillors leaked the document to their constituents in Armley, news of Strategy D, as it was commonly known, spread rapidly around inner city Leeds. Public meetings were held in most of the areas scheduled for clearance at the initiative of church leaders, business owners and residents. Neighbourhoods that had never been organised formed community groups to lobby for improvement rather than demolition. Two local historians estimated that 'there were more residents' associations and groups formed in

[33] John W. Knightly, 'Communication and Clearance Areas,' Leeds School of Town Planning Library, 1969, in *The Other Paper,* No. 1, 10 October 1969, 4-5
[34] *ibid*
[35] *ibid*
[36] R.K. Wilkinson, 'Attitudes to the Housing Environment: An Analysis of Private and Local Authority Households in Batley, Leeds and York,' Leeds University (1971)
[37] LCC, *Older Housing, Volume 2,* 19-20
[38] Gibson and Langstaff, *Housing Renewal*, 265
[39] LCC, *Proceedings of the Council,* 19 January 1972

1972 than in the previous quarter of a century.'[40] In Woodhouse, the local Anglican vicar called a public meeting with an 'unprecedented' turnout of 450 people to discuss the impact of Strategy D.[41] A group of Hunslet residents marched to the Civic Hall with the local vicar with placards reading "Hands off Hunslet" and "Save Our Homes".[42] The Woodhouse Community Association emerged from this meeting. In south Headingley, where Strategy D affected 900 homes, 200 people attended a public meeting called by a handful of local residents under the slogan, "Save Your Homes."[43] A petition from the meeting signed by 1000 local people was sent to the council and, at a further public meeting, the South Headingley Community Association was formed. In those areas where community organising predated the Strategy D mobilisation, existing community groups began campaigning on the issue or helped to foster new action groups. In June 1972, the Chapeltown Community Association held a series of street meetings in the Gathornes and Giptons area to assess local feeling on clearance and redevelopment.[44] The meetings revealed substantial opposition to clearance and a local action group was formed.[45] In west Leeds, the established Belle Vue and Burley Community Association spearheaded the resistance to council proposals to clear the northern half of the Burley Lodge Road area.[46]

One of the local reasons Strategy D proved a trigger for community action was that it extended the clearance programme into many of the neighbourhoods that had benefited from the council's improvement policies since the 1950s. Some 8000 of the houses earmarked for clearance in the strategy were still eligible for improvement grants in 1972. Many more had been eligible for grant aided improvement in the past. Included in the clearance programme was older housing of a higher standard, including many through terraces and comparatively modern back-to-backs, built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Unlike the older and unmodernised back-to-backs that had been demolished in earlier decades, the view that these properties were inherently obsolete was contentious as we shall see later.

If the Strategy D document was the catalyst for the emergence of community action over housing renewal, the mobilisation had deeper roots. The remainder of this section will explore the wider context to the rise of community action and the intersection between local

---

[40] Stephen Burt and Kevin Grady, *The Illustrated History of Leeds* (Derby, 2002): 241
[41] Leeds Civic Trust, *Outlook,* No. 4, December 1972
[42] Press Cutting: *YEP,* 'Civic Hall demo in bid to save homes,' u.d., 1972, BSC
[43] Leeds Civic Trust, *Outlook*, No. 6 July 1973, 5
[44] Chapeltown Community Association, Housing Group Report to AGM, 19 March 1973, WYA: WYL2058
[45] Leeds City Council, Housing Committee, Improvements and Miscellaneous Properties Sub-Committee of the Housing Committee, 25 August 1972, 1; CCA, Secretary's Report 1973-4, 1, WYA: WYL 2058
[46] *YEP*, 7 November 1972, 10

and national trends. From mid-late 1960s, central government had begun to evaluate the mainstream approach to housing renewal. A key driver for this assessment was the economic context. [47] Housing renewal had been premised on constant economic growth and rising living standards, but the economic problems of the second half of the 1960s, beginning with the devaluation of sterling in 1967, began to undermine the economic base of the policy. Clearance and rehousing was expensive due to the costs of compulsory purchase, compensation, demolition, land acquisition and reconstruction. Rising interest rates made local authority borrowing more expensive and increased the cost of servicing debt on existing loans, forcing local authorities to raise rents. As unemployment began to reappear in expanding pockets in the early 1970s and the real value wages stagnate, new estates with their higher rent levels and greater transport costs became less attractive to prospective tenants. In response to the economic problems, the government sought to restrain expenditure on housing in this period. In the late 1960s, the government commissioned studies and demonstration projects to investigate cheaper approaches to revitalising older urban areas.[48] These studies revealed that improving older residential areas was feasible, even though existing statutory tools were inadequate. [49] They also detected considerable latent local support for preserving existing communities and identified dissatisfaction with the way clearance was carried out. Research conducted independently of government reinforced these points, contributing to a growing consensus in academia and central government that the model of housing renewal required reform.[50] These studies informed the Housing Act 1969, which encouraged councils to issue improvement grants to owners of older property.[51] The act created the General Improvement Area (GIA) which allowed councils to issue higher grants and undertake environmental work in designated areas. Two years earlier the Civic Amenities Act 1967 had given local authorities additional powers to protect the existing urban fabric from private redevelopment by creating Conservation Areas.[52]

The government's policy review considered not only the content of renewal policies, but also the way policy was formulated. This was a response to the first stirrings of community action. From the early 1960s, organised community groups had begun to contest urban

---

[47] Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State,* 94-96
[48] Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Central Housing Advisory Committee, *Our Older Homes: A Call for Action* (HMSO, 1966); Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Old Houses into New Homes* (HMSO, 1968), Cmnd. 3602
[49] McKay and Cox, *Politics of Urban Change*, 58-62
[50] English, *et al.*, *Slum Clearance*, 36. See also: John Cullingworth, *Housing in transition: A Case Study in the City of Lancaster* (London, 1963)
[51] Gibson and Langstaff, *Housing Renewal*, 64-65
[52] McKay and Cox, *Politics of Urban Change*, 136

renewal projects on the grounds that policy makers had ignored the wishes of local people. The urban conservation movement voiced this argument in campaigns to preserve historic buildings. Such protests were initially most common in London and historic towns like York and Oxford, but they became more common throughout the country.[53] In response, at the end of the 1960s the government passed legislation that sought to extend citizen participation in housing and planning policy. The Town and Country Planning Act 1968 obliged councils to consult citizens when preparing structure plans.[54] Councils were required to consult local residents in administering GIAs. In 1969, the Skeffington Committee, which had been commissioned by the government to investigate ways in which government could facilitate public participation in planning, published its report setting out how councils could promote citizen engagement.[55] These changes in government policy and state discourses on the relationship between policy makers and citizens were a stimulus to the growth of community action, helping to explain why it spread so rapidly across urban Britain in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The new emphasis on public participation gave people the licence to demand a greater role in policy making and provided statutory tools for community groups to engage with policy makers. New institutions and administrative procedures for participation and consultation created a space for community action.

If national government had attempted to initiate a new approach to housing renewal, this transition still appeared distant in Leeds at the beginning of the 1970s. Like many local authorities, Leeds City Council was slow to adapt to these changes. Community action groups often emerged in the gap between government rhetoric on participation and rehabilitation and the administrative reality. One of the first instances of this in Leeds was in Burley in west Leeds. In 1968, the Burley Lodge Road area, a neighbourhood of back-to-backs and through terraces, was selected for one of the government's pilot projects in area improvement.[56] The pilot was also designed to trial collaborative working between the local authority and local people. The recently formed Belle Vue and Burley Community Association tried to engage with the pilot but quickly became disillusioned.[57] The council made few attempts to identify the views of local people, conducting an opinion survey after the scheme had begun. The measures implemented by the council, including certain road closures, were unpopular with local people. The rate of housing modernisation actually

---

[53] Alison Ravetz, *Government of Space,* 85-86
[54] Alison Ravetz, *Government of Space,* 88-89
[55] Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *People and Planning: report of the Committee on Public Participation in Planning* (HMSO, 1969)
[56] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal*, 263-4
[57] Terry Flynn, letter to *The Other Paper*, No. 9, 13 February 1970, 3; Joint Working Party of Leeds Civic Trust and Belle Vue and Burley Community Association, 'Burley: The Lessons of Improvement,' (1972)

stalled during the course of the scheme. In 1972, the neighbourhood remained blighted by unimproved houses, vacant and vandalised buildings, poor quality pedestrian areas, dead trees, and the emergence of new traffic problems.[58] It was condemned by one activist as 'exhibiting planning at its most perfunctory.'[59] In that year, part of the area was actually reinserted into the clearance programme.

Burley Lodge Road was formative for the then nascent community action campaign in Leeds. It revealed that official rhetoric on consultation often belied a lingering reluctance to modify existing procedures and implied the council still viewed improvement as a temporary expedient. Activists held that the failure of the scheme demonstrated the link between effective rehabilitation and resident involvement. One activist argued that 'improvement is a social as well as a physical thing, depending on willing co-operation between residents and planners'[60] The experience of activists in Burley was repeated in Chapeltown, an area suffering from acute housing stress, where community activists campaigning for the neighbourhood to be given General Improvement Area status were rebuffed by the authority.[61] The contradiction between trends in national policy and housing renewal in Leeds were confirmed when the council approved Strategy D. The strategy ruled out widespread improvement as a viable option and it had been produced in a closed environment. Rather than deterring community activists, these early frustrations made them more determined to press for change. As central government policy shifted towards improvement and participation, community activists were able to claim they were holding the government to account for its failure to follow national policy.

One of the key reasons people formed new community action groups was that very few existing organisations voiced growing public disenchantment with housing renewal. While the policy had been broadly popular for many decades, political organisations were slow to respond to shifts in public opinion. The Labour party's network of ward organisations did not dissent from the Labour leadership's line on housing renewal. Indeed, Labour councillors in inner city wards were usually enthusiastic proponents of clearance and rehousing. Voluntary organisations that were active in the inner city did not engage critically with housing renewal, nor voice concerns they may have encountered in their work with social or recreational bodies. Until the 1970s, voluntary organisations such as the Leeds Council for Social Service and the Leeds Council of Community Relations

---

[58] Leeds Civic Trust, *Outlook*, No. 1, May 1972, 4
[59] *ibid*
[60] LCT, *Outlook* , No. 1, May 1972, 5
[61] CCA, 'Some Examples of the Work of the Chapeltown Community Association, 1971-2,' 1972, WYA: WYL2058; 'Chapeltown, '72: A Report from the Grassroots,' (1972) 8, WYA: WYL2058

considered such issues to be political and outside of their remit. The trade unions took very little interest in community issues in this period, focusing their energies on the workplace and the issue of housing renewal was no exception.[62] The failure of political parties, voluntary bodies and political parties to engage critically with issues like housing renewal generated a need for new political organisations when popular discontent began to grow.

Discontent with particular policies such as housing renewal was compounded by a wider dissatisfaction with the increasing complexity and inaccessibility of local government. This applied to each of the campaigns we examine in this thesis on council housing, renewal and transport. In 1969, Terry Flynn of the Belle Vue and Burley Community Association summarised this view in observing that 'at a time when local authorities are becoming more remote from the people, community and tenants' associations have a vital role to play in the life of the community' by helping individuals 'to cut through the red tape which is eroding confidence in the local authorities.'[63] People turned to community action not only because other organisations were not articulating their concerns, but because they felt the council was unlikely to listen to them otherwise. Community action was a response to poor channels of communication between local government and citizens and an attempt to strengthen those channels.

If community action groups filled a political vacuum they did not do so without help. The first community activists were supported by two more established organisations: the Leeds Liberal party and the Leeds Civic Trust. The Liberals were a dormant political force in Leeds in the post-war period until the late 1960s when the party's fortunes were revived by handful of dynamic Liberal activists and councillors. This was a nationwide phenomenon associated with the brief Liberal revival of the period and the popularity of the Young Liberals.[64] Michael Meadowcroft, the leader of the Liberal group in Leeds in the 1970s, and his colleagues were advocates of community politics, an approach to local politics in which party activists forged links with community groups and participated in local campaigns – an approach Meadowcroft defended in response to criticism from other parties.[65] Meadowcroft supported decentralising decision-making as far as possible, arguing in 1975 that 'power should be exercised as close to the people and at the lowest possible

---

[62] Interview with Keith Mollison, Leeds, 2013
[63] *The Other Paper*, No.2, 24 October 1969, 5
[64] Peter Hain, 'Introduction,' in Peter Hain, ed., *Community Politics,* 15
[65] Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Reports,* 14 December 1978, 61; Stuart Mole, 'The Community Representative,' in Hain, *Community Politics,* 135-150; Peter Hain, *Radical Regeneration: Protest, Direct Action and Community Politics* (London, 1975): 92-93

level of government.'[66] The party won seats in Labour heartlands like in Armley and Hunslet, partly by capitalising on disillusionment with housing clearance as they were able to present themselves as the only opponents of the policy on the council.[67] As we saw above, in February 1972, Liberal councillors helped to ignite the grassroots mobilisation by leaking the Strategy D document to their constituents in Armley, an act which incensed Labour and the Conservatives as the document was meant to be confidential.[68] While the Liberals did not lead community action, they acted as a political sponsor on the council where they gave voice to a different perspective on housing renewal. The Liberals raised numerous motions in the city council which sought to modify aspects of the programme. [69] Liberal councillors also pressed the council to consult with affected communities in advance of making decisions on clearance.[70]

The Leeds Civic Trust also assisted in the development of community action. Founded in Leeds in 1965, the Trust was part of the national urban conservation movement which developed in London in the late 1950s.[71] During its first five years, the Trust concentrated its activities on campaigning to preserve prestigious historic buildings in the city centre from redevelopment driven by speculative office building. In the early 1970s, the Trust was steered in a more radical direction by some of its younger members, such as Alison Ravetz and Parry Thornton, who argued that the Trust should interpret its role more widely, broadening its focus beyond and campaigning on housing and transport issues.[72] Thornton held that housing should concern the Trust as a conservation issue and a social issue.[73] Contact between the Trust and community groups based in inner city neighbourhoods was first made at Burley Lodge where activists collaborated with the Belle Vue and Burley Community Association to contest the council's approach to improvement.[74] The Trust co-financed a report on Burley Lodge Road by a team of planning consultants, which lent weight to the activists' case.[75] Over the 1970s, the Trust, provided financial aid and professional advice to community activists and made 'representations to the Council' on their behalf, leveraging its reputation as a respectable institution. [76] In return, several

---

[66] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 23 April 1975, 596-601
[67] *The Armley Free Press*, March 1972, 1, WYA: WYL1795
[68] *YEP,* 3 March 1972, p.1, 9
[69] LCC, *Verbatim Report,* 12 October 1977, 191-3. See also: LCC, *Verbatim Report,* 11 October 1979, 28-9
[70] Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Report,* 14 December 1978, 51
[71] John Pendlebury, *Conservation in the Age of Consensus* (Oxford, 2009)
[72] Interview with Alison Ravetz, Leeds, 2013
[73] Leeds Civic Trust, *Outlook*, No. 12, May 1976, 1
[74] Joint Working Party, 'Burley'
[75] Tom Hancock, Robert McKie and Dean Hook, *Neighbourhood Study: Burley Lodge Road, Leeds* (Leeds, 1973)
[76] Leeds City Trust, Annual Report 1973 (1973), 3

community action groups affiliated to the Trust. Both the Leeds Civic Trust and the Liberal Party helped to counteract the centrifugal forces of community action by providing a citywide perspective and linking groups together, as we shall explore later.

Finally, the rise of community action should be understood in the context of a wider process of politicisation and the rise of new forms of political organisation in this period. The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the rise of feminism, gay liberation and black power.[77] It was also a period of intensifying trade union militancy and student radicalism. Tenants became increasingly politicised in this period through a series of campaigns against rent rises and government reforms to rental policy. London and Sheffield in particular witnessed major tenant mobilisations in the late 1960s over rent rises and rent rebates.[78] These campaigns climaxed in the early 1970s in a national wave of tenant organisation against the government's legislative proposals for 'Fair Rents'.[79] In Leeds there were protests against rent rises on several council estates in this period.[80] There was also an upsurge in industrial militancy in the city and student protests at the University of Leeds.[81] People were inspired by these political mobilisations to organise and take action over issues where they might otherwise have remained silent. The deference and pessimism, which had characterised social attitudes in the immediate post-war era, especially in working-class communities, was waning. Commenting on this trend, one Leeds activist suggested that 'people are slowly getting used to the idea that they do have rights, that they can demand instead of beg.'[82]

The city council's initial response to the explosion of community opposition to Strategy D was dismissive and indicative of the municipal paternalism that angered community activists. Frank Marshall, the leader of the council, framed the issue in party political terms, accusing the Liberals of trying to 'inflame the minds of the people by what they are pleased to call community politics.'[83] His response suggested the council had failed to understand the nature of community action and the grievances that drove it. The new community activists did not view the debate over housing renewal in party political terms. Few action groups were formally affiliated with any party. Instead, the main cleavage was between the local political establishment, who supported the existing housing renewal policy, and

---

[77] Adam Lent, *British Social Movements Since 1945: Sex, Colour, Peace and Power* (Basingstoke, 2000)
[78] Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: the History of a Social Experiment* (London, 2001): 151-2
[79] Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, 127, 152
[80] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 11 October 1967, 4-5; LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 14 October 1970, 114-5
[81] *The Other Paper*, No. 9, 13 February 1970, 2; Thomas, Nick, 'Challenging the Myths of the 1960s: the Case of Student Protest,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 13:3 (2002): 284-87
[82] *TOP*, No. 8, 30 January 1970, 4-5
[83] *YEP,* 7 February 1972, 5

organised groups of people who opposed it. The leak of the Strategy D document activated latent public disenchantment with the secretive, top-down approach to policy-making in the city. Writing about the grassroots mobilisation in May 1972, a member of the Leeds Civic Trust observed that 'underlying the specific issues is a deep resentment at being "left out" by the planners.'[84]

This section has explored the broader context to the rise of community action and the short term causes of the explosion in community organising over housing renewal in the early 1970s in Leeds. Housing renewal fundamentally altered the landscape of Leeds and transformed the lives of a significant proportion of the city's population. The policy was broadly popular for several decades, but residents of affected areas began to organise against clearance proposals in the early 1970s. It was not only the physical effects of the policy that drove community action, but the political ramifications of an approach to urban renewal with very little popular involvement. The rise of community action must be understood in the context of wider political changes. New social movements were challenging assumptions about the relationship between the state and its citizens. Economic shifts undermined the assumptions of mid-century urban policy. Central government was remarkably responsive to these changes, but local government proved more lethargic, creating a conflict between popular expectations and the local reality. Leeds City Council chose to persist with the orthodox approach to housing renewal despite mounting opposition to it. Community action developed to fill a political vacuum in which dissenting views on housing policy and the role of local government were rarely voiced. From its inception, however, community action drew strength from alliances with organisations that shared its values.

2. The case against clearance and rehousing

The rise of community action in Leeds around housing renewal was reflective of wider national trends. Community action groups were formed in all large British cities affected by clearance programmes at this time and there were particularly significant community action campaigns against clearance in Manchester, Nottingham and Newcastle.[85] This section will explore the community activists' argument against the council's housing renewal policies. It will analyse the four distinct components of this case to illustrate the issues on which the

---

[84] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 1, May 1972, 1
[85] Sydney Jones 'Community Action in a Glasgow Clearance Area: Consensus or Conflict?' in Peter Leonard, *The Sociology of Community Action* (1975); Jan O'Malley, *The Politics of Community Action*: *A Decade of Struggle in Notting Hill* (1976) 119-163; Ray Gosling, 'St Anne's Nottingham,' in Anne Lapping, *Community Action* (1970); S. Baine, *Community Action and Local Government* (1976); Peter Shapely, *The Politics of Housing* (2008)

debate turned. Examining these arguments in detail will also help us to understand the ideas that motivated community action more generally. It will offer insight into the different constituencies that constituted community action, a theme which will be explored in more depth in the following section.

The first pillar of the argument against established renewal policies was premised on a positive approach to the value of the older housing stock and of older inner city neighbourhoods in general. Activists rejected the notion that certain types of older housing were automatically unfit for human habitation or obsolete, simply because of their design and layout. Most back-to-back housing, they claimed, was structurally sound and could be improved to modern standards.[86] These claims were corroborated by architects commissioned by community action groups to investigate the older housing; one report on Cross Streets in Armley illustrated the ways in which back-to-backs could be modernised and retrofitted.[87] Indoor toilets could be installed in cellars and attic could be converted into additional bedrooms with dormer windows. These studies also showed that rehabilitation was more cost-effective than redevelopment.[88] Since the late 1950s, the council itself had demonstrated that it was possible to retrofit back-to-backs to meet modern standards of ventilation.[89] The council's own improvement programme had modernised thousands of back-to-backs and through terraces.[90] The groups accepted that selective demolition might sometimes be necessary but they rejected the need to clear multiple blocks simultaneously simply to create a more convenient development site.[91]

The physical case for retaining older housing was reinforced by a social one. Activists turned upon its head the argument that clearance would improve the welfare of the residents of older areas, arguing that older housing performed a vital social function. Ravetz maintained that older neighbourhoods

> provide shelter, jobs, services and informal social support structures for…the aged, the infirm, the unemployed, the poor, including the poor with families of young children [and] the young, single people, particularly students.[92]

Older housing was attractive to many households because it was affordable. Rent and heating costs were low, and back-to-backs were easy to clean.[93] Low rents allowed elderly

---

[86] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 8 March 1972, 291-2
[87] Woodhouse Housing Action Group, *Which Way Woodhouse?* (1976): Architect's Report, 12; Community Housing Working Party, *Four Case Studies*: *The Effects of Clearance: Four Case Studies* (1981): 3-6
[88] Cross Streets Housing Action Group, *Cross Streets Residents' Report,* 25
[89] CHWP, *Gradual Renewal in Leeds: A report on clearance and improvement* (1976): 9
[90] WHAG, *Which Way,* 3
[91] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 8 March 1972, 395
[92] CHWP, *Gradual Renewal*, 3-4
[93] CHWP, *Four Case Studies*, 11

households to remain financially self-sufficient without relying on supplementary benefits or rent rebates.[94] Families on low incomes, students, recent migrants, single people and childless couples were drawn to older housing because it was cheap, accessible, easy to maintain and located in neighbourhoods with plenty of services. Council housing, which was generally designed for couples with children, was not readily accessible for these groups.[95] The plight of lone parents in the 1966 film 'Cathy Come Home' illustrated vividly how it was possible for needy groups to fall through the gaps in public housing provision.[96] As smaller households constituted a growing proportion of the overall housing market, activists argued that older terraced housing would become more not less valuable. [97] Clearance usually resulted in a net decrease in the overall housing stock as high density terraces were replaced with vacant sites and, several years later, lower density council estates.[98] Households who did not qualify for council housing were thus forced to compete over an ever dwindling stock of cheaper private rental housing. [99] In their study of Burley Lodge Road in 1973, Hancock and McKie found that whilst families with children and young married couples might benefit overall from clearance and redevelopment, other household types in the area would not.[100] For these reasons, activists argued that traditional housing renewal exacerbated the crisis in housing.

The low cost of back-to-backs afforded working-class households, who could not afford a mortgage on a newer property, the opportunity to purchase housing. These working class owner-occupiers, many of whom were middle-aged or retired, were unlikely to find replacement private housing outside a clearance area at a price they could afford.[101] When an area of back-to-backs was redeveloped, activists argued that 'most of the owner occupiers...displaced are unable to afford to purchase another property and are thus forced into rented accommodation.'[102] For younger couples, a back-to-back could be their first rung on the housing ladder; as their income rose and the family expanded, they could upgrade to a larger property, such as a through terrace or semi-detached house.[103] Underlying this argument was the principle that the fitness or suitability of a house or an older neighbourhood should be judged by the person who was living in it or who might choose to

[94] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 21 November 1973, 107-8
[95] Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, 129-32
[96] Jeremy Sandford, *Cathy Come Home* (London, 1967)
[97] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 8 March 1972, 393-5
[98] CHWP, *Gradual Renewal,* 7
[99] CHWP, *Gradual Renewal,* 3-4
[100] Hancock, McKie and Hook, *Neighbourhood Study*, 1973, 15
[101] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 2 May 1973, 546-6; *YEP,* 6 February 1973, 5
[102] Chris Greenfield, Memorandum to Director of Administration*,* 'Clearance Programme and Local Rehousing,' 25 February 1976, 2, ALC
[103] Hancock, McKie and Hook, *Neighbourhood Study*, 1973, 15

live in it. The council, they argued, could not presume to understand what everyone wanted nor could a rigid policy cater for a diverse range of preferences.

The second component of the case against housing renewal concerned the wider social impact of clearance and redevelopment. Community activists argued that housing clearance would destroy stable communities in inner city neighbourhoods. Whether or not we accept the historical reality of community in older urban areas, community activists were adamant that their neighbourhoods contained communities and they wanted to preserve them. It was this perception that informed this part of the case against official housing policy. In their petitions, letters and deputations, community action groups frequently referred to 'community spirit,' a 'sense of community' and 'our community.' Most groups included the word 'community' in the name of their group to emphasise this point. One action group maintained that 'Armley is a close knit community' where 'the community is a way of life.'[104] A spokesman for a group in Hunslet spoke of the 'well-established human relationships and the good neighbourliness of West Hunslet.'[105] The Ebors Action Group's social survey concluded that residents 'feel a part of the community, a community which has roots going back many years, and in which they can have a full and rich life.'[106] In asserting the sense of community in inner city neighbourhoods, activists rejected the council's claim that the areas scheduled for redevelopment were socially unstable and in decline.

Activists understood community as a dense social network of friends, neighbours and relatives, living in a particular geographical area often for a long period of time. A community group in Hunslet advised the council that the 'community spirit' in the area resulted from 'continuity of family, relatives, friends and environmental associations.'[107] A community group in Hyde Park explained the sense of community arose from the fact that 'over half the households in the area had lived there for over fifteen years.[108] This point was echoed by a resident of the Ebors area who claimed that 'there is a well-developed community spirit in among the people – many lived in the district most of their lives and brought up their families here.' Community also implied supportive networks of mutual aid. The Woodhouse Housing Action Group quoted a longstanding resident of the area who described the community in the following terms:

---

[104] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 8 March 1972, 392
[105] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 30 April 1969, 4-5
[106] CSHAG, *Cross Streets*, 4
[107] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 8 March 1972, 391-2
[108] Presentation at meeting with council, 11 June 1973, Cliff Lane/Road Terrace and Cook Cliff Road Residents and Homeowners' Group, WYA: WYL 247

Young people in the areas marrying other young people in the area and living within shouting distance of mum and dad. The young bride had someone to run to when the Yorkshire pud wouldn't rise...Grandma could feel secure and still wanted as a babysitter...There is always someone to 'look after my key, the gasman's coming today' or who will keep their eye on a sick neighbour when their family has to go to work.[109]

If this was a somewhat romanticised depiction of urban communities, it was nonetheless a powerful and emotive image, and one that resonated with many campaigners. Idealised images of community such as this one were frequently deployed by activists. Activists appealed to policy makers to consider older urban areas not simply in terms of housing standards and street layouts, but as living neighbourhoods. If some descriptions of community were couched in nostalgic accounts of bygone days, activists did not always depict community as static or ethnically homogenous. A longstanding resident of the Ebors area observed that recent commonwealth migrants in the area 'get on well with their neighbours and have been gently absorbed into our community to our mutual benefit.'[110] That inner city neighbourhoods had proved to be adaptable and flexible in an era of mass migration was presented as another reason to preserve them.

According to community activists, clearance not only threatened to fragment and disperse the people that constituted these social networks, it also destroyed the physical infrastructure that had aided the development of community. The intimacy of the built environment and the abundance of local amenities, they claimed, underpinned community by facilitating regular social interaction between neighbours. One report held that '[t]he design of the old terraced houses where the street was seen as common property and all houses were overlooked encouraged people to get to know each other.'[111] Echoing this view, activists in Woodhouse emphasised this close link between the fabric of older areas and community: they described 'neighbours chatting over back walls, thriving corner shops and adults and kids sitting out on door steps 'til late in the evening.'[112] A range of other neighbourhood institutions – pubs, shops clubs, churches and local schools – functioned as key nodes in the community; they were places where people, particularly elderly residents, met and talked.[113]

The threat to community often preceded the bulldozer by several years as the blighting effects of zoning an area for clearance drove away many longstanding residents. The

---

[109] WHAG, *Which Way*, 13-14
[110] Ebors Action Group, *Report*, 12-13
[111] Leeds Trades Council, *Which Way Home? A report on Housing in Leeds by Leeds Trades Council* (Leeds, 1978): 16
[112] *LOP,* No. 20, September 1975, 10-11
[113] CSHAG, *Cross Streets*, 1976, 4

clearance of neighbouring areas deprived a district of people and amenities, leaving behind derelict sites that were often left undeveloped for decades.[114] The scale of change was too great and the length of time it took to clear and rehouse a neighbourhood meant it was hard to keep neighbours together.[115] Despite the scale of the challenge activists believed that community could be restored if the threat of clearance was lifted and confidence returned to the area. Campaigning itself had strengthened community ties in the area. Activists in south Headingley maintained that the formation of a Community Association to fight produced 'a growing sense of community spirit involving all the different groups, including students, young people, old people [and] immigrants.'[116] As we saw in Chapter 1, the formation of a community in adversity often underpinned community action as people came together to tackle common problems.

The third pillar of the case against the policy emphasised the value of the structure and built form of the older parts of the city and contrasted this against more modern council developments. Community activists praised the quintessentially urban qualities of older neighbourhoods. Street frontages were legible with doors opening onto a clearly defined street. The geometric street pattern made neighbourhoods highly permeable for pedestrians. There was an abundance of shops, small businesses, pubs, clubs and other social facilities within easy walking distance of people's homes.[117] Owing to their high density, older neighbourhoods enjoyed high quality public transport links. Car ownership was not a requirement to travel around the city. Although the streets themselves usually lacked greenery, older neighbourhoods were usually well-served with traditional parks, recreation grounds or areas of common land.[118] Older neighbourhoods were almost invariably located close to the city centre, with its abundant commercial and leisure amenities, and close to the city's industrial belt where many residents worked.[119] The popularity of the inner city was visible in the long waiting lists for tenancies on certain inner city council estates: many households were prepared to wait in order to gain a flat or maisonette close to the city centre when houses were available immediately on suburban estates.[120] This was little consolation for community activists protesting clearance who were aware that they were more likely to be rehoused on peripheral estates where most council housing was located.

---

[114] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 8 July 1972, 396-7
[115] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 8 March 1972, 396-7
[116] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 2 May 1973, 546-8
[117] CSHAG, *Cross Streets*, 24; LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 8 March 1972, 391-2
[118] CSHAG, *Cross Streets*, 4
[119] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 8 March 1972, 391-2
[120] LCC, Quarterly Report of the Department of Housing, 31 March 1975, 6-7

If community activists were advocates of traditional urbanism, they were also highly critical of the new urban landscape that was designed to replace older neighbourhoods. A key criticism was that most council housing was built on the city's periphery, far away from the amenities of the city centre and from places of work. Since only a small minority of council tenants in Leeds had access to a car in the 1970s, residents became heavily dependent on the bus services, which were less frequent in outlying areas. Women, the elderly and low income families, who were even less likely have access to a car, were at a particular disadvantage on the peripheral estates.[121] Peripheral council estates were usually built to much lower densities than inner city communities so they were unable to support as wide a range of social and commercial amenities; this problem was exacerbated by the high rents charged by the council in new shopping parades and the dearth of shopping units. Estates increasingly became dependent on large centralised district shopping centres, anchored by supermarkets. While most council estates contained an abundance of green space compared to the inner city, this was often unimaginatively laid out and not particularly attractive. One report argued that the peculiar combination of high rise buildings, winding roads and large grassy spaces on the new estates 'makes getting to know your neighbours that much more difficult.'[122] Tall flats were associated with loneliness and social isolation, especially among the elderly.[123] Low rise estates designed according to Radburn principles, which segregated pedestrians and vehicles, were criticised for abandoning the traditional streets for a confusing maze of footpaths and service roads.

The widely publicised physical and social problems on many council estates undermined the status of council housing. Stories of dampness, infestations, high heating costs, vandalism, dereliction, and child delinquency became increasingly common in the 1970s.[124] Though the media popularised these negative images, these issues were initially highlighted by community activists organising on council estates as we saw in Chapter 1. Social and physical problems not only affected the high density modernist estates of the 1950s and 1960s, they were also endemic on many of the city's low density interwar cottage estates where the housing stock was in a poor state of repair after decades of under-investment and many homes lacked modern electric wiring and central heating. Allocations policies which concentrated disadvantaged families on certain estates exacerbated social problems. The prestige of council housing was dealt a heavy blow in late 1973 when the council decided to demolish the Quarry Hill estate in central Leeds less than forty years after it had been

---

[121] Leeds Trades Council, *Which Way*, 16
[122] Leeds Trades Council, *Which Way*, 16
[123] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 8 March 1972, 391-2
[124] Leeds Civic Trust, *Outlook,* No. 12, May 1976, 4-5

built.[125] Activists drew on this body of evidence to argue that moving to council housing would not automatically raise their living standards. This point was underlined by stories of households who had moved from back-to-back housing in the inner city to council housing only to find the latter in a worse state of repair.[126] Turning on its head the argument that the architecture of the new estates would have an edifying effect on their inhabitants, one action group held that '[t]he seedy Seacroft centre epitomises the sterility of new areas with their drug-taking, crime and delinquency.'[127] The familiarity and stability of many older neighbourhoods was juxtaposed against the social dislocation already evident on new estates.

The final component of the case against the council's policies drew together the first three strands to craft a political argument against the way housing renewal was carried out. As we saw earlier, the policy making process and the mode of implementation did not enable anything more than perfunctory resident involvement. Underlying their arguments about the importance of older housing and inner city neighbourhoods was the view that the value of such areas could only be determined by those who lived there. As a petition to the council put it, '[t]he fitness of a house can be judged best by the consumer…therefore there should be no demolition in advance of residents' wishes.'[128] A group in Castleton developed this point, arguing that communities should have the 'right to determine the housing and facilities in which they live.'[129] As we saw earlier, for community activists the experience of Burley Lodge Road reinforced the view that any alternative to clearance would only succeed if the local people were closely involved in its implementation.[130]

The democratic deficit in policy making mattered to activists because they disagreed with the prevailing policy. They had to challenge the council's claim that the policy had the backing of the people affected by it by showing that clearance was unpopular and people wanted a new approach. To do this, activists undertook surveys of local opinion and publicised the results. The Cross Streets Housing Action Group conducted a survey with the assistance of students from Leeds Polytechnic, which revealed that 80 per cent of residents opposed clearance and wanted to remain in the area.[131] Similar surveys organised by groups in Woodhouse, Hunslet and Park revealed majorities of between 70 and 80 per cent

[125] Alison Ravetz, *Model Estate: Planned Housing at Quarry Hill* (Abingdon, 1974), 223; Kevin Gould, Letter to residents of Quarry Hill, November 1973, WYA: WYL564
[126] *LOP,* No. 23, Jun 12-25 1975, 10; LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 6 December 1978, 5-6
[127] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 19 November 1975, 251-53
[128] Petition on 1975 Housing Strategy, 1975, ALC
[129] Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Report,* 8 March 1972, 392-3
[130] Joint Working Party, 'Burley,' 12
[131] CSHAG, Residents Report, 1976

opposing clearance.[132] While it is difficult to assess how methodologically rigorous these polls were, they were powerful political tools, which served to emphasise the perceived gap between public policy and community opinion.

In making these arguments, community activists were rejecting the model of representative democracy according to which elected councillors made major policy decisions on behalf of their constituents without actively consulting with them. They were challenging the role of council officers in policy making who, according to activists, exerted undue influence over the urban renewal process. The Woodhouse Community Association told the council that 'it is the planners who really rule.'[133] Officers were often portrayed as detached from the experiences of inner city communities, motivated by their professional interests not the concerns of ordinary people. The Community Housing Working Party claimed that the problems encountered by community activists in Stourton were 'a classic example of planners disrupting a community by applying solutions from above to problems which largely exist in their own eyes.'[134] Since officers were 'trained to operate and think according to national, generalised standards,' they were not always sensitive to the particular needs of every community.[135]

The argument that inner city communities should have a greater role in policy making was sometimes framed in terms of class and locality. Activists maintained that a largely middle-class group of councillors and officers who mainly resided in the outer suburbs were attempting to impose decisions on the largely working-class populations of the inner city. The struggle over housing renewal was frequently presented as a contest between north and south Leeds or between the outer suburbs and the inner city. Remarking on the dereliction and neglect that characterised Hunslet, a speaker for a community group from the area asked: 'Would it have been left thus in Headingley, Weetwood or Alwoodley?'[136] Fractious encounters between community activists and councillors brought out similar grievances. After a meeting between councillors and the Ebors Action Group, one activist complained that 'if this is the sort of person that Far Headingley, Roundhay, Alwoodley and Moortown breed, then they should stay there and stop vandalising delightful areas like the Ebors.'[137] The implication was that the people who actually lived and worked in inner city neighbourhoods, rather than those who purported to represent them, should play a greater

[132] *Hearsay,* July 1974, No. 2; Ebors Action Group, Report, 6; Woodhouse Housing Action Group, *Which Way Woodhouse?* (1976), 7
[133] Leeds City Council, Verbatim Reports, 19 November 1975, 351-53
[134] Leeds Civic Trust, *Outlook,* No. 19, November 1977, 3
[135] CHWP, Gradual Renewal, 4
[136] Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Report,* 30 April 1969, 4-5
[137] *Leeds Other Paper,* No. 19, August 1975, 3

role in their governance. As community action expanded, activists explicitly called for greater public participation in policy-making. Below, we shall examine the ways in which activists endeavoured to put these ideas into practice. The key point here is that the community activists' case against housing renewal was as much an argument for a different model of urban governance as it was a case against a particular approach to housing renewal.

This section has developed three interlinked points. First, community activists constructed a broad range of arguments surrounding housing renewal. The case against the city's housing policies valorised the city's older housing stock and the traditional inner city neighbourhoods in which it was located. They stressed the material and social benefits of the older urban fabric. Second, community activists campaigning on housing renewal were concerned not only with urban preservation, but with challenging the way the city was governed. The way housing policy was formulated was presented as symptomatic of a wider democratic deficit. This, they argued, could be addressed as part of a more participatory approach to housing renewal. Third, community activists developed sophisticated arguments, based on detailed evidence and research. They conducted investigations themselves, commissioned professional help and made recourse to work in other cities. In doing so, they challenged the empirical base on which the city council defined the city's problems and proposed solutions.

3. Who were the activists?

Having explored the debate over housing renewal and the policy making process, we can now examine who participated in community action campaigns. Few community action groups in Leeds had a formal membership system and the membership records created by some have not survived. As such, this discussion is based on biographical information contained in a range of other sources. Community action groups were organised by a relatively small group of core activists who drew on the support of a larger section of the neighbourhood, but it is not always possible to distinguish between the core activists and sympathetic members of the community.

The most committed community activists were often those who felt a strong connection to their neighbourhood. This could be because they had lived there for several decades and in that time made various investments in the area. Elderly tenants, many of whom had lived in their area for several decades, were also particularly active in community groups. A deputation from the Whingate Community Association to the council consisted of activists

who had lived in the area for between 40 and 60 years.[138] As we have seen, elderly tenants and owner occupiers had a clear financial incentive to remain in older property. Owner occupiers were particularly active in the groups. In many inner city districts, owner occupation rates were as high as one third, but unlike their suburban counterparts inner city owner occupiers owners were usually on low incomes and their property had a low market value.[139] Working-class owner-occupiers tended to be middle-aged or retired and they had often invested their life savings to acquire and modernise their small property. Many had benefited from local authority mortgages as private finance was hard to obtain in the inner city.[140] As long-time residents of their neighbourhoods, working-class owner-occupiers had made a significant financial, social and emotional investment in their area and in its future.

Women were well-represented in community action groups. Whilst men were often selected as the titular leaders of the groups, women often did the bulk of the organising.[141] Women were often more deeply immersed in the social life of their neighbourhood than local men; they established friendships with their neighbours and felt a greater sense of community. Women were responsible for maintaining the household and many women saw community action over housing issues as a logical extension of this role. It is no coincidence that many of the men who were involved with community action worked or had an economic interest in the immediate neighbourhood. Local shopkeepers helped to found the Belle Vue and Burley Community Association.[142] They had a clear vested interest in preserving and improving the neighbourhood. Commercial streets were often cleared along with local housing and shopkeepers found it difficult to re-establish their business on council estates where rents were significantly higher and population densities lower. If their business survived, their consumer base would be eroded by the centrifugal effects of clearance.

Many inner city neighbourhoods contained a mixture of households who were settled and relatively comfortable and those who were highly transient and very poor. As a council report explained 'stability and instability are found side by side' in the inner 'redevelopment zone,' 'but all parts are liable to change.'[143] The backbone of community action groups was the stable section of the community. The presence of a critical mass of such households was a pre-condition for community action. Community action was less common in the most acutely deprived areas of the inner city where social problems – overcrowding, illiteracy,

---

[138] Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Report,* 2 May 1973, 545-6
[139] Leeds City Council, 'Ebors: Proposed HAA, Joint Report of Director of Housing, Director of Planning and Chief Environmental Health Officer,' June 1976, 7
[140] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 30 July 1975, 141-43
[141] Interview with Barbara Hancock, Leeds and Southampton, 2014
[142] Joint Working Party, 'Burley,' 10
[143] Leeds City Council, 'Leeds: Social Area Analysis,' August 1971, 2-3 1970, EBC

child delinquency, children in care – were particularly common; but it was more common in the 'fringe' or 'marginal' areas of deprivation in the inner city – areas with high concentrations of old housing and households on modest incomes but fewer social problems.[144] The transient and acutely deprived component of the inner city population – families on very low incomes, young single people and other itinerant households – were politically apathetic. Whilst community action groups advocated for this section of the population in arguing for the retention of low cost, accessible housing within easy reach of work and services, the groups rarely received their active support.

Ethnic minorities were poorly represented in most community action groups. Areas such as Burley, Harehills and Woodhouse contained large numbers of new commonwealth immigrants, but they do not appear to have participated in the local action groups in large numbers before the 1980s. While there is no evidence that the groups held racist views, most made few attempts to reach out to ethnic minorities. Ethnic minority participation in community action groups in areas such as Harehills and south Headingley did increase in the late 1970s and 1980s as immigrant households became more established in the area and perhaps began to identify with the objectives of local community action groups.[145] Chapeltown was the key exception in that ethnic minority participation in community action was significant from the late 1960s. The Chapeltown Community Association's membership was broadly representative of the area's ethnically diverse population: in 1972, on the CCA's ruling council, one member was a Sikh, four were born in the West Indies, one in Ireland and nine in England.[146] An action group in the Gathornes and Giptons area of Chapeltown, which was threatened with clearance, was ethnically diverse.[147] Despite this, one CCA member believed some of the CCA groups needed to do more 'to increase their representativeness.'[148]

The community action campaign against clearance was more than a 'working class protest rebellion.'[149] Most community action groups in Leeds were the product of a creative partnership between people of working-class origin and people from a more privileged socioeconomic background who supported their objectives. Community action gained much

[144] Leeds City Council, Identification of Areas of Multiple Deprivation,' 8 and 'Map B: Deprived Areas,' WYA: WYL2058
[145] A Mr Hussein is listed as one of the members of the Elfords Residents Association in 1983, but few distinctively South Asian names appear in community group records before the 1980s. LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 9 November 1983, 3
[146] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 2, August 1972, 11
[147] 'People who have come to meetings about the Gathornes and Giptons,' 3 September 1973, WYA: WYL2058
[148] AGM of CCA, 24 October 1972, WYA, WYL: 2058
[149] Stephen Burt and Kevin Grady, *An Illustrated History of Leeds* (Derby, 2002): 241

of its strength from the active input of confident, well-informed and well-educated citizens who possessed political and professional contacts and lent their expertise. Many of these individuals were drawn from the progressive wing of the disciplines of architecture, planning, social work, community work and housing management.[150] They were professionally committed to developing a new approach to housing policy that prioritised resident participation and rehabilitation. They were interested in the capacity of the older built environment to support communities and to meet the needs of various marginalised social groups. They undertook research, consulted national policy documents, and wrote reports. Citywide groups like the Leeds Civic Trust acted as a clearing house for professionals wishing to support local action groups. Students from the Polytechnic on courses in these disciplines were often willing helpers, producing a report for activists in Chapeltown, for instance.[151]

The emerging field of community work was a key source of middle-class support for community action groups in the inner city. Community workers were employed by local voluntary organisations, often with public funding, to support the development of community organisations that would support the efforts of public and voluntary agencies to tackle various social problems. As we shall see in Chapter 4, community workers at the Hall Lane Community Centre stimulated and supported community action over housing renewal in Armley.[152] Keith Mollison, the SCAT worker whose work in Hunslet we examined in Chapter 2, offered planning and housing advice to community activists in Chapeltown who were campaigning against clearance and formulating a response to the council's local plan consultation.[153] Barbara Craig and her colleagues at the Hunslet Parish Community Work Project, whose work with the Hunslet Grange activists we analysed in Chapter 1, supported several action groups in Hunslet campaigning against housing clearance.[154] Community workers also helped to link together different community action groups. Barbara Craig and Keith Mollison became members of the Leeds Community Workers Group, which enabled community workers from around Leeds to share information and co-ordinate campaigns on issues like housing improvement and fuel poverty.[155]

---

[150] 'The Bureaucratic Guerrilla: an alternative role for the local authority planner,' *Community Action,* No. 1 February 1972, 26-28
[151] 'Chapeltown, '72: A Report from the Grassroots' (1972) 8, WYA: WYL2058
[152] CHWP, *Four Case Studies*, 3
[153] Keith Mollison to Max Farrar 14 December 1973, WYA: WYL564; Peta Sissons to Max Farrar, 13 November 1973, WYA: WYL564
[154] Barbara Craig, Hunslet Parish Community Work Project, 1977, BHC
[155] Interview with Mollison; Interview with Craig

The professional, middle-class members or supporters of community action groups were not necessarily outsiders in the sense that they lived outside the area affected by clearance policies. Many inner-city neighbourhoods, especially in north Leeds, were socially mixed with significant pockets of middle class residents either at the fringes or closer to the centre. Hyde Park and Chapeltown exemplified this variety. These areas were directly affected by housing clearance policies and they bordered the districts that were most heavily affected by clearance and redevelopment. Community action flourished in socially diverse areas as politically motivated professionals mingled with working-class residents in opposing clearance (see Fig. 2.7). University lecturers, professionals and students were active in the Woodhouse Housing Action Group and the South Headingley Community Association. Smaller groups such as the Ebors Action Group and the Victoria and Consorts Housing Group were set up by middle-class professionals living in a largely working-class area.

The relationship between middle-class professionals and working-class residents in community action groups was complex and varied. As we saw in Chapter 1, community workers usually adopted an enabling role, providing advice without speaking on behalf of the groups or making decisions for them. This approach was informed by the professional ethic of community work.[156] Many of the planners, architects and academics who participated in community action played a more central role, chairing meetings, writing letters and leading delegations to the council. As we shall explore later, it was usually these professionals who introduced community activists to new approaches to housing and planning policy, furnishing action groups with expert knowledge. Middle-class involvement in community action over housing renewal was driven as much by self-interest as by political principle. Many middle-class residents of the inner city were personally affected by urban renewal schemes. In the early 1970s, streets of large through terraces in Hyde Park and south Headingley, within walking distance of the University, were scheduled to be cleared, along with nearby back-to-backs.[157] The property in Hyde Park owned by one prominent Leeds community activist from an upper-middle-class background was inserted into the clearance programme in the early 1970s.[158] Those middle-class activists whose homes were not directly affected by the published proposals still feared that the rolling clearance programme would eventually reach their homes. The uncertainty generated by the rolling clearance programme meant that aspiring owner occupiers found it difficult to acquire mortgages on pre-1919 property in inner city Leeds, even if they were not formally

---

[156] Interview with Hancock
[157] SHCA, 'Notes on Property retained in the 1982-86 clearance programme,' 1973, WYA: WYL5012; Regents Park Residents Association to City Development Officer, 4 February 1973, WYA: WYL47
[158] Audrey Marlow, Letter to City Development Officer, 5 February 1972, WYA: WYL247

scheduled for clearance.[159] Research conducted by the community activists revealed that local building societies had designated large swathes of the older city as 'blue zones,' areas where they would not lend to home buyers.[160] Blue zoning provided middle class residents with a vested interest to campaign against the principle that all older housing would eventually become obsolete.[161] Prospective home owners and current middle-class and working-class owner occupiers were could thus unite in condemning housing clearance for its effects on confidence in the local housing market. In choosing to live in the inner areas, rather than the outer suburbs, these middle class activists constituted a distinctive segment of the city's middle class population. While inner city Leeds was certainly not experiencing gentrification in this period, these middle class community activists resembled the men and women who gentrified inner London neighbourhoods in this period: they were graduates working in service sector with a liberal or left-wing political outlook.[162]

Although they brought together a wide range of individuals, community action groups campaigning against clearance did not represent all the interest groups in inner city neighbourhood. A significant proportion of the population tacitly supported the prevailing model of housing renewal. Young families with children were far more likely to support clearance and redevelopment because it provided an opportunity for them to improve their housing conditions.[163] Low density council estates with semi-detached houses and abundant open space often appealed to families with children. For families with at least one skilled worker in a secure job the prospect of increased housing costs was less daunting. Surveys conducted by community activists showed that between one fifth and one third of households supported clearance policy in affected neighbourhoods.[164] While this represented a significant decline in public support for clearance compared to the 1950s and 1960s, it indicates that community activists could not speak for the whole neighbourhood. As we shall see, the tensions between the opponents of clearance and its supporters became more pronounced as the period progressed, creating a crisis of legitimacy for many community action groups.

This section has advanced the following basic arguments about the composition of the community action groups. First, community action was a broad, dynamic partnership of

---

[159] North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association, Annual Report 1974-5, WYL 247; Stuart Weir, 'Red-line districts', *Roof,* July 1976, 110
[160] NHPRA and SHCA*, Memorandum to DOE Finance Review* (1976)
[161] Interview with Ravetz
[162] See the descriptions of the new urban middle class in London in Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (London, 1974): 85 and Jeremy Bulger, 'The Invaders of Islington,' *New Society,* 15 August 1968, 226. However, there were fewer cultural and media professionals in Leeds in this period.
[163] Hunslet Parochial Church Council, *A Study of Attitudes to Housing Old and New* (1977): 3
[164] EAG, *Report*, 4; CSHAG, *Residents' Report*, 2

people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. It was not a single-class monoculture and it is difficult to generalise about what the average community activist looked like. The success of community action hinged upon an alliance between mobile middle-class professionals, who often possessed a particular expertise in planning and housing issues, and people from a working-class background who had few formal qualifications but felt a strong connection to their locality. Second, self-interest was a key driver of community action. This applied as much to the middle-class community activists as their working-class counterparts. Most activists felt they stood to benefit personally from the campaign. This helps to explain their energy and commitment. A smaller number of community activists had no clear personal interest in the outcome but had made a professional or political commitment to a new approach to housing renewal. Third, a theme linking most of those who participated in community action was a feeling that they had been ignored by policy makers. Community action drew together a diverse range of people whose housing priorities and attitudes to urban living were not accommodated in the city's approach to urban renewal.

4. Community based renewal

This section returns to the narrative we began in the first section to investigate the impact of community action on the city's housing policy. Its aim is to assess the effectiveness of the community action. It will begin by discussing how community activists sought to influence local policy before considering their achievements. Community groups had to demonstrate that they were representative of opinion in their neighbourhood. Lacking an electoral mandate, they were always susceptible to the charge that they were a minority interest group. The groups had to overturn an entrenched view in the council that clearance and redevelopment were universally popular. Organising a petition was a means of demonstrating that an action group was representative of neighbourhood opinion. Petitions with several hundred signatures were common.[165] Sending a deputation of group members to a city council meeting was another means of raising awareness of the group's cause and underlining the strength of local opinion. Since petitions and deputations could be ignored fairly easily, activists arranged other face-to-face meetings, away from the scripted encounters of the council chamber.

While demonstrating their credibility, activists sought to apply pressure on the council and other public bodies. Here we are mainly concerned with the methods rather than their eventual outcome. Activists used the traditional channels for communication within the

---

[165] Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Reports*, 8 March 1972, 393-5

system of local government and experimented with new approaches. Community activists usually made a concerted effort to develop good relationship with local councillors who could act as an advocate for the group in the council.[166] Early in their campaign, the South Headingley Community Association secured the support of their ward councillors, who advocated for the group in the city council. Activists also arranged public meetings between members of the community and representatives of the council, giving activists the opportunity to lobby councillors and officers. These meetings contained moments of tension, exposing political and cultural differences between community activists and council representatives: at one meeting with councillors in 1974, members of the Ebors Action Group described the elected members as '"pig ignorant"' of local issues.[167] Disparaging remarks aside, activists were often able to negotiate concessions from councillors at public meetings when they felt the weight of public opinion. At one such meeting in December 1972, the Burley and Belle Vue Community Action Group negotiated a reprieve for part of the neighbourhood, then in the clearance programme.[168]

Community activists experimented with newer forms of protest associated with the new social movements of this period. Sit-ins, occupations and squats were uncommon in campaigns over clearance and rehousing. City centre marches and delegations to the civic hall were the norm. Borrowing from the trade union movement, in 1975 the Woodhouse Housing Action Group picketed a meeting of the Housing Committee to protest a decision on clearance, which they claimed had been made without public consultation.[169] Groups also deployed less confrontational, more creative forms of protest. The Ebors Action Group used drama to communicate their message. When councillors came to visit the area in summer 1975, the group organised a mock carnival on one of the main streets complete with banners and a brass band.[170] This dramatised the sense of community that the group claimed existed in the area. During their campaign The Ebors Group performed a satirical play, 'The Golden City' to parody council policy and procedure.[171] After the area had been removed from the clearance programme, group members performed a pantomime, 'Eborella: A Christmas Fantasy,' which toured pubs in Leeds in 1976 and 1977, in a light-hearted attempt to educate other communities about the lessons they had learned.

[166] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 6, July 1973, 5
[167] *LOP,* No. 12, January 1975, 14
[168] LCC, Minutes of the Housing Services Committee, 12 January 1973 (l)
[169] *LOP,* December 1975, No. 23, 5
[170] *LOP,* No. 19, August 1975, 3
[171] *LOP*, No. 34 July 1976 10-24, 2

Community activists needed to sustain the participation of local people in the campaign. This was partly to ensure they appeared legitimate in the eyes of the local authority, but on a more practical level, it was to secure sufficient manpower to run the action groups. Despite the existence of widespread disenchantment with the council's renewal policies, apathy was prevalent. Many people did not believe it was possible for a community group to effect change in the face of council opposition. Activists in the Oldfield Lane Community Association remarked that

> [a] lot of people expressed the sort of feeling of pessimism and hopelessness about what was planned for them. They felt they were facing some distant impersonal machine which would do whatever it wanted to do regardless of their opinions on the subject. A typical comment was "If the council want your house…there is nothing you can do about it."[172]

One way of combatting apathy was to raise local awareness of the campaign and the issues at stake. Most community action groups produced and circulated regular newsletters for this purpose.[173] Given the area over which groups operated, it was not possible to rely on face-to-face communication alone. Community newsletters explained what the council was proposing for the area and outlined the alternatives. They also contained information about key meetings and campaigning actions. To produce these newsletters, activists made use of the cheap off-set lithograph printing that became widely available in this period.[174] These publications compensated for the relative dearth of official information about housing renewal, which tended to reinforce pessimism that the council's plans could not be stopped. Activists hoped that a more informed population would be more likely to engage in activism.

Although the mainstream media could not be relied upon to cover the particulars of any given campaign, community activists used it at important strategic moments to raise awareness of their campaign. Press releases were issued to tie in with public meetings, petitions and deputations. Media coverage made it harder for the council to ignore community action. Community action impacted on the way urban renewal was discussed in the local media. Whereas the local press had covered clearance and redevelopment uncritically in the 1960s, it began to acknowledge other viewpoints in the 1970s. The protests surrounding Strategy D received extensive coverage in the local press and journalists often quoted community activists.[175] The activities of the groups received more sustained and detailed coverage in the alternative press: *The Other Paper* and its successor

---

[172] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 21 November 1973, 107-8
[173] Holbeck Community Association, *Holbeck Voice*; Ebor Action Group, *Hearsay,* and Woodhouse Community Association, *Yapstick.*
[174] Nigel Fountain, *Underground: The London Alternative Press,* 1966-1974 (London, 1988); Robert Dickinson, *Imprinting the Sticks: the Alternative Press Beyond London* (Aldershot, 1997)
[175] *YEP,* 15 February 1972, 2

the *Leeds Other Paper* contained numerous stories on the community action campaign for a new housing policy. With a readership largely confined to the Left and the politically aware, these publications had a much circulation than the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, but they helped to raise awareness of local community campaigns in the wider activist community.[176]

One of the most effective tools in the armoury of community activists was collaborative working between groups across Leeds. This helped to strengthen their negotiating position and ensured their voice was heard by the often aloof council. While community action was born as a disparate collection of neighbourhood groups, these groups quickly coalesced to form a citywide campaign. By the mid-1970s, activists were routinely working together and they established joint organisations. As early as 1972, two of the city's first community action groups, the Belle Vue and Burley Community Association and the Chapeltown Community Association organised meetings of community groups operating in the inner city to discuss shared concerns.[177] These meeting exposed certain rifts between community action – owner occupiers were not always sure their interests were aligned with those of tenants – but ultimately these differences proved inconsequential until later in the decade.[178] Crucially, activists from different neighbourhoods were talking and sharing ideas. In 1974 and 1975, community activists held a series of citywide events to discuss broader issues of policy and strategy. At a conference titled 'Housing for All' in February 1974 at Leeds Polytechnic Leeds community activists spoke alongside academics, councillors and campaigners from other parts of the UK such as Camden and Clay Cross.[179] Terry Flynn of the Belle Vue and Burley Community Association emphasised the need for 'a committee to co-ordinate the actions of community associations and tenants associations in Leeds.'[180] A second Housing for All conference was held in spring 1975.[181] Building on these networking efforts, in 1976 a group of community activists concerned with housing renewal formed the Community Housing Working Party (CHWP). The group functioned as a clearing house for activists opposing the clearance programme, exchanging ideas, conducting research and promoting alternative approaches to housing renewal.[182] The core group of activists who steered the CHWP were mainly drawn from the middle-class wings of community action groups, including community workers, academics and architects. Over

---

[176] Tony Harcup, *A Northern Star: Leeds Other Paper and the Alternative Press* (London and Pontefract, 1994)
[177] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 2, August 1972, 6; LCT, *Outlook*, No. 3, October 1972, 6
[178] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 2, No. 2, August 1972, 6
[179] 'Housing for all Conference Programme,' 24 February 1974, WYA: WYL564
[180] 'Move! Broadsheet of the campaign for housing for all,' No. 2, February 1974, 1, WYA: WYL564
[181] *LOP,* No. 16 May 1975, 15
[182] CHWP, *House Sense* (Leeds, 1980), ii

a dozen community action groups from all parts of the inner city had affiliated to the CHWP by 1980.[183]

The CHWP's major contribution to community action was to help to sponsor a viable alternative to existing housing renewal policies.[184] The group promoted the gradual renewal method, developed by scholars in the fields of planning and architecture.[185] According to this approach neighbourhoods should be renewed incrementally in response to the particular needs of each of its component parts. Practitioners of gradual renewal divided up an area into cells, as small as a single street. Each cell would be assessed independently to ascertain whether rehabilitation, demolition or a combination was suitable. This dispensed with the traditional practice of clearing large sites and making a presumption in favour of clearance based solely on housing type and street layout. Selective demolition would create space for new community facilities, green space or new housing. Resident involvement was central to the approach. Decisions on the form renewal should take would be based as far as possible on the expressed wishes of local people. The local community would be intimately involved in every stage of the renewal process, preparing plans and monitoring work. Professionals would work from an office based in the area, making them accessible to residents and enabling them to build up detailed local knowledge.

In 1976 the CHWP published a report outlining gradual renewal and discussing how it might be applied to Leeds.[186] This was circulated to councillors and members of the Housing Committee and it received extensive coverage in the local press. The report drew lessons from the Jericho area of Oxford where gradual renewal had been trialled in the early to mid-1970s.[187] The group's argument about the value of participation was informed by the experience of Byker in Newcastle where the residents had been consulted by the architect during the redevelopment of the area.[188] The advocates of gradual renewal in Leeds were also influenced by Jane Jacobs who espoused similar ideas about urban revitalisation in America.[189] In promoting gradual renewal, the CHWP provided community action groups with a well-researched and credible alternative to orthodox renewal policies; this gave many groups a clearer focus and sense of purpose, as we discuss see below.

---

[183] *ibid*
[184] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 97-137
[185] Robert McKie, 'Cellular Renewal', *Town Planning Review,* Vol 45, 1974, 274-90
[186] CHWP, *Gradual Renewal in Leeds: A Report on Clearance and Improvement* (1976)
[187] Richard Moore, 'Gradual Renewal,' *Architects' Journal,* 5 February 1975, reproduced in CHWP, *Gradual Renewal,* 14-17
[188] Graham Towers, *Re-building Democracy: community architecture in the inner cities* (London, 1995): 50-52
[189] Ken Powell, *Leeds: Must Old Still Mean Bad?* Save Britain's Heritage (1981): 9; Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, 1961)

Having explored how the activists operated, we will now turn to assessing their impact. The first major wave of community action impacted on council policy remarkably rapidly. In July 1972, the Housing Committee began a citywide review of clearance proposals and the members of the committee personally visited all of the areas scheduled for clearance under the housing strategy, a total of 56 visits.[190] In several neighbourhoods clearance was re-scheduled for a later period, making them eligible for improvement grants, and others were removed from the clearance programme completely.[191] Following a public meeting held by the South Headingley Community Association in 1973, the council removed most of the scheduled area from the programme.[192] In July 1973 the entire 1982-86 phase of the clearance programme, which affected comparatively newer housing of a higher standard, was deleted.[193] In the same month, the council initiated a comprehensive review of its housing renewal policies. [194] Community activists had prompted the first major review of the policy in the post-war period.

The review of urban renewal policies coincided with the election of a Labour majority on the city council in May 1972. That Labour had voted in favour of Strategy D as recently as January 1972 reveals the influence of community action on local party policy. Although community groups did not field candidates in local elections, Labour was anxious to shore up its support in inner city wards. Liberal and Conservative victories in inner south and west Leeds since the late 1960s had emphasised Labour's vulnerability in areas affected by urban renewal.[195] The new Labour council also acknowledged that community action had raised important questions about the legitimacy of the policy making process. In its May 1972 manifesto the Leeds Labour Party pledged to 'consult with the residents before any plans are announced' and to plan 'demolition and redevelopment together to preserve family life' and allow 'those who wish to remain in their familiar area.'[196] The party was borrowing the rhetoric of community action. In late 1972, the council provided for consultation in housing policy by creating a set of Housing Consultative Committees for each area of the city.[197] Representatives of community and tenants groups were invited to sit alongside councillors

---

[190] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 19 July 1973, 47-50
[191] LCC, Housing Committee, 8 September 1972
[192] LCT, Outlook, No. 6, July 1973, 5
[193] LCC, 'Leeds Housing Strategy: Report of Housing Working Party,' April 1975, 28
[194] LCC Housing Committee, 3 July 1973, 37
[195] *Leeds Municipal Election Results, 1960-1982,* LLFHL
[196] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 8 November 1972
[197] LCC, Tenancy Sub-Committee, Housing Committee, 20 December 1972, 6

and officers, on these committees which first met in Autumn 1973 to discuss local policy and administration.[198]

Upon the completion of its policy review in April 1975, the council adopted a new housing strategy.[199] This reduced the clearance rate to 1,750 houses per year. A key reason cited in its report for reducing the clearance rate was 'the increasing public opposition to the scale of clearance action.'[200] The council accepted as legitimate activists' concerns about 'the effect [of clearance] on the supply of cheaper accommodation, particularly owner occupied.' The rump clearance programme was to be reviewed annually by a Housing Working Party 'in consultation with appropriate ward councillors and community groups.'[201] The council committed itself to various measures designed to maximise local rehousing opportunities for households displaced by clearance in order to preserve established communities.[202] In an attempt to make the administrative and legal procedures associated with urban renewal more transparent, the council published a booklet which explained the various stages of the clearance process, from officer inspection to rehousing.[203] The booklet accepted that the process could be 'confusing and upsetting,' before outlining the procedures by which residents could object to clearance action; it even suggested that neighbours might form a residents group.[204]

The impact of community action in Leeds mirrored trends in several other large British cities. Manchester City Council radically scaled back its clearance programme in 1974 after a major community campaign.[205] Bimingham City Council had taken a similar decision in late 1972 and the authority embarked on a major housing improvement programme.[206] In Leeds, the appraisal of housing renewal policy took place in the context of an assessment of several other planks of the post-war approach to urban renewal. As we saw in Chapter 1, the city's approach to council house-building shifted in the mid-1970s from system-built high and medium rise estates to low rise estates built from traditional materials. Chapter 3 shows how transport policy was influenced by community protest in a similar period. Several of the city's council comprehensive redevelopment proposals in the city centre and suburban

---

[198] LCC, Housing Committee, 14 December 1973, 30; Housing Consultative Committee, Central Area, Agenda, 2 October 1973, Max Farrar Notes, WYA: WYL564
[199] LCC, Housing Committee, 17 April 1975, 4
[200] Leeds City Council, 'Leeds Housing Strategy: Report of Housing Working Party,' April 1975, 9
[201] LCC, Housing Committee, 17 April 1975, 5
[202] Leeds City Council, 'Clearance and Local Rehousing: Report of the Housing Working Party,' November 1975
[203] Leeds City Council, *The Clearance   Process and You* (1976)
[204] *ibid*
[205] 'Manchester's Bulldozer Stopped,' *Community Action*, No. 16, Oct-Nov 1974, 33-34
[206] *Community Action,* No. 4, Sept-Oct 1972, 11; Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 225-236

district centres were either scaled back or abandoned in the mid- to late 1970s and the council designated several conservation areas.[207]

Community action was swimming with the tide of national government policy. A succession of government circulars in the early to mid-1970s echoed the case made by the community activists that clearance often caused unnecessary social distress, disrupted communities and depleted the stock of useful older urban housing.[208] This argument had been made powerfully in numerous academic studies.[209] The review of housing renewal policy that had begun in the late 1960s continued and government guidelines began to steer councils away from large-scale clearance towards housing rehabilitation. Further government-sponsored research demonstrated that improvement was viable.[210] In 1974, new legislation gave councils more powers to effect housing rehabilitation in designated areas.[211] The Housing Action Area supplemented the General Improvement area in councils' arsenals. As part of the 1975 strategy, Leeds City Council resolved to designate four General Improvement Areas (GIAs) and four Housing Action Areas (HAA) per year for five years.[212] National funding for housing improvement was increased in the early to mid-1970s. Housing Associations were allocated an increased share of public spending on housing and they were charged with playing a key role in the housing improvement drive.[213] Like in the late 1960s, this shift in policy was motivated as much by economic expediency as it was a response to the explosion of community action, but it still vindicated the approach activists had campaigned for and it strengthened their negotiating position.

In the mid-1970s the council's new stance on improvement and participation, combined with the continued shift of central government policy, gave community activists an opportunity to lobby for more radical policy innovations. The next part of this section will explore how community activists capitalised on their early victories to deliver new approaches to housing renewal aimed at rehabilitating older housing, preserving communities and extending resident involvement. Recognising that it was not always possible to achieve all three of these goals, community activists were prepared to

---

[207] Leeds City Council, 'Conservation Areas: Designation and Implementation,' February 1972

[208] Department of the Environment, *Better Homes: The Next Priorities* (HMSO, 1973): Cmnd. 5339, 5; DOE, *Housing Act 1974: Renewal Strategies* (HMSO, 1975): 7-8

[209] Norman Dennis, *People and Planning: the Sociology of Housing in Sunderland* (London, 1970); Norman Dennis, *Public Participation and Planners' Blight* (London, 1972)

[210] Department of the Environment, *New Life in Old Towns* (HMSO, 1970)

[211] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 107-114

[212] LCC , Housing Committee, 11 November 1975, 5

[213] Peter Malpass, *Housing Associations and Housing Policy: A Historical Perspective* (London, 2000): 157-171

compromise on retaining older housing if it was possible to conserve the community and give residents an enlarged role in the decision-making process.

Spearheaded by the CHWP, community action groups promoted gradual renewal as a structural alternative to conventional policies. Though gradual renewal had been endorsed by the Department of the Environment in 1975, the city council initially claimed that the method was not suitable for Leeds.[214] Community activists drew on their contacts in central government to bring pressure to bear on the council. In July 1976, Alison Ravetz wrote to one of her contacts at the Department of the Environment explaining Leeds City Council's reluctance to investigate gradual renewal. The official undertook to lobby the city council to take gradual renewal more seriously in areas like Woodhouse (see Fig. 2.5).[215] Community activists had conducted opinion surveys showing that 75 per cent of residents wanted at least part of old Woodhouse preserved and 53 per cent wished to stay in a modernised house; only 27 per cent favoured demolition and rehousing by the council.[216] In spring 1977, the CHWP and the Leeds Civic Trust organised a conference in the city at which several of its leading advocates spoke.[217] Several councillors and officers attended this event. This lobbying paid off when the city council agreed to conduct a feasibility study on gradual renewal in a part of Woodhouse, which had been earmarked for clearance.[218] The gradual renewal study was a major departure from the standard approach to policy making. The council organised a number of public meetings, chaired by councillors and officers, and distributed literature outlining the options.[219] Residents were presented with several renewal options—ranging from total redevelopment through partial demolition to gradual renewal— and asked to indicate their preference.[220] We will return to the Woodhouse gradual renewal study below.

Several of the major innovations in housing renewal in the mid- to late 1970s occurred in Hunslet. This was perhaps surprising since Hunslet had been subject to intense clearance and redevelopment since the 1930s. As we saw in Chapter 1, it was the site of some of the council's more infamous innovations in housing. It was partly on account of the shortcomings of experiments like Hunslet Grange that Hunslet was also the location for one of the most intensive backlashes against conventional renewal policies. The area developed

---

[214] DOE, *Renewal Strategies*, 7-8
[215] Richard Moore to Alison Ravetz, 29 July 1976, ARC; Richard Moore to Colin Jones, 1 July 1976, ARC
[216] WHAG, *Which Way*, 7
[217] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 16, April 1977, 7-8
[218] LCC, Housing Committee, 30 November 1976, 224
[219] Leeds City Council, 'Gradual renewal and its Application to Woodhouse,' 1978
[220] *ibid*

a thriving community action scene, not only on the Hunslet Grange estate.[221] Action groups in Hunslet formed across the district to contest further clearance in the early 1970s. These groups were assisted by the Hunslet Parish Community Work Project as we saw in Chapter 1.[222] Responding to this grassroots pressure, in 1974 the council undertook an appraisal of planning policies in Hunslet.[223] The report acknowledged that wholesale renewal had perhaps been pursued too vigorously in the past, before recommending that 'continuous community involvement' in any future redevelopment and as a result of this reappraisal officers were more willing to accept new approaches to old problems.[224] Activists capitalised on the new mood.

In 1974, the decision to demolish the Sussex Avenue area of Hunslet had been taken by the council, but in discussions with local residents the local community worker Barbara Craig found that residents remained anxious about the prospect of being rehoused in another area, away from their family and neighbours.[225] Craig suggested that pre-allocation might offer a solution to this problem. Under this approach, the council would allocate houses to families in a clearance area before the new estate had been built. Clearance and new building would be phased so that households could move directly from their old homes to the new estate. This created an opportunity for the community to participate in the design of the new estate. In response to Craig's encouragement, the residents of the Sussex Avenue Clearance Area formed the Rocheford Tenants Association to campaign for pre-allocation, arguing that it was consistent with the council's professed commitment to securing local rehousing. Following negotiations with the local housing manager and the chair of the Housing Committee, the council agreed to pre-allocate 90 families from the Sussex Avenue clearance area to the planned Pepper Lane estate of 113 houses.[226] All but two households participated in the scheme. Households were allocated a house well in advance of their move date. When given the freedom to swap allocated houses, many neighbours chose to continue living adjacent to one another on the new estate.[227] The community was consulted through public meetings, the circulation of a booklet and evening surgeries in the Housing Information Centre.[228] Tenants were allowed to select internal fittings as well as 'work top surfaces, external colour schemes, floor tiles and fencing.'[229]

---

[221] LCC, *Quarterly Reports of the Director of Housing,* 31 March 1975, 12
[222] Craig, 'Hunslet Parish'
[223] LCC, Planning Committee, 2 June 1976, 55
[224] Leeds City Council, 'Hunslet Appraisal: Current Position,' July 1976, 7
[225] Barbara Craig, 'Hunslet Parish'
[226] LCC, Housing Committee, 10 December 1974, 5
[227] Barbara Craig, 'Notes on Community Based Renewal in Leeds, 24 April 1978
[228] LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing,* 31 March 1975, 8
[229] *ibid*

If pre-allocation reconfigured the relationship between people and the council, it did not remove conflict: in some areas it generated new tensions. Residents pushed for more tenant involvement than the council was prepared to countenance and the issue of whether tenants should pay for the cost of their design choices generated animosity.[230] Despite these problems, the Rocheford Tenants Association declared the scheme 'an unqualified success.'[231] In 1977, a survey of residents who had been pre-allocated revealed a high degree of satisfaction a year later owing to the increased sense of control residents felt.[232] The Rocheford Tenants Association published a report documenting their experiences and they promoted pre-allocation nationally by writing about their experiences for *Community Action*.[233] Their achievement motivated residents in neighbouring areas to organise community groups to lobby for pre-allocation. In 1975, 70 families from a clearance area in Leasowe Road in Hunslet won the right to pre-allocation after convincing a planning inspector that the council's existing plans for them would not guarantee local rehousing.[234] This persuaded the council to export the pre-allocation model to other inner city neighbourhoods including Woodhouse, Stourton and Armley.[235] By the late 1970s it had become the city's default approach to rehousing from clearance areas.

A second inventive campaign in Hunslet saw activists capitalise on the community activists' early local victories and the shift in national policy to take more control over the process of housing renewal. In 1974, a dozen community groups and smaller housing associations formed the Leeds Federated Housing Association (LFHA), as a means of extending community control over inner city renewal.[236] As a registered housing association, the LFHA had access to public grants from the Housing Corporation to improve houses and let them to tenants at a fair rent. The Arthingtons Group (TAG) from Hunslet was one of the founding members of the LFHA. They had been campaigning since 1972 to preserve their neighbourhood of back-to-back streets. In November 1975, the group persuaded the council to release the Arthingtons area from the clearance programme. The Arthingtons was designated as the city's first Housing Action Area (HAA). In a HAA, property owners were eligible for a higher level of grant to undertake improvement work and public bodies

---

[230] LCC, Housing Committee, Tenancy Sub-Committee, 4 June 1975, 5; LCC, *Quarterly Report of the Director of Housing,* 30 June 1975, 7; Barbara Craig, 'Notes on Community Based Renewal in Leeds, 24 April 1978
[231] Rocheford Tenants Association, *Pre-allocation at Pepper Lane* (1976)
[232] Hunslet Parish Community Project, 'A Study of Attitudes to Housing – Old and New*,'* December 1977, 3
[233] *Community Action*, No. 28, Nov-Dec 1976
[234] Craig, 'Community Based Renewal'
[235] LCC, Housing Committee, 21 March 1978 (ss)
[236] Leeds Federated Housing Association, 'History,' http://www.lfha.co.uk/AboutUs, accessed 9 September 2015

received funds to plan and co-ordinate the work. TAG also persuaded the city council to nominate the LFHA as the agency responsible for administering the Arthingtons HAA.[237]

Through TAG's position as a member of the LFHA, the community exerted considerable influence over the improvement programme. Regular consultation meetings were held with residents and the housing association set up an office in the area to strengthen lines of communication between residents and officers.[238] Improvement work proceeded swiftly. The owner occupiers in the area began to renovate their houses with the assistance of grants.[239] Almost all the private landlords sold to the LFHA who modernised them and let them to members of the community who wanted to stay in the area.[240] Households who needed more space – usually families with children – were rehoused by the council elsewhere. The Arthingtons HAA benefitted from the relative social stability of the area and the preponderance of owner occupiers who had a vested interest in rehabilitation.[241] TAG was supported by Keith Mollison, the community worker employed by SCAT who also supported activists on Hunslet Grange.[242] For community activists, TAG's achievement validated the argument that housing renewal could meet the needs of the whole community if local people were closely involved in the process and if adequate funding was available.

The approach to housing renewal in the Arthingtons was the antithesis of the method the council had adopted in Burley Lodge Road a decade earlier and this transformation underlines the impact of community action on local policy making. The success of the Arthingtons HAA convinced the city council to roll out a programme of HAAs across the city. For community activists still campaigning against clearance, obtaining HAA status became a new objective in their campaign. The LFHA became a powerful vehicle for enabling community groups to effect improvement without relying wholly on the local authority. Other members of the LFHA in its first decade included the South Headingley Community Association, The Ebors Action Group alongside community action groups in West Hunslet and Holbeck.[243] The success of these Leeds activists in implementing a community-led approach to renewal was mirrored in other parts of urban Britain. In North Kensington, a community group persuaded the Greater London Council to redevelop the

[237] LCC, 'The Arthingtons: Proposed Housing Action Area,' Report of the Housing Working Party, November 1975
[238] LCC, 'Area Improvement: Progress and Procedures'
[239] *ibid*
[240] *ibid*
[241] *ibid*
[242] Interview with Keith Mollison, Leeds, 2014
[243] Leeds Federated Housing Association, Annual Report, 1981/83, EBC

Swinbrook area in accordance with the wishes of local people and guarantee local rehousing opportunities.[244]

The Arthingtons area of Hunslet was the site of a third and even more radical approach to housing renewal: the housing co-operative. Housing co-operatives were pioneered in the early 1970s in Liverpool, Islington and Coventry where they were conceived as a means of extending tenant control over housing in the context of disenchantment with both council and private landlords.[245] In a housing co-operative, property was collectively owned and managed by the members of the co-operative who bought equity in the co-operative for a nominal sum. Members paid rent to the co-operative, which covered the cost of building work and administration. If a member left the co-operative, their equity was transferred to a new member. Housing co-operatives were also conceived as a means of re-building community in inner city areas, since managing the co-operative required members to work together.[246] In the early to mid-1970s, the housing co-operative idea gained momentum nationally and eventually received cross-party support.[247] In 1975, the government enabled housing co-operatives to receive grant aid from the Housing Corporation. In 1976, it established the Co-operative Housing Agency to support the formation of housing co-operatives.[248] In the mid-1970s, community workers in Hunslet discussed with local housing officers the viability of setting up a new build housing co-operative in the district. The Arthingtons Group and the Leeds Federated Housing Association supported the proposal. The Chairman of the city's Housing Committee, who sat on a government working party on housing co-operatives, was receptive to the idea.[249] A steering committee for a Hunslet housing co-operative was formed by a partnership of community activists and public officials. Local people were invited to join and other members were drawn from the city's housing waiting list. In 1977 the Hunslet Housing Co-operative was formally constituted and in 1978 the council transferred the land on the site to the co-operative.[250]

---

[244] Towers, *Building Democracy,* 67-72

[245] Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project Liverpool, *Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project, July 1969-June 1972* (London, 1972); Towers, *Building Democracy,* 52-53; Anne Power, *Holloway Tenants' Co-operative: Five Years on* (1977); Charteris Road Area Tenants Association, 'Summary of Tenant Co-operative Proposal,' 14 June 1976, RCC

[246] sanfordcooptv, 'Sanford Housing Co-Operative 1974 1/4,' Youtube, 18 December 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKBKBbbmups, accessed 18 September 2015

[247] Department of the Environment, Working Party on Housing Co-operatives, *Final Report of the Working Party on Housing Co-operatives*, (HMSO, 1975)

[248] Advisory Committee on Housing Co-operatives, *Co-operatives and Housing Policy: A Report by the Advisory Committee on Housing Co-operatives in response to the Consultative Document on Housing Policy* (London, 1977); HC, 26 May 1976, vol. 912, cc.236-7W

[249] Barbara Craig, 'Hunslet Housing Co-operative: A History,' March 1978; LCC, Housing Committee, 6 April 1975, 2 (x)

[250] Craig, 'Housing Co-operative'; Leeds City Council, Housing Committee, 21 March 1978 (aa)

The co-operative model gave the community a hitherto unprecedented level of influence over the process of housing renewal. The members of the co-operative were in control of developing the site and allocating families to the new houses. They demonstrated their independence when they chose to appoint two new architects for the building work, spurning the architect who originally advised them.[251] Co-operative members played a key role in the design of the buildings, which required their chosen architects 'to re-think their traditional role' in publicly funded projects. [252] After a protracted round of negotiations over finance with the Housing Corporation, construction commenced and by 1980 the co-operative had completed, houses for 18 families, including 30 children.[253] The success of the Hunslet housing co-operative demonstrated the radical potential of community action when activists were able to mobilise a range of allies in support of a project. Following the success of this project, community activists in Harehills and Chapeltown successfully lobbied for council assistance to establish housing co-operatives to revitalise twilight areas.[254] These groups received public assistance to purchase and modernise dilapidated older housing. The success of Leeds housing co-operatives was replicated numerous times across urban Britain in the late 1970s and 1980s: with public assistance thousands of older houses were rehabilitated by housing co-operatives. Housing co-operatives across Britain built scores of small housing estates, usually according to traditional design principles with resident participation.[255] The housing co-operative movement was particularly active in Liverpool and the London boroughs of Islington and Haringey.[256]

This section has argued that community activists were able to steer the direction of the city's housing renewal policy. Community action was able to effect pioneering policy shifts in certain neighbourhoods that pointed towards a radical new approach to housing renewal. Community activists were flexible. They explored different approaches to housing renewal and they were not wedded to retaining the existing physical fabric if they could achieve their social and political goals through a new approach to redeveloping inner city areas. Community workers and allies in the housing and planning professions furnished community activists with detailed and deliverable approaches to renewal that helped them to achieve their aims. Key to the success of community action was the effective working relationship activists formed with influential local policy makers and ward councillors. The

---

[251] Craig, 'Housing Co-operative'
[252] Craig, 'Housing Co-operative'; *Leeds Other Paper,* No. 121, 11-25 Jan 1980, 15
[253] *Leeds Other Paper,* No. 121, 11-25 Jan 1980, 15
[254] LCC, Housing Committee, 23 March 1982 (z) and 24 June 1986, 10
[255] Alison Ravetz, *Participation in Design: A Study of New Build Housing* (Leeds Polytechnic, 1989): 10-36
[256] Towers, *Building Democracy,* 81-93; Anne Power, *Facts and Figures about the Holloway Tenant Co-operative: a survey of all rehoused members* (London, 1978); Towers, *Building Democracy,* 96-101

intersection between central government policy and the goals of the community action groups lent weight to their case for a new approach. The campaign was built on negotiation, but activists were also prepared to apply pressure indirectly through innovative forms of public protest influenced by the new social movements of the period. The result was that by the mid- to late 1970s the outline of an alternative approach to housing renewal was beginning to form.

5. Inner city decline and the limits of community action

If the mid-1970s was a period of creative opportunity, it was to prove a brief one. The later part of that decade and the 1980s was an increasingly hostile climate for community action surrounding housing renewal and activists made fewer significant gains. The more radical objectives of the city's community action groups remained largely unfulfilled in the mid-1980s. Innovative experiments in residents control and community-led renewal were limited to a handful of areas. The citywide campaign on housing renewal fragmented and its influence diminished. This section will discuss these limitations and explore the internal and external obstacles community activists faced in the second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s.

The traditional approach to housing renewal persisted in a diminished form for almost a decade after the council's policy review in the mid-1970s. The clearance programme had been scaled back but not abandoned: in 1975, the council still intended to clear 6700 houses by 1981.[257] The programme was to be rolled forward every year.[258] The threat of clearance still hung over a large proportion of the inner city. Traditional attitudes to the older urban fabric retained a powerful hold on many councillors and officers who remained wedded to the view that clearance and rehousing was the most effective form of housing renewal. Several experienced environmental health inspectors continued to view the back-to-back house as inherently unfit and beyond redemption.[259] In the late 1970s, the Chair of the Housing Committee, Peter Sparling, frequently remarked in council meetings that the clearance rate was too low, which he believed was 'storing up' problems for the future.[260]

The Cross Streets area of Armley was one neighbourhood that was retained in the clearance programme, despite a strong local campaign for rehabilitation by the Cross Streets Housing

[257] 'Petition on the 1975 Housing Strategy' (1975), ALC
[258] Leeds City Council, 'Report of the Housing Working Party: Housing Clearance Programme: Roll Forward and Publicity,' 12 September 1978
[259] Interview with Ravetz
[260] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 2 February 1977, 577; LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 12 October 1977, 196

Action Group (see Fig. 2.6).[261] The new approaches to renewal being pioneered elsewhere in Leeds bypassed this neighbourhood. As one member of the group put it, '"We feel like we're one of the last areas to go down under old ideas."'[262] At the public inquiry into the compulsory purchase order for the neighbourhood in 1977 the council resorted to traditional arguments for clearance, referring to the 'inherent limitations of back-to-back housing' and the obsolete street layout.[263] Despite receiving the support of the Hall Lane Community Centre, Leeds Civic Trust, the Liberal Party, the Community Housing Working Party and over a dozen other local organisations, activists failed to persuade the Department of the Environment to reject the council's compulsory purchase order, which was confirmed in May 1978.[264] Unable to contest clearance beyond this stage, the group ran a local advice centre to provide housing, legal and welfare advice to families in the rehousing process, before disbanding in 1979.[265]

Where clearance plans had been defeated activists still struggled to secure the long term future of the neighbourhood. Following the IMF loan crisis, cuts in public expenditure fell particularly hard on the housing budget. This was compounded in Leeds by the Conservative council's own policy of holding down the rates by curtailing spending on housing and other departments.[266] The improvement programme was also starved of financial resources and the council failed to meet its targets for declaring GIAs and HAAs to effect area improvement.[267] Between 1975 and 1979 13 out of a planned 16 HAAs were declared and only 6 out of 16 GIAs. A Shelter report on Harehills found that resources available were insufficient to effect improvement.[268] These economies undermined attempts to rebuild parts of the inner city and to offer displaced families the option of local rehousing. The council was reluctant to use its compulsory purchase powers to acquire unmodernised housing or to compel recalcitrant landlords to upgrade their properties. As a result, many inner city neighbourhoods that had been spared demolition continued to decline physically, eroding confidence that improvement could ever succeed.

The effect of these policies was marked in neighbourhoods like the Ebors area of Hyde Park. In 1975, following a campaign by the Ebors Action Group the area had been removed from the clearance programme and declared a Housing Action Area. Efforts by the group to

---

[261] LCC, Housing Committee, 7 September 1976, 132
[262] *Leeds Other Paper,* No. 44 Nov 27-Dec 11 1976, 22
[263] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 22, June 1978, 2
[264] Leeds Civic Trust, *Outlook,* No. 22, June 1978, 2
[265] *Leeds Other Paper,* No. 79, 28 April -12 May 1978, 7
[266] Leeds Trades Council, *Which Way,* 5
[267] Steve Bilcliffe, 'Twist the Lion's tail', *Roof,* March 1979, 54
[268] *ibid*

establish a housing co-operative in the neighbourhood to spearhead renewal – a proposal which had the support of 58 per cent of surveyed residents – were rebuffed by the city council. [269] But the council's own record in rehabilitating the area was poor.[270] No local area office was opened so officers did not develop a close relationship with local people.[271] The authority declined to use its full statutory powers to compel recalcitrant landlords to improve their property.[272] Several council-owned properties were left vacant for years and few property owners applied for grants.[273] The council's decision in 1984 to demolish some of the houses in the Ebors was an indictment of its efforts to rehabilitate the area.[274] The Ebors Action Group struggled to hold the council to account for this. The more complex process of monitoring improvement in the area and working with officers to prepare improvement plans was a more challenging task for the action group. The existential threat of clearance had bound the community together; sustaining the campaign in the next stage was more difficult. Another obstacle for activists was that the population became increasingly transient in the 1970s. Rates of owner occupation were lower than areas like the Arthingtons and social problems were more prevalent.[275] The experience of the Ebors was repeated elsewhere in the city. The Gathornes and Giptons area of Chapeltown was declared a Housing Action Area in 1976, but it was later reinserted into the clearance programme after the council's apparently lacklustre efforts to rehabilitate the area failed.[276]

Shifts in official rhetoric notwithstanding, the breadth and depth of resident involvement in housing policy making remained limited in the late 1970s. With no formal powers, the Housing Consultative Committees were essentially talking shops, a fact reflected in the low attendance at meetings in many areas.[277] Policy was still substantially made by officers and councillors with public involvement occurring at a late stage. Many local councillors were anxious about the implications of community participation. They were prepared to consult communities, even to co-opt local people onto committees, but baulked at more fundamental, structural changes in the 'style of government and the use of resources.'[278] High profile participation exercises such as the preparation of the Chapeltown Local Plan were roundly critiqued by community activists who argued that officers presented communities with a narrow range of options after the key decisions had already been

---

[269] LCC, 'Ebors: Proposed HAA,' 11
[270] LCC, 'Area Improvement: Progress and Procedures,'
[271] *ibid*
[272] Leeds Trades Council, *Which Way Home?* (1978)
[273] LCC, 'Area Improvement: Progress and Procedures'
[274] LCC, Housing Committee, 15 November 1984, 14
[275] LCC, 'Ebors: Proposed HAA', 7
[276] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 30 July 1980, 2
[277] *Report of the Director of Housing*
[278] Alison Ravetz, 'A philosophy for renewal,' *Outlook*, No. 25, February 1979, 6-8

made.[279] Participation programmes implemented by local authorities around the country in the 1970s were found to have similar shortcomings.[280]

For many community activists, the council's approach to participation suggested it was not wholly committed to the approach. In Cross Streets in Armley, officers delivered the public information leaflets explaining the clearance process after the date for making objections to the compulsory purchase order had passed.[281] Activists claimed that a public inquiry would have been unnecessary had the action group been given the opportunity to develop 'a harmonious working relationship with the council, based upon an agreed programme of objectives, supported by a majority of people.'[282] The planning inspector at the Inquiry agreed that the council's procedures for enabling public participation needed improving. [283] Activists highlighted similar shortcomings in the way the council carried out the feasibility study into gradual renewal in Woodhouse.[284] They rebuked the council for refusing to negotiate directly with the community group, preferring to work with local councillors. At public meetings, local councillors made no attempt to outline the different options from a neutral stance, but rather presented the case for clearance. [285] Activists also criticised the council's methodology: the survey form distributed to local people was, they argued, confusing and unnecessarily complicated, but the council decided to make no changes to the initial draft.[286] In a scene that verged on the comedic, the surveys were delivered by local children, hired for the job by council officers. For activists, the lack of rigour raised questions about the validity of the survey result.

While community activists tended to apportion the blame for the failure of participation exercises on the recalcitrance of the city council, this was not entirely fair. Community activists had always been somewhat vague about what meaningful resident involvement would look like. Stopping clearance was a tangible goal. Changing the relationship between policy makers and citizens was rather woollier. The substance between slogans like neighbourhood control and local participation was not always apparent. Even the advocates of gradual renewal had not offered a clear model for facilitating the involvement of local people in policy making. As one activist observed, community activists never fully

[279] Chapeltown News, *Planning to Deceive: a critique of Leeds Council's participation planning exercise*, Chapeltown News Pamphlet No. 1, 1975
[280] Smith, Leo, 'Public participation in Islington – a case study,' in Jones, David and Smith, Leo, ed., *Deprivation, Participation and Community Action* (London, 1981), 37-96
[281] CHWP, *Case Studies*, 5
[282] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 22, June 1978, 7
[283] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 22, June 1978, 7
[284] Cathy Davis, Letter, *LOP,* No. 96, 19 Jan-2 Feb 1979, 6-7
[285] Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Report,* 14 December 1978, 27-8; *Leeds Other Paper,* No. 88, 15-29 September 1978, 7
[286] *Leeds Other Paper,* No. 88, 15-29 September 1978, 7

answered certain basic questions.[287] To what extent should communities be autonomous? How should conflicts within the community be resolved? Housing co-operatives and community-run housing associations had sought to answer these questions but they remained niche approaches to housing renewal. The absence of a clear model for institutionalising meaningful community participation across the city helps to explain why moves towards greater public involvement in local policy making stalled at the end of the 1970s.

The external obstacles to community action proved increasingly insurmountable. The persistence of a truncated clearance programme and the weakness of the improvement programme meant many inner city neighbourhoods continued to suffer from planning blight. This deterred private investment and drove away longstanding residents who could afford to relocate. In the late 1970s, the take up of house improvement grants in the inner city fell, suggesting that the remaining owners could not afford to pay their share of the cost of improvement or lacked the confidence in the area to invest.[288] Owner occupation rates fell in inner city Leeds in the 1970s and 1980s and a growing proportion of private owners were landlords who were less willing to invest.[289] These problems were compounded by a broader flight of private capital from the inner city which drove the decline of manufacturing industry and other traditional sources of employment for skilled and unskilled manual workers. Structural unemployment rose. The net result of these changes was that the proportion of inner city residents who were severely deprived increased. The more upwardly mobile residents moved to outer areas and they were replaced by households on low incomes, often with social problems who could not access housing anywhere else. The more stable communities who had provided the backbone for inner city community action became less common. This weakened community action groups internally. It also made it harder for activists to speak optimistically about the future of inner city neighbourhoods.

The effects of this spiral of inner city decline on community action were clearly illustrated in Woodhouse. The results of the feasibility study into gradual renewal showed that 51 per cent of respondents supported clearance and redevelopment, while one third supported some form of long term rehabilitation.[290] Only 29 per cent of the sample specifically supported gradual renewal, though this figure reached 43 per cent among owner occupiers. On the

---

[287] Alison Ravetz, 'A philosophy for renewal,' *Outlook*, No. 25, February 1979, 8
[288] Leeds Trades Council, *Which Way*, 7
[289] Re'new Leeds Ltd, 'Addressing the Challenges of back-to-backs in Leeds,' Volume 2: Background Research, November 2008, 81, https://singleaspect.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/volume2-backgroundresearch-final1_12112008162257.pdf, accessed 15 September 2015
[290] Leeds City Council, *Gradual Renewal and its application to Woodhouse* (Leeds, 1979)

basis of this results, the council rejected the gradual renewal option and proceeded to redevelop the area.[291] There had been a substantial shift in public opinion since the early 1970s when a majority of Woodhouse residents had opposed clearance. The result of the Woodhouse feasibility study was a major blow for the community activists. A unique opportunity to pioneer a new approach to renewal floundered. This shift in local opinion was largely the product of the blight which had swept through the area due to the uncertainty over its future and a dearth of public and private investment. Housing conditions worsened as landlords (including the council) stopped carrying out repairs. Public services deteriorated and local shops closed down.[292] Many longstanding residents chose to depart and owner occupiers sold to the council before the value of their property fell further. It was harder for local people to imagine that the area could be successfully rehabilitated. Commenting on the shift in public mood in 1981, one writer noted that the 'fierce opposition' to council policy of the early 1970s had been supplanted by 'an air of demoralisation, of a resentful acceptance of the inevitable.'[293]

Blight had undoubtedly been exacerbated by the time devoted to consultation, but community activists noted that it had taken the council almost two years to actually begin the consultation process after it had decided to undertake the study. The delay was used by supporters of clearance to discredit the notion of participation.[294] In an attempt to arrest the spread of blight, the action group opened a Housing Action Centre, offering welfare, legal and housing advice, but this small intervention could not reverse the tide of disinvestment that plagued the area.[295] This situation was mirrored in Cross Streets in Armley where activists struggled to maintain their momentum in the context of deteriorating physical conditions caused by planning blight. The argument that the area could be rehabilitated became increasingly tenuous. By 1978, even the action group accepted that 'the area had sunk almost beyond recall.'[296] Organising the community and maintaining morale was very challenging in these circumstances.

The rapid decline of certain inner city neighbourhoods in the late 1970s created divisions among the resident population. As the recovery prospects for inner city neighbourhoods deteriorated, it became harder to unite the neighbourhood behind a campaign for rehabilitation of the older housing stock. In the scramble for a share of diminishing public

---

[291] LCC, Gradual Renewal
[292] Ken Powell, *Leeds: Must Old Mean Bad?* Save Britain's Heritage (1981), 6
[293] *ibid*
[294] Woodhouse Community Association, *New Yapstick*, No. 19, 2; Cathy Davis, Letter, *Leeds Other Paper*, No. 96, 19 Jan-2 Feb 1979, 6-7; LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 14 December 1978, 27-28
[295] WCA, *New Yapstick*, No. 16, 3
[296] CHWP, *Case Studies*, 5

resources, divisions emerged among community activists between staunch opponents of clearance and those who were prepared to accept it under certain conditions. This was most clearly manifest in Stourton in south east Leeds. Until the late 1960s, Stourton was a traditional older residential neighbourhood on the edge of the city's southern industrial belt. After the construction of the M1 motorway, the council began to redevelop the area, replaced housing and community facilities with industrial units and warehousing.[297] In 1974, the Stourton Community Association was formed to preserve what remained of the community. A survey conducted by the group found that a majority of the community was in favour of improving the remaining houses and reinstating lost amenities, despite the changes of recent years.[298] The council largely ignored this campaign and in 1976 it announced that it intended to clear the remainder of the housing in Stourton to create more space for industrial uses.[299]

By the late 1970s, the continued deterioration of the area had eliminated the majority support for rehabilitating the neighbourhood: a survey of residents with a 92 per cent response rate found that whilst 40 per cent wanted to stay, 60 per cent wished to be rehoused by the council.[300] Opinion in area was now essentially split between tenants, represented by the Idas Pre-allocation Group, who had drifted in favour of clearance and owner occupiers, represented by the Stourton Residents' Association, who remained committed to rehabilitation and this division was manifest in two rival community groups. The Idas group had been won over to redevelopment in part by the council's offer to pre-allocate residents to a newly built estate. Its members conceived of the local community as portable: it could be transplanted to a new setting. For the homeowners of the Stourton Residents Association community was inextricably linked to the physical space in which they had made a social and financial investment. These divisions created a dilemma for local community workers, who wanted to advise both groups without favouring either, but such a position became increasingly impossible.[301]

The Idas group prevailed at the 1978 public inquiry and thereafter all of residential Stourton was demolished and the residents were rehoused.[302] This satisfied the aims of one group of community activists but disappointed another. This outcome challenged the view that it was possible to identify a community interest in inner city neighbourhoods. Increasingly, the inner city was fragmenting into different interest groups with irreconcilable agendas. In the

[297] *LOP,* No. 76, 17-31 March 1978, 3; *LOP,* No. 11, December 1974, 12
[298] Barbara Craig, 'What's in store for Stourton?' July 1977
[299] *ibid*
[300] *LOP,* No. 76, 17-31 March 1978, 3
[301] Barbara Craig letters, 14 January 1978 and 19 February 1978, BHC
[302] *YEP,* 19 June 1978, 2; *LOP*, No. 214, 12 March 1982, 2 and *LOP*, No. 233, July 1982, 3

late 1970s, several community action groups had emerged to campaign for clearance and rehousing. In 1978, the East End Park Residents for New Homes Association campaigned for clearance and rehousing, claiming that a minority of owner occupiers were trying to veto clearance when this option enjoyed the support of a clear majority of residents.[303] In 1979, a group of residents from Beeston Hill made a similar appear to the council.[304] The emergence of pro-clearance groups reflected a growing pessimism about the prospects of older areas. As the public building programme stagnated and the housing waiting list lengthened, many working-class households saw clearance as their only chance of securing council housing. Although these groups were keen to influence council policy they appeared less interested in long-term resident participation than in improving their housing situation.

As we saw in the last section, community activists succeeded when they formed partnerships with governmental actors. While community activists had reached an *entente* with leading Labour councillors by the mid-1970s, they had less purchase on the policies of the Conservative administration that ran Leeds between 1976 and 1980. Like their colleagues in cities like Nottingham, Conservative councillors in Leeds adopted a proto-Thatcherite approach to housing renewal.[305] The annual council building rate was reduced from a planned 2000 per year in April 1975 to a planned 1250 in September 1977, but only 833 new houses were built in 1977 and 652 in 1978.[306] The new approach went beyond cutbacks. The Leeds Conservatives privileged the role of the private sector as an agent of renewal, rejecting both the state-led model and the community-orientated approach promoted by community activists. The council sold land earmarked for public building to private property developers, including many former clearance areas in the inner city.[307] Prophetically, between 1976 and 1979, 2.3 per cent of the total stock was sold to sitting tenants.[308] The direction of policy in Leeds in the late 1970s foreshadowed the shift in government policy in the 1980s when a market-led approach to housing renewal was rolled out nationally.[309] Government spending on council housing was slashed, which led to a virtual cessation of the council building programme by the late 1980s. Housing associations filled a small proportion of the gap. Funding was instead targeted at private sector investors. Owner occupation and private housing for sale was prioritised over other tenures. The

---

[303] LCC, *Verbatim Report*, 6 December 1978, 1-2
[304] LCC, *Verbatim Report,* 1 August 1979, 1-3
[305] Nottingham Housing Action Group, *This is the Housing Policy That Jack Built* (1977)
[306] Leeds Trades Council, *Which Way*, 5
[307] Leeds Trades Council, *Which Way*, 8
[308] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 270; Bilcliffe, 'Lion's tail', 54
[309] Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State*, 101-137

council's capacity to steer an independent course was circumscribed by rate-capping and borrowing limits. Planning powers over chunks of the inner city were transferred to unelected quangos with a narrow remit of stimulating private sector investment.[310]

Under this neo-liberal approach to housing renewal, the innovative approaches to housing renewal that were pioneered in the 1970s became less viable. Inner city communities rarely had the resources to rehabilitate housing alone. Community action groups relied on the support of an active state that was prepared to intervene in the housing market and a government that was prepared to allocate adequate resources to publicly funded housing. The Labour-led council was more sympathetic to community action, but its room for manoeuvre in housing matters was progressively circumscribed by national government. Pre-allocation and area improvement were hamstrung by decimated housing budgets. The growth of innovative forms of community housing provision, such as housing co-operatives and community housing associations was also curtailed by new rules on housing finance.[311] For instance, efforts by the Victoria and Consort Housing Group to form a co-operative in Little Woodhouse were rebutted by the government in 1985.[312] Local authorities and housing associations lacked the powers or resources to address problems like overcrowding, unmodernised dwellings and negligent landlords.[313] Community campaigns against the direction of national policy were undermined as the spiral of decline accelerated in the 1980s. When the council's rolling clearance programme was finally wound up in 1984, it gave way to a very different paradigm to the one community activists had imagined.[314]

In the early 1980s, the community action campaign around housing renewal was beginning to wane and by the mid-1980s most of the community action groups we have explored in this chapter had folded. The wider network of organisations that had sustained links between community action groups also fragmented. The Community Housing Working Party had dissolved by the mid-1980s. The Liberal Party was no longer an insurgent force on the city council, though it continued to present a challenge to Labour in parts of the inner city. The Leeds Civic Trust's links to community action groups began to weaken and the organisation became increasingly focused on conservation issues and city centre regeneration.[315] Activists who remained involved in housing work increasingly began to focus on the existential threat to council housing and on the re-emergence of slum

---

[310] Ravetz, *Government of Space, 93-96*
[311] Malpass, *Housing Associations,* 171-180, 187-195
[312] LCC, Housing Committee, 1 October 1985, 59; *LOP*, No. 145, 7 November 1980, 2
[313] *LOP*, No. 198, November 1981, 3
[314] Leeds Civic Trust, 'Leeds Back To Backs,' http://leedscivictrust.org.uk/?idno=1166, accessed 15 September 2015
[315] Leeds Civic Trust, Annual Report, 1986/7

landlordism. These defensive campaigns drew attention away from the campaign for community-led renewal.

For many community activists, the long-term legacy of the campaign was bittersweet. Whilst they had saved the physical fabric of inner city neighbourhoods, they were unable to check the wider social and economic forces that reshaped the inner city in the 1980s. In 1982, a member of the Arthingtons Group lamented the social decline of her neighbourhood, the loss of established families and their replacement by more deprived households.[316] She claimed she would never have got involved in community action in the 1970s had the neighbourhood been in such a poor state then. This spoke of the disenchantment felt by many community activists in the 1980s. After a decade of struggle, marked by a number of significant achievements, many community campaigns over housing ended on a sombre note.

This section has shown that community action over housing renewal had clear limits. The achievements we explored in the previous section did not represent the full realisation of the community activists' aims. Activists enjoyed more success defeating clearance proposals than implementing their preferred alternatives. The council's record on housing improvement and resident participation fell short of its professed aims. Radical innovation in housing renewal was limited to a handful of neighbourhoods. The weakness of community action stemmed from two basic problems. First, the social and economic condition of the inner city became increasingly hostile to community action in the late 1970s and 1980s. Inner city decline robbed community action groups of some of their most active and talented participants and eroded public confidence in the future of the inner city. Community activists struggled to maintain the momentum of their organisations and many action groups folded. Second, community action needed state support, either from local or central government, in terms of public resources and administrative assistance. In the late 1970s, the city council's commitment to the community action's wider goals was only superficial. In the 1980s, just as the council was beginning to embrace participation and community-led renewal more sincerely, central government policy departed from these principles.

<center>***</center>

This chapter has used the campaign against housing clearance and efforts to build an alternative approach to housing renewal to deepen our understanding of the nature of

---

[316] Letter to Barbara Craig from Anon, u.d., c. 1982, BHC

community action. It has explored who participated in community action, what activists believed, how they operated and their impact on policy. It has also discussed the reasons for the trajectory of community action over the long 1970s. Housing renewal drove community action more than any other so the conclusions drawn in this chapter are particularly valuable.[317] Community action developed because housing renewal policy no longer catered to the needs and aspirations of a significant proportion of those affected by it. The city council and the two main political parties were slow to recognise this disjuncture. Community action occupied this vacant political ground, though from its inception, it was sustained by existing political and voluntary organisations that supported its goals.

The arguments mobilised by community activists against the traditional approach to housing renewal focused on the social, economic and environmental effects of the policy. Their case was buttressed by social and physical surveys which yielded extensive data. Community action drew support from various social groups who were disadvantaged by the established policy. Community activists heralded from a variety of social backgrounds, from working-class women to small business owners. Community action groups were animated by a powerful alliance between working-class people and middle-class professionals, many of whom were directly affected by the clearance proposals. Community action groups across the city were united by a sense that an entrenched policy had overlooked their needs and aspirations. They exposed a democratic deficit at the heart of the policy making process. As Davis has argued, community activists undermined the notion that an electoral mandate gave local authorities the right 'to interfere in the property and environment of a substantial section of the community.[318]

Community action groups were able to effect change remarkably rapidly: by the mid-1970s, the clearance programme had been scaled back. Innovative approaches to housing renewal were trialled across the city in the mid- to late 1970s by community activists working with the council. Community activists proved flexible in their attitudes to the extant urban fabric but they were consistent in arguing for a transfer of responsibility from the council to local people. The success of community action was premised on the good working relationships activists established with councillors and officers. Central government was a crucial ally in the late 1960s and 1970s, encouraging the council to heed the pressure from below to adopt a new approach. In the long term, community activists found effecting positive change as

---

[317] Mike Fleetwood and John Lambert, 'Bringing socialism home: Theory and practice for a radical community action,' in Gary Craig, Nick Derricourt and Martin Loney, ed., *Community Work and the State: Towards a Radical Practice* (London, 1982): 48
[318] Davis, ''Simple Solutions,'' 273

harder than blocking policy. Innovation in housing renewal was limited to a handful of neighbourhoods and in many neighbourhoods the end of clearance gave way to a new era of stagnation and decline. The acceleration of the economic decline of the inner city made community organising more challenging and opened up rifts in communities that had once been broadly united on the direction renewal should take. This was compounded by a radical shift in central government's approach to urban renewal in the 1980s. By this time, the council was more of an ally to community action groups, but its capacity to support activists had been curtailed. The citywide campaign began to fragment as activists were drawn to other campaigns and community-based renewal appeared increasingly unattainable.

The speed with which community action declined sheds light on the strength of these citywide networks. While community activists from across Leeds campaigned together on housing renewal, most community activists chiefly identified with the neighbourhood action groups. The work of citywide bodies like the CHWP helped community activists think and act strategically, but the centrifugal forces in community action were more powerful. While some activists adopted a regional or national approach to the housing renewal question, most activists concentrated on problems in their locality. Even the more mobile community workers and the middle class activists focused on particular districts. As highly localised bodies, community action groups needed to win local victories to sustain their momentum. As this became more difficult in the 1980s their relative isolation from other activists made it harder for them to maintain group morale. Citywide bodies were dependent on the survival of the neighbourhood groups from which they drew their legitimacy. As individual community action groups folded the citywide bodies disappeared with them. This was the disadvantage of an entirely bottom-up approach to politics. The highly decentralised and polycentric nature of community action distinguishes it from the major social movements of this era, which managed to combine local self-organisation with a national framework of organisations and a shared identity.

Housing was not the only issue that concerned community activists. Other issues lent themselves to a citywide or regional focus. In order to enrich our understanding of the diversity of community action and to further our understanding of its citywide organisation, the next chapter will explore community action surrounding transport.

Chapter 3

Organising in the Motorway City:
Community Action and the Politics of Transport

This chapter explores the ways in which community activists engaged with issues of transport and mobility in Leeds. It begins by outlining origins of the city's transport strategy in the post-war decades and the principles informed the 'Motorway City' project. The second section begins by asking why community action was largely absent from Leeds in the 1960s. It then explores why community action emerged in the 1970s and discusses the extent to which community activists were able to shape the implementation of the urban motorway programme. Section three examines the way community activists challenged the privileged position of motorised traffic in the city, looking at campaigns for pedestrian crossings and against heavy good vehicles. Section four and five investigate the campaign against road-building on the A660 corridor in north-west Leeds, showing why community action was more successful there than in other parts of the city. Section fives focuses on how this action campaign, and its relationship with the local state, matured in the 1980s. This section examines the way transport policy shifted over the long 1970s in a part of the city where community action was most potent.

1. The Rise of the Motorway City

One of the key contexts to the rise community action in Leeds from the late 1960s was the transport policies pursued by local and national government. Much of the community action in the city was a reaction to a transport strategy that was seen to prioritise the road network and motor vehicles at the expense of public transport, pedestrians and the urban environment, particularly in the inner city. To contextualise community action surrounding transport, this section explores the policies and the principles that underpinned the transport strategy.

The policies adopted in Leeds in the 1960s and 1970s were directed by spending priorities and a policy framework defined by national government. After a period of stasis in highway building in the first post-war decade, from the late 1950s, governments began to expand of the capacity of the road network, building new roads and widening or improving existing ones.[1] This was partly a response to the dramatic rise in car ownership in the 1950s and 1960s in Britain: the number of cars in use rose from 2.2 million in 1950 to 5.5 million in 1960 before climbing to 11.5 million in 1970.[2] The shift was also influenced by the growth of a powerful road lobby, consisting of motoring organisation, road-builders, car manufacturers and road hauliers.[3] By the mid-1960s, a cross-party consensus had crystallised that it was the role of government to satisfy rising demand for motor transport among private citizens and businesses.[4] An efficient and comprehensive road network was seen to be an integral part of a modern economy and a desirable part of a modern society in which cars would be used for leisure and travelling to work.[5] Arguments for restricting vehicle usage through planning controls or pricing mechanisms did not command mainstream political support in these years.[6] Policy was governed by the assumption that rates of motor vehicle ownership and usage would continue to increase for the foreseeable future as the population became more affluent and businesses exploited opportunities presented by road transport. Road space had to be expanded to avoid policy makers' deep-seated fear: 'nightmare possibility of total standstill.'[7] Accordingly, public spending on roads increased dramatically throughout the 1960s, rising from £190 million in 1964/5 to £504 million in 1970/71.[8] The national motorway programme, which connected major towns and cities by a network of hundreds of miles of wide, grade segregated roads, absorbed most of this budget and dramatically increased the appeal of private transport.[9] During the same period, governments oversaw a major reduction in the capacity of the rail network on the grounds that the demand for rail travel would continue to decline and a rationalised network would be more efficient.[10]

---

[1] David McKay and Andrew Cox, *The Politics of Urban Change* (London, 1979): 165
[2] McKay and Cox, *Urban Change,* 165
[3] Mick Hamer, *Wheels Within Wheels: A Study of the Road Lobby* (London, 1987): 37-51
[4] McKay and Cox, *Urban Change,* 171
[5] Simon Gunn, 'People and the car: the expansion of automobility in urban Britain, c. 1955-70,' *Social History,* 28:2 (2013): 223-225
[6] David Rooney, 'The Political Economy of Congestion: Road Pricing and the Neoliberal Project, 1952-2003,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 25:5 (2014): 628-650
[7] Alison Ravetz, *Re-Making Cities: Contradictions of the Recent Urban Environment* (London, 1980): 127
[8] McKay and Cox, *Urban Change*, 171
[9] David Starkie, *The Motorway Age: Road and Traffic Policies in Post-war Britain* (Oxford, 1982): 6-9
[10] Philip Bagwell and Peter Lyth, *Transport in Britain, 1950-2000: From Canal Lock to Gridlock* (London, 2002): 136-137

Adapting urban areas to meet the needs of road vehicles was a key part of the new national transport strategy [see Fig. 3.1]. Towns and cities were both the origin and destination of the vast majority of vehicle journeys. Urban areas became congested as existing road networks strained to cope with increased demand.[11] Central areas, upon which vehicles converged, became choked with traffic and blighted by vehicle noise and fumes. This congestion was viewed as an inhibitor to economic growth. The volume of road vehicles in urban areas presented a safety concern: the number of road traffic fatalities 'increased steadily after the Second World War,' rising from 133,000 in 1945 to 390,000 in 1965.[12] Governments acknowledged that expanding urban road infrastructure would be more problematic than building inter-city motorways because the competition for urban space was more intense. New and expanded roads had to share scarce urban land with housing, commerce and industry, and with other modes of transport. The problem of accommodating motor vehicles in urban areas was the subject of an investigation commissioned by the Ministry of Transport by team led by Professor Colin Buchanan.[13] Buchanan's report argued that cities would have to be radically re-structured to meet the challenges of motor vehicles. Buchanan advocated building new roads, dedicated to vehicular traffic, separate from the existing network. In order to avoid conflict between vehicles and pedestrians, he argued that vehicles and pedestrians should be separated. Rejecting the multi-functional street, he promoted car free precincts, serviced by vehicles at their outer edges, where pedestrians could access urban amenities unencumbered by vehicles. In city centres, he advocated vertical segregation, with pedestrians and vehicles accommodated on different levels.[14] Buchanan did not propose unfettered freedom for the motorist. He maintained cities should ration demand for urban motoring through parking controls and maintain a comprehensive public transport system, but his report was biased in favour of travel by private vehicle.[15] The report had a major impact on the way transport professionals, politicians of all parties and the general public understood urban transport problems for at least two decades.[16]

Leeds City Council embraced the new paradigm in transport policy with enthusiasm. At the beginning of the road-building drive, in the late 1950s, the city council undertook a review

[11] Simon Gunn, 'The Buchanan Report, Environment and the Problem of Traffic in 1960s Britain,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 22:4 (2011): 3-5 [Online access version]
[12] Matthew Keep and Tom Rutherford, House of Commons Library, 'Reported Road Accident Statistics,' 24 October 2013, 2-3, www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers /sn02198.pdf, accessed 11 September 2015
[13] Ministry of Transport, *Traffic In Towns: A Study of the Long Term Problem of Traffic in Urban Areas* (HMSO, 1963)
[14] *Traffic in Towns: the specially shortened edition of the Buchanan Report* (Middlesex, 1964), 172-8
[15] McKay and Cox, *Urban Change*, 168
[16] Gunn, 'The Buchanan Report,' 11-13 [Online access version]; *Traffic in Towns: the specially shortened edition of the Buchanan Report* (London, 1964)

of transport policy and in 1962 the authority agreed the outline of a major new urban road network.[17] The philosophy underlying the city's strategy was elaborated in the city's Development Plan Review, prepared between 1962 and 1968. In 1969, the strategy was summarised in a report produced by the city council in partnership with central government, named the Leeds Approach.[18] The city council was deeply influenced by Buchanan who used Leeds as a case study.[19] The city's transport strategy began from the premise that the hitherto unforeseen increase in vehicle ownership necessitated a 'radical' re-formulation of transport policy.[20] Congestion, it was argued, arose from conflicts between the different functions of the city's roads.[21] Commuter traffic might be held up by local traffic; long distance freight might be delayed pedestrians crossing the road. These conflicts could be circumvented by differentiating roads according to their function and minimising the number junctions where different types of roads intersected.[22] There was also to be a major expansion of capacity of the city's road network. The council estimated that there would be 11,170 vehicles per hour travelling in one direction on the network by 2010 and argued that this growth must inform the construction of a new primary road network.[23] The main function of this network was to prevent congestion and reduce journey times by enabling vehicles to travel in 'free flow conditions.'[24] For instance was predicted that a new inner ring road would 'reduce congestion in the central area by one third.'[25] The primary road network would be formed of different types of roads. Three urban motorways, designed solely for motor vehicles with full grade segregation, would connect the central area to the new motorways.[26] Both the M1 and the M62 passed within six miles of the city centre and the architects of the Leeds Approach were keen to ensure that Leeds capitalised on this strategic position in the emerging national motorway network. Motorway distributors would feed traffic from the motorway onto existing city streets.[27] Several of the city's major radial roads linking the suburbs to the centre would be converted into expressways: wider, faster, wide roads with grade segregated intersections that bypassed commercial areas.[28] Finally, a

---

[17] Leeds City Council, 'Planning and Transport: the Leeds Approach: A Report of the Special Partnership between the Leeds City Council, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government,' (HMSO, 1969): 10
[18] LCC, 'Planning and Transport,' 1
[19] Ministry of Transport, *Traffic In Towns*, 80-111
[20] Leeds City Council, *First Review of City Development Plan: Report of Survey (Written Analysis, Submission Edition)*, July 1968, 1
[21] LCC, *First Review of Development Plan*, 110
[22] LCC, *First Review of City Development Plan*, 111
[23] LCC, *First Review of the Development Plan*, 104
[24] LCC, *First Review of City Development Plan*, 110
[25] Joseph Minogue, 'Leeds rebuilds conservatively,' *The Guardian*, 11 April 1962, 8
[26] Leeds, First Development Plan Review, 111-12
[27] Leeds, First Development Plan Review, 112
[28] *ibid*

new inner and an improved outer ring road would enable traffic to bypass the city centre and outer suburbs respectively.

The transformation of the transport infrastructure was conceived of as a key part of the wider project of urban renewal. A key principle of the Leeds Approach was that road-building would be integrated with the redevelopment of residential, commercial and industrial areas.[29] These aspects of renewal were planned and programmed simultaneously. The clearance of older housing and obsolete industrial premises gave the city the opportunity to weave new road systems into the city's urban fabric.[30] Cleared sites functioned as blank slates on which city planners could reconfigure urban space in accordance with new planning principles.[31] The intention was to improve the environment in residential and commercial areas while expediting the flow of traffic.[32] At key nodes on the emerging road network, land was allocated for new industrial and warehousing developments.

Despite its preoccupation with road infrastructure, the Leeds Approach was explicitly framed as a 'balanced' approach to transport in the city. The council judged it could not afford to construct a road network capable of accommodating the total potential demand for car use and conceded such a network would absorb too much land. To prevent the new network from becoming congested, the city council intended to limit car commuting in the peak periods to 17.5 per cent of the central area workforce and 22 per cent of those who worked in the industrial zone. [33] This would be implemented by limiting the supply of parking spaces for commuters.[34] The public transport system would cater for the remainder of the workforce.[35] Requiring the majority of workers to use public transport would ensure there was 'a sufficient residual demand for public transport to make it possible to operate an effective service.'[36] To enhance the appeal of public transport, which would face stiff competition from the car, the Leeds Approach advocated a system of express buses for commuters travelling from outlying areas, which would use the new network of high speed roads.[37] Housing estates would be planned to ensure bus routes were readily accessible and percolating services would carry passengers through

---

[29] LCC, 'Planning and Transport,' 38
[30] LCC, 'Planning and Transport,' 6
[31] Ravetz, *Re-making Cities, 51-2*
[32] *YEP,* 18 January 1968, 10
[33] Ministry of Transport, *Traffic In Towns*, 98; LCC, *First Review of the Development Plan*, 100-103
[34] LCC, 'Planning and Transport,' 17-18
[35] LCC, 'Planning and Transport,' 38
[36] *ibid*
[37] LCC, 'Planning and Transport,' 30; LCC, *First Review of the Development Plan,* 107

residential areas.[38] While the lion's share of resources were to be devoted to road-building, the strategy envisioned a mixed economy in transport and investment in roads was not solely designed to benefit private vehicles. However, city buses would have to share space on the road with cars since priority measures were judged to be unfair to motorists.[39] In common with other cities in Britain and North America, Leeds had 'motorised' its transport system in the late 1950s, replacing electric trams with buses, and the architects of the Leeds Approach judged that a dedicated rapid transit system was not economically feasible.[40] The tension between planning for the car and the interests of other modes of transport would be a key driver of community action.

Like other aspects of urban renewal, the transport strategy was designed to project an image of Leeds as a dynamic city that was utilising the latest technology and planning concepts to modernise its infrastructure and improve conditions for business. The Project Leeds marketing initiative explained the marriage of roads and advancement in the following terms: 'Exciting flyovers and splendid roads twist and spiral their course around the City Centre and run out to join the great motorways. Everywhere there are signs of improvement and progress.'[41] Project Leeds branded Leeds as 'The Motorway City of the Seventies' and this slogan was deployed in marketing literature and franked on letters sent from Leeds for much of the 1970s.[42] This placed the road network at the forefront of the city's civic identity. Like many other cities in the western world in this period, Leeds had embraced 'automobility,' a system in which the economy, society, culture, resource use and patterns of consumption were orientated around the private car.[43]

2. Motorway Politics

The implementation of the transport strategy began in the early 1960s. Work commenced on the inner ring road in 1964 and the project was completed in 1974 at a total cost of £12.5 million [see Figs. 3.3-3.5].[44] The inner ring road traced an arc for 2200 yards around the northern side of the city centre. [45] Built to motorway standards, it was sunk

---

[38] LCC, 'Planning and Transport,' 21, 30
[39] LCC, *First Review of the Development Plan,* 105, 107
[40] Gunn, 'People and the car,' 224; LCC, *First Review of the Development Plan*, 107-8
[41] Leeds Chamber of Commerce, *Project Leeds* (Cheltenham, 1969, 1971): 3
[42] David McKie, 'Motorway city of the seventies,' *The Guardian*, 17 April 1971, 9
[43] John Urry, 'The 'System' of Automobility,' *Theory, Culture & Society,* Vol 21 (4/5), 2004; Gunn, 'People and the car,' 220-222
[44] *YEP*, 'Hole that ate the traffic,' 16 April 2007, http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/latest-news/top-stories/hole-that-ate-the-traffic-1-2097838, accessed 23 September 2014
[45] Leeds City Council, *Leeds Inner Ring Road* (Leeds, 1966)

into an open trench for most of its length with one tunnelled section. Preparation of the site required the demolition of 340 houses, six pubs and several cafes and industrial workshops, displacing hundreds of people and scores of businesses.[46] At its eastern end, the ring road merged into the York Road, a radial road that had recently been upgraded to a dual carriageway. The second major road scheme, the south-east urban motorway, matched the inner ring road in its scale and ambition [see Fig. 3.6]. The 2.5 mile road, which linked the city centre and the terminus of the M1 at Stourton, consisted of 'six multi-level interchanges, 12 bridges, the Hunslet motorway distributor and several other link roads.'[47] It cost £6.9 million. Constructing the road required the 'elimination of what [amounted] to a small town in terms of industry commerce and housing' in south Leeds.[48] The compulsory purchase order alone affected 800 people, 341 houses, 55 shops, 15 houses above shops, 134 businesses and 53 portions of garden and in total 730 properties were demolished before construction began in November 1968.[49]

The transport strategy envisaged two further urban motorways.[50] The south-west urban motorway would connect Leeds to the Lancashire-Yorkshire Motorway, later the M62. It would pass through the densely populated neighbourhoods of Holbeck and Beeston Hill. The North East Urban Motorway road would link the two southern urban motorways to the A1 east of the city by bypassing the city centre and crossing the inner east Leeds neighbourhoods of Burmantofts and Harehills.[51] The decision to demolish Quarry Hill Flats, a council estate housing several thousand people, was partly motivated by the need to secure the line of the road.[52] In addition to the urban motorway schemes, the council prepared detailed plans for converting radial roads in Headingley, Halton and Stanningley to expressway standard by the early 1980s.

Speaking in support of the motion for the compulsory purchase order for the south-west urban motorway in April 1971, Alderman Frank Marshall, the leader of the city council, expressed his gratitude for the 'tolerance' shown by Leeds people on being ''messed around'' and coping with 'all the dust, dirt and inconvenience' associated with the road-

---

[46] http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/latest-news/top-stories/the-rocky-road-that-took-leeds-over-40-years-to-finish-1-2196114, accessed 23 September 2014
[47] *YEP*, 17 November 1967,
[48] *YEP*, 8 December 1966, 12
[49] *YEP*, 8 December 1966, 12; *YEP,* 17 November 1967, 13
[50] Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Reports,* 28 April 1971, 400-1
[51] *YEP,* 31 January 1973, 3; *The Guardian,*1 February 1973, 6
[52] Letter from Kevin Gould, 1973, WYA: WYL546; Alison Ravetz, *Model Estate: Planned Housing at Quarry Hill, Leeds* (London, 1974), 223; LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 21 November 1973, 109-110; *LOP,* No. 661, 29 November 1990, 5-6.

building programme and other aspects of urban renewal.[53] Marshall was not straining credibility. Despite the seismic impact of the new roads social and economic life of the inner city and the far-reaching implications of future road building proposals, there was no significant organised protest over the city's urban road-building programme in the 1960s.[54] The only recorded opposition to the inner ring road emanated from a handful of property owners, angered that they were to receive compensation based on the ground area only when their property was compulsorily purchased. At the public inquiry into the Development Plan Review in 1969, which outlined the routes of all three urban motorways, there were no principled objections to the policy of constructing urban motorways. One resident of Harehills objected to the route of the North East Urban Motorway, but this was not supported by the Inspector.[55] At the public inquiry into the South East Urban Motorway, there was only one 'root and branch objector.'[56] The local press did capture evidence of localised disgruntlement at the motorway programme and, in particular, the opaque nature of the policy making process. In 1968, a resident of Hunslet complained that road-building was '"a bureaucratic steamroller"' and lambasted the council for its failure to provide detailed information to affected citizens.[57] This dissatisfaction notwithstanding, few residents articulated principled objections to motorway or the wider transport strategy.[58] Crucially, individual grievances did not translate into any collective resistance to the transport strategy or any of its component parts before the 1970s.

The general public acceptance of urban road building in Leeds was broadly representative of the rest of urban Britain. In a handful of historic cities such as Oxford and Bath there was substantial opposition to road proposals from the 1950s. In most large industrial cities urban motorway projects were not the focus of grassroots opposition until the late 1960s or early 1970s.[59] In London, significant opposition to urban road-building arose only in the mid-1960s when the Greater London Council's proposals for a series of orbital motorways – the London ringways – were published.[60] In

[53] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 28 April 1971, 402
[54] Motorway Archive, 'M621 Southern Motorway,' http://www.ukmotorwayarchive.org/, accessed 29 January 2015
[55] Leeds City Council, *Development Plan First Quinquennial Review, Report of a Local Public Inquiry into Objections and Representations* (1969): 43-44
[56] *YEP,* 18. January 1968, 10
[57] *YEP*, 18 January 1968, 10
[58] *ibid*
[59] Stephen Snowden, *Towns Against Traffic* (London, 1971): 58-78; Starkie, *Motorway Age, 72*
[60] Starkie, *Motorway Age,* 73-75; Snowden, *Towns Against Traffic* (London, 1971): 110-132; John Davis, ''Simple Solutions to Complex Problems': the Greater London Council and the Greater London Development

Cardiff, Southampton, Portsmouth and Nottingham, community groups began contesting urban motorways plans in the late 1960s.[61] In Leeds, significant community opposition to urban road-building lagged a few years behind these places, not surfacing until the early 1970s. Still, in most of urban Britain, road planners had almost a decade to progress schemes, from the late 1950s to the late 1960s, before they encountered grassroots resistance. In order to understand the roots of this activism, it is necessary to explore why community action was not present in the 1960s when the foundations of the Leeds Approach were laid. This section will explore the four key reasons for the dearth of community activism in Leeds in the 1960s over transport, before exploring why community action flourished in this area in the following decade.

Firstly, the absence of community action in the 1960s is partly explained by the city council's failure to engage the citizens in a conversation about the new transport strategy. Ordinary people had few opportunities to comment on the Leeds Approach as it was developed because the policy-making process was largely invisible to the public. Officers from local and national government worked with leading elected politicians to craft the key principles and apply them to the city. Senior officers, such as the City Engineer in the late 1960s, Geoffrey Thirlwall, were extremely influential within the council bureaucracy and spearheaded the programme of road building.[62] Men like Thirlwall resembled powerful city engineers around the western world, such as Robert Moses in New York City.[63] Officers and councillors firmly believed that they enjoyed strong public support for the key principles that informed the policy. As we saw in Chapter 2, councillors interpreted their electoral mandate as a broad endorsement by voters of the policies their party supported. The council followed the statutory process for consultation, but this only required local authorities to publicise plans and policies at a late stage, after they had effectively been agreed by officers and councillors. The outline of the urban motorway system was presented at an exhibition in the City Art Gallery in 1962 after the full council had ratified this plan. Work on the Inner Ring Road began in 1964, two years before the public inquiry into the road in 1966.[64] When the

Plan, 1963-1973,' in Jose Harris, ed, *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities and Institutions* (Oxford, 2003): 249-274
[61] Starkie, *Motorway Age,* 77-78
[62] Stan Kenyon Interview, September 2008, Leeds
[63] Anthony Flint, *Wrestling with Moses; How Jane Jacobs took on New York's master builder and transformed the American city* (New York, 2009)
[64] Motorway Archive, 'Leeds Inner Ring Motorway,' http://www.ukmotorwayarchive.org/, accessed 29 January 2015

draft Development Plan Review went to public inquiry in 1966 all the key proposals regarding transport had been agreed by local decision makers.

This closed and technocratic approach to policy making was both informed and legitimised by the expanding discipline of transport planning, which originated in the United States in the 1950s.[65] Transport planning worked from the premise that future transport needs could be determined by analysing existing transport patterns and applying multipliers for anticipated growth.[66] Transport planners collected quantitative data – such as the number of vehicles using a given road at a particular time – and used it to model existing transport patterns and to forecast long term change. As the Buchanan report contended, '[t]he necessary characteristics of a network are as capable of methodological evaluation as the layout and dimensions of a steel frame for a building.'[67] The expressed preferences of citizens were not part of this methodology and, despite its claims to technocratic neutrality, transport planning afforded a privileged position to motor vehicles and road-building. Transport planners rarely considered other transport modes and they tended to assume that increasing road capacity was the only viable response to rising vehicle use.[68] Neither the accuracy of this method nor the desirability of meeting future demand was publicly debated.

The opaque nature of policy making did not provide an incentive for citizens to organise to try to influence policy. Ignorance suppressed community organising. Hunslet residents interviewed shortly after the south-east urban motorway opened confessed they were ignorant of the council's plans until construction work began.[69] Instead of launching a dialogue with the public in which the the principles underlying the strategy were open to discussion, the council organised a public relations campaign to promote the new transport policy with a series of events to celebrate the opening of new roads.[70] The Project Leeds initiative continued to advance the Motorway City brand. The council's message was communicated through and amplified by a largely sympathetic press at both

[65] John Grant, *The Politics of Urban Transport Planning: An Analysis of Transportation Policy Formulation in Three UK County Boroughs between 1947 and 1974* (London, 1977): 9-14
[66] McKay and Cox, *Urban Change*, 170
[67] Ministry of Transport, *Traffic In Towns*, 111
[68] Ravetz, *Re-Making Cities,* 128, 133
[69] *LOP*, No. 5, June 1974, 4-5
[70] *YEP*, 'The rocky road that too Leeds over 40 years to finish,' 29 October 2008, http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/latest-news/top-stories/the-rocky-road-that-took-leeds-over-40-years-to-finish-1-2196114, accessed 22 September 2014

the local and national level.[71] As a consequence, the view that the new road system was a symbol of progress and the source of future prosperity was widely accepted. Across the country, the reconfiguration of space and patterns of mobility was viewed, like housing renewal, as integral to modernisation.[72] The impacts on the environment, society and personal mobility were given little consideration.

While the council's approach to policy making helps to account for the dearth of community action in the 1960s, it does not provide a complete explanation. Basic information about the road plans had been available since 1962 and from the mid-1960s the strategy began to take a material form. The second reason for the dearth of community action over transport before the 1970s is linked to the political culture of the areas most intimately affected by road-building. In 1974, when residents of Hunslet were asked by a local journalist why they had not challenged the plans for the south-east urban motorway, the reporter was told that local people felt powerless in the face of the forces that re-shaped the city and the transport system. This sentiment was typified by one comment: '"I don't think we've any say. These things are planned."'[73] Residents viewed town planning as a process by which fixed ideas were imposed from above with no space for popular input. Whether or not these views were justified, they were clearly deeply felt. Many participants raised issues of class and geography, suggesting that the working-class people in south Leeds did not organise over transport in the 1960s because they felt their views would be ignored. As one participant put it, '"It depends on the locality. If it was at Roundhay [north Leeds] or somewhere like that it would carry more authority. But when you get lower down the scale to working people you haven't got authority at all."'[74] This sentiment was echoed by another speaker who commented, '"we're on the wrong side of the river, and it's as simple as that. We're just ordinary working class people – they don't give a damn."'[75]

Many of the households who were directly affected by the road believed urban motorway building was an inevitable and irresistible part of the modernisation of the city. It was begrudgingly accepted by those who did not expect to benefit personally. In 1966, one resident who had to move to make way for the south-east urban motorway told the

---

[71] *The Guardian*, 11 April 1962, 8, 30 June 1962, 3, 16 April 1964, 6 and 17 April 1971, 9; *YEP* 17 November 1967, 3, 18 January 1968, 10, 31 January 1973, 3 and 11 August 1976, 7. An early note of caution was sounded in *YEP,* 18 January 1968, 10
[72] Gunn, 'People and the car,' 231-32
[73] *LOP*, No. 5, June 1974, 5
[74] *LOP*, No. 5, June 1974, 4-5
[75] *ibid*

Evening Post: "We knew it has to come."[76] A year later, a journalist observed the same passive attitude among people living on the route who 'realise that they will have to go, they accept that it will cause them inconvenience and maybe even loss…'[77] There is little evidence of working-class deference – many commentators clearly had little respect for those in office – but rather of a sense of fatalism, a belief that those living on or near the route of the urban motorways would never be able to influence policy making. The discourse that roads represented the city's future was deep-seated. Community organising could not take root unless people believed they had a chance of influencing change.

These attitudes were mirrored and reinforced by civil society organisations in inner city Leeds who raised no objections to the transport strategy. The trade unions, working men's clubs, churches and other recreational bodies were silent on the issue in the 1960s. Consistent with the consensus that prevailed nationally, the Leeds Labour Party actively supported the proposals. There is no evidence of councillors in inner Leeds expressing reservations about the road proposals before the 1970s. When a motion confirming the route of the south-east urban motorway was put before the council in 1966 there was no debate.[78] Although the Liberal Party opposed urban motorways in the 1970s, it had no representation in Leeds until 1968.

Thirdly, the wider social context in which the transport strategy was formulated often militated against the emergence of community action. The transport strategy was prepared and implemented alongside widespread residential, commercial and industrial redevelopment. As we saw above, the Leeds Approach drove to link these processes. Large swathes of housing in the areas most affected by the new road system were cleared, as we saw in Chapter 2, on public health grounds and their inhabitants were dispersed to peripheral council estates. The social upheaval this caused was not conducive to neighbourhood organising. Households that no longer had a long term vested interest in the area were less likely to contest plans for the future of the land on which their condemned houses stood. Between 1961 and 1971, the city demolished 1400 houses specifically for planning and highway reasons.[79] For many residents of properties required for road schemes, highway construction expedited their movement from a

---

[76] *YEP,* 8 December 1966, 12
[77] *YEP*, 16 January 1968, 6
[78] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 2 November 1966, 6
[79] Leeds City Council, *Older Housing in Leeds: An Assessment of 'redevelopment Potential and Priorities, 1971-1991, Volume 2: Formulation of Strategies* (Leeds, 1972): 38

declining area to a newer council house, so they had no decision to contest the scheme. In areas where most of the old streets had been cleared a decade in advance of the road-building there was no urban fabric or residential community left to save. The extent of physical change wrought by the various planks of urban renewal reinforced the feeling examined above that Leeds was changing irreversibly and irresistibly.

Fourthly, it is significant that most of the urban road-building programme affected largely working-class areas. This was partly a function of the geography of urban development of Leeds. Middle-class housing was concentrated on the higher ground in the north and west of the city over a mile from the central area. In the city's more affluent suburbs there was less demand for new roads. The national motorways approached Leeds from the south and the city's industrial and commercial districts were located in and around the city centre. The inner ring, where the council sought to expand road capacity, was dominated by working-class housing. Slum clearance created vacant sites that created opportunities for road-building. Low-income citizens often lacked the educational resources, professional skills and political connections to build a campaign. They were less likely to be informed of schemes and the means of objecting to them. As we argued in Chapters 1 and 2, effective community action was usually a partnership between working-class and middle-class citizens. As community action was still in its infancy in Leeds in the late 1960s, there were few middle-class community activists available help residents to build community groups in places like Hunslet and Holbeck.

The exception for the tendency for major highway schemes to be planned for working-class areas was inner north-west Leeds. This part of the city was more socially mixed. In neighbourhoods like Hyde Park and Headingley there were numerous professional middle-class households. In 1964, the city council revealed a proposal to build a bypass around the centre of Headingley as part of its wider strategic goal of upgrading the A660 road to expressway standard [see Fig. 3.8].[80] This scheme was contested by a group of residents, including a clergyman, an estate agent, an architect and a university lecturer.[81] The group elaborated a sophisticated argument against the proposal based on the social and environmental effects of the road and they hired a solicitor to present this case at a public inquiry.[82] The argument against the by-pass prevailed and in 1965 the government

[80] *YEP*, 14 April 1964, 9; Leeds City Council, *Draft City Development Plan* (1951), 57; LCC, *First Review of City Development Plan*, 112
[81] *YEP,* 16 April 1964, 13
[82] *YEP,* 17 April 1964, 13; *YEP,* 16 April 1964,13; *YEP; YEP,* 15 April 1964, 11, 14 April 1964, 9

refused permission for the scheme.[83] This was the second time a Headingley by-pass had been rejected: in the late 1930s, a group of Headingley residents had organised to defeat similar proposals.[84] In Section IV, we will explore community action and highway building in north-west Leeds in more depth. The key point here is that the social and educational background of local people helps to explain why community action was present in north-west Leeds in the 1960s when it was absent elsewhere in Leeds. In London, middle-class community activists constituted the backbone of the opposition to the London ringways proposals.[85]

If Leeds people had been largely passive during the planning and construction of the urban motorways, the finished product provoked a different response. In the 1970s and 1980s, the effect of emerging road network on the urban and social fabric of inner city Leeds was a key driver of community activism in general and around transport in particular. The shock of living in close proximity to the completed road motivated people with no previous experience of activism to begin campaigning. In London, too, the opening of the Westway in 1970 was a pivotal moment for anti-road protest in the capital because it illustrated vividly the problems associated with motorways in dense urban areas.[86] We explored the wider context to this activism in Chapters 1 and 2: the rise of new social and political movements; growing militancy in trade unions and on council estates; the growth of the urban conservation movement; and the way in which central government responded to these protests by creating new mechanisms for popular input into the planning system. For community action around transport in the working-class areas of Leeds, the opening of the south-east urban motorway in 1972 was a critical moment.[87] Local people were appalled by the noise and fumes generated by the road, by its severing effect on the communities of south Leeds and by the loss of local amenities resulting from road-building. One resident lamented that the district had been 'split in two…We were one big community, but we're isolated.'[88]

In south Leeds, a key grievance was the loss of the greater part of Hunslet Moor – one of few large green spaces in inner south Leeds – to the motorway. As one resident put it, '"We had a lovely Hunslet Moor here, the football pitches, the cricket pitches, [now] we've

---

[83] *YEP,* 13 July 1965, 1; *YEP*, 14 July 1965, 3
[84] *Yorkshire Post,* 4 June 1937; *Leeds Mercury*, 6 June 1937
[85] Davis, ''Simple solutions,'' 257
[86] Davis, ''Simple solutions,'' 265
[87] *YEP,* 15 December 1972, 11
[88] *YEP,* No. 5, June 1974, 4-5

nothing – we've a bowling green and that's all.'"[89] Another noted the contradiction between efforts to make Hunslet a smokeless zone and the pollution caused by the new road.[90] After the road opened, the inhabitants of south Leeds began to deconstruct and challenge the modernisation discourse that had been propounded to justify urban motorways. In 1972, one Hunslet resident lambasted the degradation of Hunslet Moor 'to make way for the rampaging paths of "progress".'[91] The same writer argued that the project subjugated people to cars: 'Every time I use the motorway bridge…I become almost aware of being an intruder…among nightmares in steel and concrete.' Media reports convey a mounting sense of injustice in south Leeds that the area had borne an unfair share of physical dislocation. The motorway was viewed as an undemocratic imposition on the area, planned and implemented by people with little knowledge of the area or its people. One resident suggested that 'if those that plan…got off their backsides and came to see round [here] before they start making plans…it'd be different.'"[92]

In the absence of opposition from the two main political parties, the trade unions or any other established civil societies, community action groups were formed to campaign on transport issues. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, community action filled a vacuum. In Hunslet and Belle Isle, the emergence of community action came too late to exert any influence over the line of the motorway. Consequently, activists fought a rearguard action against the road, seeking to ameliorate its ill effects. In streets bordering on the motorway community groups applied pressure the council to reduce their rate payments on the grounds that the road significantly damaged local amenities.[93] One group took the council to court and the case eventually reached the Court of Appeal in 1974.[94] A group of residents in the Parnabys area campaigned for a barrier to be erected between their houses and the road.[95] In the mid-1970s, there was a sustained campaign, led by the Moor Crescent Tenants Associations, to restore those parts of Hunslet Moor not lost to the road to their former condition. Activists discovered that Tarmac, the main contractor for the road, had received £7000 to landscape the area and replace the lost bowling greens but this money 'disappeared.'[96] The campaign linked up with activists in Holbeck who later faced an almost identical problem. These campaigns had only limited success.

[89] *ibid*
[90] *ibid*
[91] *YEP,* 31 July 1972, 14
[92] *LOP,* No. 5, June 1974, 1
[93] *LOP,* No. 5, June 1974, 4-5
[94] *LOP*, No. 10, Nov 1974, 12
[95] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 8 March 1972, 400
[96] *LOP*, No. 28 April 19-May 3 1976, 4

Hunslet Moor remained unimproved in 1976.[97] It was not until the early 1980s that public bodies agreed to pay compensation to people living in close proximity to the motorway.[98] Community activists were unable to change the council's priorities. Despite the vast sums spent on road-building, officials told activists at a public meeting in 1976 that there was 'no money in the kitty to bring the area back to its original condition.'[99]

The growth of community action in south Leeds in 1972 meant that when the city council sought government south government approval for the compulsory purchase order for the south-west urban motorway it encountered organised opposition. The road was planned to bisect Holbeck and Beeston Hill, passing directly over Holbeck Moor, another significant area of green open space in inner south Leeds [See Fig. 3.11]. The experience of the south-east urban motorway had bred cynicism in local people, who had learned to deconstruct euphemistic planning terms that were deployed to assuage fears of blight. One resident of Holbeck lampooned the notion that the area around the urban motorway would be 'landscaped,' noting that ''they haven't landscaped a lot over at Hunslet yet have they?''[100]

Objections were raised in Holbeck and Beeston Hill, and the Holbeck Action Group was formed to contest the route. This group was chiefly composed of parents, pupils and teachers from Matthew Murray Comprehensive School and the campaign centred on the route of the Ingram Distributor Road – designed to covey traffic from the motorway to the city centre – which was scheduled to cross the school playing fields, passing close to the school buildings.[101] At the public inquiry in July 1972, the group argued that the road would cause 'excessive noise in classrooms…give rise to fumes, dust and dirt, expose children to the temptation of trespassing on the road and would sever the present playing fields.'[102] This was the argument against building large roads in urban areas in microcosm. Pupils at the school organised a petition of 500 signatures and the group managed to secure the support of the *Evening Post*, a considerable achievement given the paper's contemporary enthusiasm for the urban motorways.[103] The campaign was supported by Vicar of the Beeston Hill who described any route affecting Holbeck Moor as '"an act of sophisticated vandalism"' and attempted to link up objectors from Matthew

[97] *YEP,* 1 April 1976, 13
[98] *YEP,* 6 March 1982, 5
[99] *YEP,* 10 April 1976, 3
[100] *LOP*, No. 12, Jan 1975 6-7
[101] *YEP,* 10 June 1972, 7
[102] *YEP,* 16 June 1973, 8
[103] *YEP,* 20 June 1972, 1

Murray and Beeston Hill.[104] Rejecting the council's argument that the impact of the road could be mitigated through soundproofing and landscaping, the Secretary of State for the Environment required that the Ingram Distributor Road be tunnelled to limit its impact on the school.[105]

Whilst the Holbeck Action Group provides evidence of the rise of community action over transport in the early 1970s and the potential force of such activism, it also underlines the limits of community action around road-building in inner city areas. Although the group influenced the planning process, the group did not contest the need for an urban motorway. The debate concerned the routing of the distributor rather than whether or not there was a need for such a road. Whether this was a reflection of activists' pragmatism or the views of local people at the time is unclear. The failure to mount a structural challenge to the transport strategy and the road-building programme restricted the scope of community action to engaging with the component parts of the overall strategy.

There was little co-ordinated action between the handful of groups that formed to challenge the south-west urban motorway. [106] The council's hostility to participation remained a key obstacle. A shopkeeper who organised a petition felt that local activists were "'fighting a big machine.'"[107] Public ignorance of the council's plans remained widespread. On the eve of the public inquiry, the Vicar of Beeston Hill observed that 'few people seemed to know just where the three [optional] routes ran.'[108]

Community activists were still vulnerable to the charge that there had been few objections to the road plans in the decade since the outline routes had first been publicised. When, in 1971, a Labour ward councillor for Holbeck called for a pause in the preparation of the south-west urban motorway scheme to enable local people to have an opportunity to be more involved in the process, the leader of the council dismissed the idea on the grounds that there had been opportunities for communities to object since the plans were unveiled in the 1960s.[109] Marshall remained resolutely opposed to deeper participation on the grounds that this would cause delays that would have 'serious

---

[104] *YEP,* 24 April 1972, 6
[105] *YEP,* 16 June 1973, 8
[106] *LOP*, No. 12, Jan 1975 6-7
[107] *LOP,* No. 20, Sept 1975, 8-9
[108] *YEP,* 24 June 1972, 6
[109] LCC, *Verbatim Report,* 28 April 1971, 401-2

repercussions' for the overall programme. The implication was that the wider Leeds Approach was no longer negotiable. It had to be implemented in full and on time.

The south-west urban motorway was built between 1974 and 1976 with few modifications at a cost of £10.5 million.[110] Like in Hunslet, the impact of the road on Holbeck's amenities was significant. Holbeck Moor was severed with the loss of a playground, flower beds, tennis courts and 78 mature trees.[111] The *Leeds Other Paper* found no local support for the road. Residents protested that the area had been 'spoiled' and that they felt 'cut off' and the effect on Holbeck Moor caused considerable anguish.[112] This episode cannot be characterised solely as a case study in the failure of community action. The negative local reaction to the South East Urban Motorway clearly unsettled Labour councillors and prompted a debate in the Leeds Labour Party about the road programme.[113] Although the sceptics did not carry the argument, sufficient doubt had been raised for the city's Planning Committee to withdraw its support for the northern section of the North East Urban Motorway in October 1973 on the grounds that it was 'too damaging to housing and general environment in that area.'[114] The Halton Expressway and a multi-level intersection at Sheepscar were scrapped for the same reason.

The urban motorways had a significant effect on the political outlook of local people in inner city Leeds, which is significant for the history of community action. There is evidence that prior to motorway building people in places like Holbeck expected elected local government to act in their best interests without the need for protest.[115] The construction of the motorways discredited this position. It deepened local distrust in politicians and professionals, especially planners. As one Holbeck resident remarked on the south-west urban motorway, '"I don't care who's planned this, but he must have done it with his eyes shut…Either that or he wants locking up."[116] This shift in political culture helps to explain why in the late 1970s and early 1980s road proposals were resisted, with some success, in the working-class neighbourhoods of Richmond Hill and Cross Green.[117] These activists were more keenly aware of the effects of urban road

---

[110] *LOP*, No. 10, Nov 1974, 13; *Yorkshire Evening Post,* 11 August 1976, 7
[111] *LOP,* No. 20, Sept 1975, 8-9
[112] *LOP,* No. 33, June 26-July 10 1976, 8-9
[113] Robert Waterhouse, *The Guardian*, 22 September 1973, 11
[114] Ken Woolmer, quoted in 'Design for Living,' *The Citizen,* 12 October 1973 [LCT]
[115] *LOP,* No. 20, Sept 1975, 8-9
[116] *LOP*, No. 33, June 26-July 10 1976, 8-9
[117] *LOP,* No. 192, 9 October 1981, 1, 13; *LOP,* No. 194, 23 October 1981, 3; *LOP*, No. 212, 26 Feb 1982, 3

schemes. As the pace of housing renewal slowed in the 1980s, the roads threatened more settled communities and newer housing.

While this political awakening came too late to stop the motorways in south Leeds, it was channelled into other forms of community organising. In 1976, the year the motorway opened, the Holbeck Community Association was formed to campaign for the interests of the neighbourhood. Writing in 1980 about the origins of the Association, one member recalled:

> the advent of the motorway scourge united the remnants of the communities left, they the people rose up in anger to preserve what they could of the place called Holbeck, out of this resurgence of interest was born Holbeck Community Association dedicated to improving living conditions within the district, caring and …fostering community spirit…'[118]

The Holbeck Community Association campaigned to reduce the impact of increased traffic and motorway blight on Holbeck, but it also worked on a wider range of local issues, such as housing, elderly welfare, children's play and recreational facilities. In Hunslet, too, the impact of the motorway galvanised activists to form stronger organisations to campaign to renew the area. The Hunslet Community Forum was formed in the late 1970s to co-ordinate the work of community groups in the area. In 1979, members of the Forum told the city council that it had been 'set up to revive the spirit of Hunslet, which was laid to rest beneath the motorway and the redevelopment of large areas of Hunslet.'[119] Too late to roll back the road building programme and comprehensive redevelopment, they hoped to compensate for its ill effects.

This section has shown that there was little community opposition to the planning and preparation of the first urban motorways. The wider process of urban renewal and the associated social upheaval militated against community organising. This was reinforced by widespread ignorance of planning strategy, the council's reluctance to engage with local people and a political culture in which modernising projects. The socioeconomic profile of the south Leeds neighbourhoods affected by the two urban motorways was also significant. Community activists did eventually organise against the urban motorways but they were too late to fundamentally alter the proposals. The lived experience of the urban motorways proved a major driver of community action and contributed to the rise

---

[118] Holbeck Community Association, *Holbeck Voice*, March 1980
[119] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 7 November 1979, 1-2

of a more critical political culture. The new roads were not only a focus of community action in the inner city but a catalyst for community organising around other issues.

3. Struggling to cross the road

This section continues to explore the way in which community action emerged in response to the implementation of the transport strategy. It broadens the focus beyond the urban motorways to explore how community activists engaged with the general rise in vehicular traffic across the city. The trends in transport and personal mobility that informed the city's transport strategy in the 1960s continued over the following decades. Car ownership levels continued to rise and the roads were increasingly used to transport goods. The planners' attempts to ration demand for car use by controlling the supply of commuter car parking were largely unsuccessful. [120] The expanded road network incentivised car use and the new roads quickly became congested during peak periods, compounding the problem of congestion on older roads. Consequently, the number of vehicles on the city's roads continued to grow.

In this context, navigating the city on foot became increasingly difficult. Walking remained one of the most popular means of navigating the city.[121] Pedestrians had to contend with an increased flow of traffic and faster vehicle speeds as drivers took advantage of wider, straighter roads and streamlined intersections.[122] While the primary road network was intended to remove through traffic from residential and commercial streets, in many areas it appeared to have the opposite effect, channelling larger volumes of traffic into particular areas, especially inner city neighbourhoods. Grade segregated roads were impossible to cross on foot at surface level and dedicated crossing facilities – bridges or underpasses – were not always provided. Widened roads were a major obstacle to pedestrians. The sheer difficulty of crossing the road was highlighted by an activist in Farnley who explained that the only way to cross the outer ring road was to wait on the kerb before dashing across the road when there was a gap in the traffic.[123] Unsurprisingly, there had been 52 accidents involving pedestrians in 1969. Nationally, while road accident casualties began to decline after peaking in the mid-1960s, road accident casualties remained over 300,000 annually

[120] House of Commons, Second Report from the Expenditure Committee, Session 1972-3, Urban Transport Planning Volume II, Minutes of Evidence (HMSO, 1972), Cmnd, 5366, 478
[121] Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain,* 213
[122] Pat Toms, 'Promoting Private Traffic: Pedestrians and Cyclists,' *Journal of the Institute of Highways and Transportation,* April 1987, No. 4, Vol. 34, 12
[123] *TOP,* No. 10, 27 February 1970, 3

during this period and in the early 1970s the figure was closer to 350,000.[124] The fear of road traffic weighed heavily on the minds of pedestrians. This concern was particularly acute for parents of younger children.

The increase in the volume of road traffic was not only a problem because it created a barrier to pedestrian movement: the noise and fumes produced by the traffic severely blighted the environment of many neighbourhoods. The impact on streets, pavements and houses alongside main routes were particularly severe. Sharp increases in the number of heavy goods vehicles on the city's roads, a development stimulated by the growth of the national motorway network, intensified this problem. The average weight of freight vehicles increased in the 1960s and 1970s as heavier weight classes were permitted.[125] Lorries used urban neighbourhoods to access the motorways and to reach industrial and commercial areas. Over 1700 heavy goods vehicles travelled through the centre of Harehills on Roundhay Road during the morning rush hour.[126]

These conditions were a key driver of community action across the city. Groups of affected residents formed community action groups to advocate for pedestrians in their neighbourhoods and to remove heavy goods vehicles from local roads. The first traffic action groups in the city appeared in the late 1960s and their numbers grew over the 1970s as the problems discussed above intensified.[127] There were at least fourteen separate traffic action groups operating in the city between the late 1960s and early 1980s. The actual number of groups probably exceeded this figure because, like most community action groups, the traffic action groups were highly localised and often short-lived, which rendered them invisible to journalists and many did not appear before the council. Some traffic action groups had close links to established community organisations and drew upon their networks and resources. For instance, the New Wortley Community Association sponsored a group lobbying for a safe crossing on Tong Lane.[128] Other traffic action groups had no clear links to existing groups: they were simply a product of the *ad hoc* organising efforts by local people drawn together by a shared experience of everyday problems with traffic. The traffic action groups mainly heralded from inner city neighbourhoods where levels were highest and where the impact of new roads was most acutely felt, but several formed

---

[124] Matthew Keep and Tom Rutherford, House of Commons Library, 'Reported Road Accident Statistics,' 24 October 2013, 2, www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn02198.pdf, accessed 11 September 2015
[125] Starkie, *The Motorway Age,* 120-130
[126] *LOP,* No. 39 Sept 18-Oct 2 1976, 5
[127] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 5 July 1967, 2
[128] New Wortley Community Association, Newsletter No. 1, July 1980

in more outlying areas bisected by major roads. Generally, they formed in working-class areas, since as we discussed above, traffic problems were most intense in the poorer parts of the city and it was here that most new roads were built.

To apply pressure on the council, the traffic action groups initially used the moderate methods deployed by community activists, organising petitions and letter writing campaigns, conducting research and arranging meetings with councillors and city officials. In Chapeltown, community activists began campaigning for safer road crossings at the beginning of 1972, following a spike in the number of traffic accidents in the area. The campaign was initiated by the Roads and Traffic Group of the Chapeltown Community Association. The group focused their efforts on Scott Hall Road, a radial road that carried traffic from the northern suburbs to the city centre, passing through the centre of an interwar council estate with a high child population.[129] The activists placed particular emphasis on the city council's failure to make proper provision for pedestrians and the threat to children.[130] They maintained that motorists routinely broke the speed limit, driving at up to 60mph in a 40mph zone, and did not acknowledge the existing zebra crossing. When one vehicle stopped to let a pedestrian cross it was common practice for a second motorist to use the outside lane to overtake the stationary car, endangering the crossing pedestrian. The group lobbied for a traffic light controlled pelican crossing to provide pedestrians with more robust protection and for stricter enforcement of the speed limit. They organised a traffic survey in February 1973 which challenged the council's figures and suggested that traffic levels almost met the national criteria for a pelican crossing.[131] The council was unmoved by this argument, citing the function of Scott Hall Road as an important radial route. Across the city traffic action groups usually encountered firm resistance from the public authorities who were feared that signalised crossings would hinder the flow of traffic and reduce the capacity of the road network. This was the argument the city council used to reject calls for a pedestrian crossing in Blenheim after a local girl had been injured by a bus.[132]

Traffic action groups challenged the traditional approach to transport policy making. Transport planning methods were used to determine the need for pedestrian crossing facilities and to assess whether the use of roads by heavy goods vehicles should be restricted. Such measures would only be implemented when accident rates reached a certain

[129] Chapeltown Community Association, Roads and Traffic Group Meeting, 8 January 1972, WYA, WYL2058; *YEP,* 3 May 1973, 2
[130] CCA, Roads and Traffic Group Meeting, 8 January 1972, WYA: WYL2058
[131] CCA, Roads and Traffic Group Meeting, 14 March 1973, WYA: WYL2058
[132] *LOP,* No. 1, January 1974, 3.

level and only if the regulations would have acceptable impact on traffic flow in the city overall. Community activists identified several flaws in this methodology. They pointed out that certain roads had a high accident rate, even though traffic levels were not sufficiently high to win government approval for a zebra or pelican crossing.[133] Activists in Middleton argued that the government's standardised guidelines were not applicable in their area since three recent fatalities pointed to a clear local need for better crossing facilities on the estate.[134] A rigidly quantitative approach to road safety could also have perverse outcomes. Activists in Holbeck argued that government policy seemingly required the city council to wait until another accident occurred on a local road so that the accident rate cross the government threshold before it installed a zebra crossing.[135] Activists showed that numerical data often failed to capture demand for new crossing infrastructure. Surveys of the York Road showed that few pedestrians crossed the road and the accident rate was low.[136] Local activists held that there was plenty of latent demand for crossing facilities, but few pedestrians were prepared to risk crossing when cars travelled at up to 70mph.

Community activists challenged the public monopoly over this information and expertise by conducting their own surveys of traffic flow and motorist behaviour. They used this research to bolster their argument for restricting traffic or providing new crossings.[137] In 1976 activists in Harehills campaigning for a ban on heavy lorries conducted research on Roundhay Road which found that, between 7.45am and 9am, 1779 heavy vehicles used the road, which equated to one heavy vehicle every eight seconds.[138] In 1980, activists in Halton Moor lobbying for safety measures and the closure of certain roads to through traffic, carried out a survey which showed that 1000 out of 1342 vehicles in a given period were using a road through the estate as a "rat run" to reach an industrial estate.[139] While activists held that data should not necessarily overrule the wishes of local people, they were not averse to using it to support their case. They were demonstrating that transport surveys were not neutral but could be used to serve different arguments.

Owing to the intransigence of the city council and the emotive nature of the issue, traffic action groups frequently resorted to more militant tactics, staging demonstrations on the road and obstructing the flow of traffic. The catalyst for such an action was often the death

---

[133] *LOP,* No. 10, 27 February 1970, 3
[134] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 22 July 1970, 2-4
[135] *LOP,* No. 42, Oct 20-Nov12 1976, 5
[136] *LOP,* No. 42, Oct 20-Nov12 1976, 5
[137] *TOP,* No. 10, 27 February 1970, 3
[138] *LOP,* No. 39, Sept 18-Oct 2 1976, 5
[139] *LOP,* No. 144, 31 Oct 1980, 16

of a local person – usually a child – which generated intense local anger. Activists in Chapletown adopted more militant tactics following the deaths of three local children at the junction of Sholebroke Mount and Scott Hall Road in the space of one month in spring 1973.[140] The day after the deaths of two local children, 200 residents attended a 'stormy and emotional public meeting' and they formed the Scott Hall Action Committee to spearhead the campaign. The group organised a demonstration at the point on the road where the children had died:

> In pouring rain on Friday 4th May, 150 mothers, children and men stopped the traffic by marching to and fro on the [zebra] crossing waving banners saying "Stop the Traffic", "This is our new cemetery", "Cars kill". 800 leaflets explaining the demonstration were handed out.[141]

At a subsequent meeting with local officials, the police agreed to man the zebra crossing for school children, but no firm commitment to install a pelican crossing was forthcoming.[142] Challenging the council's priorities, the group asked why the council could not allocate £3,000 for a pelican crossing out of its £1,288,400 highways budget.[143] To maintain the pressure on the council, the Action Committee organised a demonstration at the roadside during the rush hour twice a week for six weeks.[144] They wrote letters to city officials, the local MP, the Department of the Environment and the local press, leafleted in the area and gave interviews with the local radio. Over time, the Action Committee struggled to maintain the momentum of the campaign; by June 1973 numbers at the regular demonstrations had dwindled to a half a dozen protestors.[145] This revealed the difficulty of sustaining community action even in such an emotionally charged context. After the group lobbied the Planning Committee in late June, councillors agreed to fund a pelican crossing, as well as guard rails and bus bays.[146] The city council remained unwilling to reduce the speed limit on this key radial, so crossing the road elsewhere remained hazardous.

Road-blocking demonstrations were common across Leeds in the 1970s and early 1980s. The first recorded use of the tactic was in Farnley in 1970 where a local action group organised a march along part of the outer ring road to apply pressure on the council to install more crossings on a section of road where there had been an average of one accident

[140] *Chapeltown News*, No. 7, May 1973, 1
[141] *CN*, No. 7, May 1973, 1
[142] *CN*, No. 8, June 1973, 2
[143] *CN,* No. 7, May 1973
[144] *CN*, No. 9, July 1973, 6
[145] *CN*, No. 8, June 1973, 2
[146] *YEP,* 21 June 1973, 5; *CN,* No. 9, July 1973, 6

per week in 1969.[147] In November 1976, the activists in Holbeck brandished homemade lollipop signs and held up the traffic on Top Moor Side to allow children to cross the road.[148] This was in protest at the council's failure to install a zebra crossing. The Harehills Traffic Action Group used direct action to promote their campaign to ban heavy goods vehicles on the main route through the district. One weekday afternoon in December 1975, 50 members of the action group, supported by local residents and church members, blocked Roundhay Road by walking back and forth across the pedestrian crossing holding placards and banners.[149] Leaflets were handed out to passers-by to explain the action. Although many drivers were reportedly 'upset', 'shoppers and kids showed their support for the demonstration.'[150] The action lasted for almost one hour before 'the police arrived and waded in to renew the flow of lorries.' From late 1970s, the city council tended to respond more favourably to local requests for crossing facilities, but direct action did not stop. In 1980, community groups stopped the traffic in Halton Moor and New Wortley in support of their campaigns.[151]

Road-blocking demonstrations were potentially perilous forms of political activism. Activists not only placed themselves in physical danger from fast-moving vehicles, they faced the wrath of motorists and risked prosecution for obstructing the highway. Indeed, at the New Wortley demonstration in 1980, several activists were arrested by the police and charged with obstruction. [152] On the whole, however, the police appear to have acted leniently, though they usually acted swiftly to remove the protestors from the highway. An activist from the New Wortley Community Association explained the group's decision to resort to illegal tactics: '"We try to keep within the law. We were so het up about it after the boy was killed, we decided to do it. We knew it was against the law."'[153] Activists in Holbeck presented direct action as a proportionate response to the danger presented by unsafe roads: 'We realise that what we are doing may be breaking the law but it is obviously a much greater crime to endanger the lives of young and old in Holbeck by not providing us with a crossing.'[154] The Harehills Action Group resorted to using direct action after formal negotiations had 'resulted in nothing more than a vague promise that something

[147] *TOP*, No. 10, 27 February 1970, 3
[148] *LOP*, No. 44 Nov 27-Dec 11 1976, 5
[149] *LOP,* No. 23, December 1975, 20
[150] *LOP,* No. 23, December 1975, 20
[151] *LOP*, No. 137, 22 August-5 September 1980, 1; *LOP*, No. 141, 10 October 1980, 1-3
[152] *LOP,* No. 137, 22 August-5 September 1980, 1
[153] *ibid*
[154] *LOP,* No. 44 Nov 27-Dec 11 1976, 5

might be done in 2 years' time.'[155] Some campaigns were over a decade old before direct action was initiated.[156] These remarks reveal the reluctance with which community activists chose to use direct action. They did not romanticise the approach. It was, rather, a last resort, driven by anger and frustration. As activists of the Scott Hall Action Committee told motorists whose journeys they were disrupting: 'We have to demonstrate to be heard.'[157]

The disruption caused by these demonstrations was one of the few ways in which the community could actually inconvenience and embarrass the city council. It was a form of community sanction against public bodies. Like strike action in the workplace, road-blocking demonstrations sought to persuade the council return to the negotiating table. Indeed, threats of direct action were as common as direct action itself and *Leeds Other Paper* maintained that the council was 'terrified' of such threats.[158] The tactic was also used by community activists campaigning on issues like street cleansing.[159] Direct action did appear to influence council decision-making. As we saw above, the council was eventually persuaded to fund a pelican crossing on Scott Hall Road after two months of visible campaigning. Elsewhere the council's response was even more rapid. In Holbeck, community activists spent several months lobbying for a zebra crossing through moderate means with no success.[160] The day after activists held up a busy road, council workmen appeared to begin work on a zebra crossing. This prompted one resident to remark wryly, '"I've never seen the council move so fast, have you?"'[161] In 1979, activists in Harehills working with groups based further up the A58 secured permanent a ban on heavy goods vehicles using the road.[162]

Community action over road crossings radicalised people who had no previous experience of activism and were 'not normally given to demonstrating.'[163] These protests were certainly not confined to young radicals. In 1980 in New Wortley, an 80 year-old woman joined the road-blocking demonstration.[164] Working-class women played a central role in the traffic action groups. The majority of the most active members of the groups were

---

[155] *CN*, No. 20, November 1974, 2
[156] *LOP*, No. 42, Oct 20-Nov12 1976, 5
[157] Scott Hall Action Committee Flyer, 1973, WYA: WYL2058
[158] *TOP*, No. 9, 13 February 1970, 8; *LOP*, No. 186, 28 August 1981, 3
[159] *CN,* No. 19 August 1974, 1-2
[160] *LOP*, No. 44 Nov 27-Dec 11 1976, 5
[161] *ibid*
[162] *LOP,* No. 111, 17-31 August, 1979, 4
[163] *The Other Paper,* No. 10, 27 February 1970, 3
[164] *Leeds Other Paper*, No. 137, 22 August-5 September 1980, 1

women. All the leading organisers in the Scott Hall Action Committee were women.[165] The gender make-up of the traffic action groups was stressed condescendingly in local press reports, which referred to the activists 'mums' or 'wives.'[166] Women's involvement was connected to the fact that the safety of children in the community was seen to be the responsibility of women. Before crossings were installed, local women accompanied children across the road.[167] By participating in community action these women – who were less likely to be involved in party politics or trade unionism – made important interventions in urban politics.

The Leeds experience of community action over road traffic issues was mirrored across urban Britain. The May 1976 issue of *Community Action* carried a feature on grassroots campaigns for zebra crossings with advice for community groups engaging with this issue.[168] Direct action was particularly common, especially in London. In Hackney in April 1974 activists in the De Beauvoir district diverted traffic on Tottenham Road in part to protest the use of the road as a rat run by motorists.[169] In November 1976, in north London, community activists stopped the traffic at the busy Archway junction at rush hour as part of a successful campaign to veto the Greater London Council's road proposals.[170]

In campaigning for more robust pedestrian crossing facilities and for greater restrictions on the flow of traffic through urban areas, community activists were implicitly challenging the official view that vehicle movement should be unimpeded on major radial and orbital roads. They maintained that decisions over signalised pedestrian crossings and heavy goods vehicles bans were ultimately political. The decision turned on whether pedestrians and the environment should be prioritised over traffic flows and freight movements. The construction of new highways had actually intensified the conflict between vehicles and people. At the heart of the traffic action groups' case was the contention that transport policy was unfair: it prioritised the needs of the car owners over citizens who walked and frequently used the bus.[171] There appeared to be an irreconcilable tension between the council's vision of a "motorway city" in which vehicles moved quickly and freely and the ability of citizens to traverse the city on foot and inhabit a pleasant urban environment.[172]

---

[165] *Yorkshire Evening Post,* 3 May 1973, 2
[166] *Yorkshire Evening Post,* 7 April 1973, 8
[167] *Yorkshire Evening Post,* 3 May 1973, 2
[168] *Community Action*, No. 25 April-May 1976; *Community Action*, No. 26 June-July 1976
[169] *Hackney People's Press*, No. 10, April 1974, 3
[170] *Islington Gutter Press,* No. 22 November 1976
[171] *New Yapstick: the Paper of the Woodhouse Community Association*, No. 18, 1976, 3
[172] *LOP,* No. 1, Jan 1974, 3

While these points were implicit in their words and deeds, analysis of this sort did not feature prominently in the campaigns mounted by the traffic action groups. Traffic action groups usually adopted a more short term and superficial stance. In a discussion of strategy at a meeting of the Roads and Traffic Group of the Chapeltown Community Association, one member maintained that the group should spell out the wider political issue and argue that 'the car is less important than people,' challenging the council's argument that 'car flow is more important.'[173] This proposal was rejected by another member who held that the group need not take such a 'radical' stance but should instead focus on ensuring drivers did not break the speed limit.[174] The latter view was more representative of the way most action groups chose to frame their campaigns. Rather than explicitly emphasising the structural causes of increased traffic, they tried to ameliorate the symptoms. They proposed remedies such as speed restrictions, regulations on certain vehicles, safety barriers, and new crossing facilities. Rarely did traffic action groups articulate a vision of the city in which the car was structurally contained.

This narrower, more pragmatic approach limited the overall scope of traffic campaigns and militated against joint action between groups across the city facing similar problems. Traffic action groups tended to focus exclusively on their localities, or even single junctions. In the late 1970s, several activists voiced support for co-ordinated community action on traffic in the inner city, but this never materialised.[175] The interests of different community groups were not always aligned: Activists on the York Road claimed that the ban on lorries on the A58 had cause more lorries to travel through their area and community groups from different neighbourhoods clashed at a public inquiry into the order.[176] The failure to organise jointly on the traffic problem helps to explain why, despite several localised achievements, this form of community action had little impact on the underlying causes of increasing traffic levels in the city and on the emergence of an urban environment that was hostile to the pedestrian and inimical to the maintenance of a vibrant, convivial street life in inner city areas. Most inner city neighbourhoods remained blighted by congested highways and crossing the road continued to present a challenge for pedestrians into the 1980s and beyond. In 1984, the Sheepscar Interchange, a vast traffic intersection constructed in inner

---

[173] Chapeltown Community Association, Roads and Traffic Group Meeting, 7 February 1973, WYL 2058
[174] *ibid*
[175] Woodhouse Community Association, *New Yapstick*, No. 18, 1976, 3; *Leeds Other Paper*, No. 65, Sept 30-Oct 14 1977, 6, Letter from James Finlayson
[176] *LOP,* No. 64, September 16-30, 1977, 16; *LOP,* No. 101, 30 March-31 April 1979, 7

north Leeds, opened with only token facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.[177] Winning additional safety measures and pedestrian crossings was a useful short term expedient and helped to ease the problems of life for a pedestrian in the 'Motorway City,' but motor vehicles continued to take precedence over the environment and other forms of mobility at the close of the 1980s.

This section and Section 2 showed that part of the community action movement was a reaction to the effects of the 'Motorway City' project on the everyday life of certain urban neighbourhoods. It was a response to the loss of amenity, environmental blight, noise and community severance that resulted from urban motorway building. It was also a response to the general rise in vehicle traffic in the inner city and in neighbourhoods bisected by major roads that was associated with the road-building programme. This restricted other forms of mobility, particularly the ability of pedestrians to navigate the city. The emergence of community action around these issues in the late 1960s and early 1970s was the first time, in most of the city, that the transport strategy had been challenged. This section of the community action movement was able to extract small concessions from the city council to ameliorate some of the adverse effects of road-building, but it was unable to orientate the city's transport strategy in a different direction.

Sections 2 and 3 have explored four key reasons for the weakness of community action around transport in much of Leeds. First, timing was key. The rise of community action in most inner city areas began too late in the policy-making process to block the construction of the urban motorways; it emerged after much of the transport strategy had been prepared and approved by government. Second, these community activists possessed limited financial, educational and social resources; they were drawn mainly from low income areas of the city. Unlike other community campaigns we explored in Chapters 1 and 2, these action groups received little help from middle-class professionals. Third, these groups were largely parochial and did not form alliances across the city. Fourth, these community activists did not mount a structural challenge to the 'Motorway City' project and nor did they articulate an alternative vision for the city's transport strategy. The city council was able to accommodate some of their concerns without changing its basic priorities. The next two sections will explore more successful examples of community action around transport and road-building. In order to effectively contest the Leeds Approach they transcended the more piecemeal approach we have explored above.

---

[177] *LOP,* No. 331, 22 June 1984, 2-3; No. 322, 20 April 1984, 8; Pat Toms, 'Promoting Private Traffic,' 12-13

4. Organising against the Headingley expressway

Community action was not only confined to extracting small concessions from the council on transport policy, and nor did activists only fight a rear-guard action against the transport strategy. In north-west Leeds, activists succeeded in blocking a key goal of the Leeds Approach, the conversion of the A660 road into an expressway. This aim of this section is to show why community action in this part of Leeds succeeded and to examine how it accomplished this.

As we saw above, the A660 had been the focus of highway proposals in the 1930s and the early 1960s. In both of these decades, the schemes were dropped following community resistance. These victories proved indecisive. The A660 remained a key strategic route in the city's transport strategy and the council aspired to upgrade it. This was because the road connected the city centre to the Polytechnic and the University. It linked several residential suburbs to the city centre, before intersecting with the outer ring road and running out to towns and villages in the commuter belt north-west of Leeds [see Figs. 3.2, 3.9].[178] During the 1970s and 1980s, several highways schemes were promoted for the A660, first by Leeds City Council and later by the West Yorkshire County Council, which assumed responsibility for the road after 1974. They affected the first covered three miles of the 'A660 corridor' from the city centre to Far Headingley. Each scheme sought to improve traffic flow through widening the road by adding lanes, constructing new sections of road, and streamlining intersections.[179] The Headingley by-pass proposals were resurrected. The goal was to increase the capacity of the road and to eliminate conflicts between long distance commuters and local traffic.

The publication of the 1971 proposals precipitated the formation of a community action movement across the whole corridor. In 1971 and 1972, community action groups were formed in several neighbourhoods to challenge the scheme. The mobilisation consisted of groups newly formed in response to the plans and pre-existing groups established over other issues. The Headingley Residents Association and the Weetwood Society, were formed in reaction to the road proposals. The North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association and the South Headingley Community Association were formed in response to the city council's

---

[178] *YEP,* 5 March 1973, 4
[179] LCC, 'A660 Road Proposals', Information Sheet, 1973

housing renewal strategy but also campaigned against the road plans.[180] Organising around the A660 plans was a natural extension of their interest in community and the built environment. The road plans were explicitly linked to the wider project of urban renewal and community activists in northwest Leeds were aware of this connection. For instance, the Headingley Residents Association was also leading the campaign against proposals for a district centre scheme in Headingley, which sought to replace several traditional streets with 45,000 square feet of new office and retail space.[181] An early victory for the groups in October 1972 when the council abandoned its support for the district centre galvanised the campaign against the road.[182]

Recognising that groups throughout north west Leeds had a shared interest in challenging the road proposals, in 1972 activists from six community groups formed the A660 Joint Council to co-ordinate the campaign.[183] Managed by a group of elected officers, the Joint Council collected a membership fee from the member organisations and held regular monthly meetings. By the late 1970s, it had over 1000 members.[184] By the early 1980s, Leeds Civic Trust, the Victorian Society, Transport 2000, Friends of the Earth and the Leeds Cycling Action Group had affiliated to the Joint Council.[185] There was considerable overlap between the membership of these organisations and the community action groups fighting against the road plans. These organisations offered material as well as moral assistance to the campaign. The Leeds Civic Trust provided a secretariat for the Joint Council as part of its strategy for supporting neighbourhood groups that we discussed in Chapter 2.[186] The Victorian Society helped to produce influential literature for the campaign.[187] This alliance of neighbourhood groups across the length of the corridor and other pressure group was a key strength of the campaign. The groups shared information and, through the A660 Joint Council, engaged in collective bargaining with the council. This distinguished community action on the A660 to the groups we investigated in Section 2 and 3.

---

[180] North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association: Principal Events, 1971-81, WYA: WYL247
[181] Headingley Residents Association, 'It Is Time,' 1972 [LCT]
[182] Press Cutting: *YEP,* 18 October 1972, 'Big Leeds shopping centre barred' [LCT]
[183] The founder members were the Headingley Residents Association, the Ashwood Residents Association, the Horsforth Community Association, the North Hyde Park Residents Association, the South Headingley Community Association and the Far Headingley Village Society. The Blenheim Residents Association joined later in the 1970s.
[184] Audrey Marlow to Licensing Justices, 15 June 1981, WYA: WYL247
[185] A660 Joint Council, Audrey Marlow to Ken Patterson, 12 April 1984 [LCT]
[186] Leeds Civic Trust, *Outlook,* No.2, August 1972, 4; Leeds Civic Trust, Press Release, 12 January 1973 [LCT]
[187] Leeds Civic Trust and Victorian Society (West Yorkshire Group), 'A660?' (1983)

The dynamism of the campaign against the A660 road proposals was linked to the people who participated in it. As we saw in Chapter 1 and 2, the identity of community activists can only be described impressionistically based on references to people in the sources. Membership records, social studies and other sources that might allow for a more systematic analysis of group membership either do not survive or never existed. Most of the community activists mentioned in the sources on the A660 corridor were professionals or successful business people from a middle-class background, including lawyers, doctors, estate agents, accountants and business people.[188] This was representative of the norm in suburbs like Headingley, Weetwood and West Park. The written output of the groups suggests they were well-educated. There was a preponderance of academics, which is unsurprising given the proximity of Leeds University and Leeds Polytechnic. The chair of the A660 Joint Council in the early 1970s was a lecturer at Leeds University.[189] Many community activists were actually planning or transport specialists. William Houghton-Evans, who was active in the A660 Joint Council and the North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association, was a Senior Lecturer in Town Planning and Architecture at Leeds University.[190] The A660 corridor as a whole was socially diverse. Neighbourhoods like Hyde Park, Blenheim, south Headingley and Woodhouse contained a higher proportion of tenants, ethnic minorities and low income households and individuals from these backgrounds participated in the campaign. One leading activist observed that both the South Headingley Community Association and the North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association had 'an appreciable working class membership.'[191]

Women were prominent in the campaign. One of the most influential community activists in the campaign was Audrey Marlow, a resident of Hyde Park, who occupied key position in the A660 Joint Council and the North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association in the 1970s and 1980s.[192] A graduate of LSE and a veteran of Bletchley Park, Marlow first became involved in community activism from 1964 when she bought a house in Hyde Park that was later threatened by the clearance programme. Another leading activist from the Hyde Park

---

[188] LCT Press Cutting: *YEP,* 24 April 1972 [LCT]
[189] *YEP,* 13 April 1973, 9
[190] Institute for Transport Studies, 'History,' http://www.its.leeds.ac.uk/alumni/history/, accessed 20 January 2015; Christopher Todd, 'The Proposed NGT Scheme for Leeds: Statement of Case,' January 2014, 5, www.persona.uk.com/LTVS/OPs/PoE/OBJ171/OBJ171.pdf, accessed 20 January 2015. See also: William Houghton-Evans, *Planning Cities: Legacy and Portent* (London, 1975) and *Architecture and Urban Design* (Lancaster, 1978).
[191] Audrey Marlow, Comments on J.R. Ravetz, 'The A660 Corridor: A survey of problems and possible solutions' (Feb 1979), 12 February 1979, WYA: WYL247
[192] North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association, Newsletter, No. 72, 1998, WYA: WYL247

area was Celia Barry, who worked as a civil servant in east Leeds.[193] Living at the foot of a proposed flyover, Barry was typical of many activists in having a vested interest in stopping the road plans, but she had a wider interest in transport and environmental issues, which was reflected in her involvement in the campaign against a motorway proposed by the government which would link the M1 and the A1 via Pudsey and Harrogate.[194] Several members of the Pudsey-Dishforth Motorway Action Group, the organisation campaigning against this planned motorway, were active in community groups along the A660.[195] Like Barry, the majority of activists had a wider interest in political, social and environmental issues and most were involved in other local and national campaigning groups or voluntary organisations. Many community activists had prior experience of radical political groups. Both Marlow and Houghton-Evans were members of the Community Party in the 1930s and CND in the 1950s.[196] They transferred their organising skills to the community action movement.

This analysis of the membership of the campaign not only enriches our understanding of the identity of community activists, it helps to explain why community action in north-west Leeds was so successful. The professional, educational, political and socioeconomic background of key community activists was a major asset. It contrasts with the personal resources of most activists in inner and south Leeds. Community activists in north-west Leeds also derived psychological strength from the history of the campaign. That road proposal for the A660 had been defeated in the past emboldened activists. In July 1978, the A660 Joint Council held a garden party in Hyde Park to commemorate forty years of successful community resistance to road plans on the A660.[197] The view that road-building was inevitable, which characterised much of inner Leeds in this period, did not take hold in north-west Leeds.

A distinguishing feature of the A660 campaign, which differentiated it from community action over roads elsewhere in Leeds, was that activists in north-west Leeds developed compelling set of inter-linked arguments to undermine the case for road-building. The community activists' case against the council's highway proposals was composed of three distinct pillars. The first part of the case explored the social and environmental impact on north-west Leeds. As we have seen, the council contended that the scheme would improve

---

[193] Obituary for Celia Barry, NHPNA, Newsletter No. 54, Autumn 1992, 3
[194] *ibid*
[195] See: Pudsey-Dishforth Motorway Action Group Records, WYA: WYL2071
[196] NHPNA, Newsletter, No. 72, 1998, 3-4, 11-12
[197] *LOP*, No. 84, 7-21 July 1978, 7

the environment along the corridor by removing traffic from areas where pedestrians congregated.[198] Community activists countered this claim in two ways. Firstly, they argued that the new road would increase the problems of traffic by acting as a magnet to commuter traffic and freight vehicles, a point we shall return to later. As a result, the corridor as a whole would suffer from increased congestion, noise and pollution. The relative calm of roads from which through traffic was removed would be obtained at the expense of adjacent areas which would be blighted by the expressway. Secondly, they held that the road scheme would damage the built environment along the corridor by spoiling the setting of buildings of historic and aesthetic value along the route. Leeds Civic Trust described the A660 corridor as a as a place 'of unusual character and considerable beauty.' [199] The road would not only require the demolition of several individually attractive buildings, it would erode the coherence of the urban fabric, despoiling its character. This argument drew on the concept of townscape, which stressed that the special quality of an urban area was derived from several component parts – buildings, road, trees, street furniture – each of which had to be preserved to maintain this distinctive atmosphere.[200] Activists noted that the city council had recognised the value of this townscape by designating four conservation areas along the route in the early 1970s.[201] Activists rejected the claim that the road itself would be aesthetically appealing, describing it as a 'noisy, polluted and dangerous speedway.'[202]

Community activists also held that the road would undermine the social fabric of the district. Like their counterparts contesting housing clearance, activists on the A660 corridor argued the district housed a number of unified and coherent communities.[203] They maintained that demolition to prepare the route would physically displace many of the households who constituted this community. Neighbourhoods such as Blenheim were to lose 80 to 90 houses to a new section dual carriageway.[204] The impact of environmental blight and disruption would encourage those with the resources to do so to leave, breaking up established social networks. Several of the small commercial centres along the route, which acted as focal points for community life, were to be cleared or reduced in size.[205] The road would sever the neighbourhoods along the route by functioning as a physical barrier to

---

[198] *YEP,* 5 March 1973, 4; Leeds City Council, 'A660 Road Proposals', Information Sheet, 1973
[199] LCT, *Outlook,* No. 13, August 1976, 7
[200] Lionel Esher, *A Broken Wave: the Rebuilding of England, 1940-1980* (Middlesex, 1983): 72-74
[201] Leeds City Council, 'Conservation Areas: Designation and Implementation,' February 1972
[202] A660 Joint Committee, 'The Headingley Expressway: and its effect on the people who will pay, 1972 [LCT]
[203] *YEP,* 17 April 1964, 13; HRA, 'It is time,'
[204] A660 Joint Council, 'Traffic Rules OK?' in *LOP*, No. 35 July 24-August 7 1976
[205] *ibid*

pedestrian movement.[206] Unlike the existing road, the new highway would not create opportunities for incidental social contact for residents walking on footpaths. The net effect of these changes, it was argued, would be fatal to many communities.[207] Activists maintained that the council had neglected this social dimension in formulating its proposals.

In making arguments about the physical and social impact of the road proposals, community activists stressed the quintessentially urban qualities of the district: the density of people and services, the ease of navigating the area on foot and the wealth of useful amenities. They maintained that the road plans would undermine these distinctively urban features by transferring space to fast-moving road vehicles. The beneficiaries would be car users who lived in outer suburban areas.[208] Indeed, the A660 Joint Council framed the debate over the road as a conflict between the interests of an urban community and those of suburban commuters, contending that 'some of us like living in cities, not just commuting through them.'[209] This was an implicit critique of the tendency for public policy to underwrite the costs of private motoring, which encouraged the outward movement of the population from inner city to the urban fringe in the post-war decades. Key to this argument was that the council should prioritise 'the quality of life' of citizens over 'the speed at which traffic moves.'[210] The A660 Joint Council argued that conventional transport planning methodology drew absurd conclusions about the value of urban spaces. The county council's computerised model for assessing the quality of the environment had given the environment of Hunslet, with its fast roads and dearth of shops, a high rating because few people attempted to walk over the roads.[211] The implication was that there were valuable aspects of urban life that transport planning methodology could not measure or had failed to consider. This philosophy was informed by Jane Jacobs who had critiqued modernist planning principles and urban expressway building in the United States.[212]

As the new primary road network began to take shape, activists were able observe the effects of the city's extant expressways and urban motorways. Hunslet, Holbeck and the improved York Road were presented as case studies in the danger posed by the council's plans.[213] In one leaflet, activists contrasted photos of the extant Headingley Lane with

[206] *YEP,* 17 April 1964, 13
[207] HRA, 'It is time,'; Letters to Ken Woolmar, 14/15 July 1976 [WYL 247]
[208] Joint Council, 'Traffic Rules'
[209] *ibid*
[210] Leeds Civic Trust and Victorian Society, 'A660,' 6
[211] *LOP,* No. 48, February 5-18, 1977, 3
[212] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, 1961)
[213] Joint Committee, 'The Headingley Expressway'

images of the recently widened York Road in east Leeds [see Fig. 3.7].[214] While the latter image was dominated by concrete and asphalt, showing a four lane highway passing through semi-derelict land, the former depicted an almost bucolic scene of a narrow winding road with stone pavements, flanked by mature trees and old walls. The aim was to enable local people to visualise the effects of the road scheme, which the council had portrayed only in diagrammatic form.[215] Expanding on this point about the alleged disjuncture between official claims and reality, community activists held that the language used in planning documents concealed their true meaning. 'Improved junctions' would, they argued, amount to 'expressway junction[s] complete with flyovers and slip roads.'[216] Similarly, they held the term 'by-pass' was a euphemism because it suggested the road would pass around the area when in fact, 'Headingley is being pushed out of the way of the cars.'[217]

The second pillar of the case against the road proposals was to contend that the scheme would be ineffective as a form of transport policy. Firstly, the community rejected the idea that investing in roads would ease congestion on the A660 corridor. Increasing road capacity, they argued, would simply attract more motorists to the route and encourage more commuters to use their cars. Whereas the council's transport planners claimed that they were responding to the future demand for vehicle use, activists claimed that the scheme would stimulate demand for car travel. This would lengthen journey times for local drivers and bus users and, in the long term, it would not improve conditions for commuters.[218] In addition, activists claimed that a streamlined, wider A660 would become a magnet for heavy goods vehicles, travelling north from central Leeds.[219] Activists feared that should the strategic motorways planned for the north of the city in the Aire and Wharfe valleys receive approval, the A660 would become a 'northern extension of the M1 motorway.'[220] As we saw in Section 3, heavy goods traffic compounded the problem of noise and environmental blight.

Developing this argument, activists maintained that the scheme was based on a narrow appraisal of the city's transport needs. It focused almost entirely on the needs of the private

---

[214] HRA, 'It is time'

[215] The promoters argued these images were not a fair representation of the council's plans. See: 'Stanley Rostron says…', Conservative Councillor leaflet, 1972 [LCT]

[216] Joint Committee, 'The Headingley Expressway'

[217] *ibid*

[218] *YEP,* 7 February 1972, 15

[219] R.T. Smithson to Sir Karl Cohen, 11 April 1973 [LCT]

[220] Leeds Civic Trust, 'The current situation regarding plans for the A660 and alterations to Central Headingley,' 13 September 1972 [LCT]

motorist and, in particular, motorists commuting longer distances from the outer suburbs and surrounding towns.[221] It overlooked the interests of public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians. Community activists represented constituencies of citizens whose preferred modes of transport were to receive no significant capital investment in the scheme.[222] Activists rejected the notion that other road users would benefit from the new road. For much of its length, the new road would present an impassable barrier to people on foot who would be required to use special bridges and underpasses. A wider, faster road would be more hazardous for cyclists.[223] Buses serving residential and commercial areas would not be able to use much of the route.[224] The activists' challenge to the A660 scheme was grounded in a critique of the council's wider transport strategy. Local transport authorities had a statutory duty to prepare an integrated transport plan, which would co-ordinate different transport modes to operate in harmony.[225] While the council felt it had fulfilled its obligations, the Leeds Civic Trust maintained that the council's proposals fell short of an 'integrated transport strategy' because the extent of provision for the private car would be to detriment of other modes.[226] Like their counterparts campaigning against housing clearance, activists underlined the disjuncture between national policy goals and local practice.

The third pillar of the case was a political challenge to the way transport policy was prepared and implemented. Like their counterparts in the community action campaigns around housing renewal and council housing, activists argued that the council had neglected to speak directly to local people in formulating its plans.[227] The council's attempt to consult with the public in the early 1970s was limited to the distribution of information leaflets and the staging of three short exhibitions.[228] Both forms of publicity set out the case for the scheme after they had been formally agreed by the council. No election had been fought on the issue prior to the publication of the plans. This position stemmed from the growing assertiveness among the public we explored in Chapter 2. As the chair of the Headingley Residents Association put it, there 'is a healthy readiness within the community to question official decisions.'[229] Community activists highlighted this democratic deficit in the subsequent iteration of the highway scheme. The plans unveiled in summer 1976 were

[221] *YEP,* 13 April 1973, 9
[222] *YEP,* 5 March 1973, 4
[223] *YEP,* 29 April 1977, 7; *LOP,* No. 53, April 16-29 1977, 3
[224] *YEP*, 13 April 1973, 9
[225] McKay and Cox, *Urban Renewal,* 173-4
[226] C. G. Thirlwall, 'Traffic in Towns – The Planning Approach, *The Journal of the Institution of Highway Engineers*, Volume XVIII, No. 1, 1971, 21; LCT Press release, John Hepper, 12 January 1973
[227] *YEP,* 7 February 1972, 15
[228] LCC, 'A660 Road Proposals', Information Sheet, 1973
[229] LCT Press Cutting: *YEP,* 3 May 1972 [LCT]

approved by the county council before consultation had taken place.[230] For community activists, this was diametrically opposed to any legitimate means of making policy.[231] As a member of the North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association put it, 'the people most affected by the decision have not had time to make adequate representation to you.'[232] Thus, while activists objected to the content of the proposals, the process of governance was as much a target of the campaign.

In 1976, the county council countered that adequate public consultation had taken place when the city council promoted its 1971 scheme.[233] The county claimed it had modified the city council's scheme in light of earlier public comment. This position only emphasised the cleavages between community activists and the local authority. Community activists believed the earlier consultations were inadequate because public comment had only been invited on 'which side roads should be closed and where the bus stops should go,' not whether there was support for the road itself.[234] The county council's modifications to the scheme, they argued, were perfunctory and did not address their core objections. The county council did eventually consult on the scheme as part of a participation exercise for the West Yorkshire Structure Plan, but this was a statutory obligation and did not imply a shift in local government attitudes. As we shall see, activists continued to advance the political argument against highway building in the 1980s in an evolving administrative context.

In campaigning against the roads, community activists in the 1970s used most of the methods we investigated in Chapter 1 and 2. A series of public meetings were held to spread the word about the proposals.[235] Petitions and bundles of letters were submitted to the city council to demonstrate the extent of public support. Drawing on public relations techniques, activists promoted their case through Radio Leeds, bus and cinema adverting and street posters.[236] In April 1974, the Joint Council had a float in the Lord Mayor's Parade.[237] Community activists sought to negotiate with the city council over its proposals through written correspondence and face-to-face public meetings.[238] Public meetings were often tense, exposing cleavages between residents and council representatives, but they

[230] *YEP*, 7 July 1976, 7; *YEP,* 19 July 1976, 2
[231] Zinnermann and Zinnermann to Leader of WYMCC, 20 July 1976 [LCT]
[232] S. Olsberg to K. Woolmer, July 1976, WYA: WYL247
[233] *YEP*, 23 July 1976
[234] Joint Council, 'Traffic Rules OK?'
[235] LCT Press Cuttings: *YEP,* 14 July 1972, 3 May 1972 and 24 April 1972 [LCT]
[236] A660 Joint Council, Minutes, 3 March 1973, WYA: WYL247
[237] A660 Joint Council, Minutes, 28 March 1974, WYA: WYL247
[238] For written correspondence, see: A660 Joint Council Minutes, 24 February 73, WYA: WYL247. For descriptions of the public meetings in summer 1976, see: *YEP,* 17 June 1976, 3; *YEP,* 19 July 1976, 2; *YEP,* 9 August 1976, 6

were an effective form of communication.[239] In 1973 and 1974, community action groups stood candidates in local and county elections on an anti-expressway ticket in an effort to apply pressure on local councillors.[240] Directly engaging in electoral politics was a less common tactic for community activists, but it proved an effective means of applying pressure on local politicians. Over the 1970s and 1980s, city and county councillors from both parties progressively declared their opposition to the road scheme.[241]

The outcome of the community action campaign in the 1970s was ultimately inconclusive, but activists succeeded in staving off the scheme. The first phase of the community campaign against the road scheme failed to move the council leaders. The party submitted its plans for the A660 to central government largely unmodified in April 1973, confident it would receive funding approval.[242] However, eighteen months later the government had yet to make a decision and this scheme effectively perished in this policy-making limbo.[243] Local government reorganisation in April 1974 extended this hiatus as responsibility for strategy highways in West Yorkshire was transferred to the county council. As we have seen, in June 1976 the county council effectively resurrected the city council's proposals for the A660.[244] Pressure from community activists during the participation exercise on the West Yorkshire Structure Plan yielded some significant modifications to the county's plans for the corridor. The proposals for demolishing Hyde Park Corner were deleted and the Headingley bypass proposals were deprioritised.[245] The plan to demolish most of Blenheim for a dual carriageway was also abandoned in November 1978.[246] Though expanding the capacity of the A660 remained a long-term county council objective, activists had once again staved off the scheme.

The community action campaign in Leeds against urban road-building was representative of a national trend. In the early 1970s, grassroots opposition to road proposals in urban Britain intensified. *Community Action* documented these campaigns in dozens of British cities and towns.[247] In the towns of the Aire Valley north-west of Leeds, community activists

---

[239] *YEP,* 27 July 1972 6
[240] *YEP*, 22 January 1973, 2
[241] LCT Press Cutting: u.d., Autumn 1972 [LCT]; *YEP*, 23 July 1976, 6
[242] Robert Waterhouse, *The Guardian*, 22 September 1973, 11; LCT Press Cutting, *YEP,* 28 March 1972 [LCT]
[243] *YEP,* 11 October 1974 [LCT]
[244] *YEP*, 17 June 1976, 3
[245] Audrey Marlow, *Headline*, No. 21, February 1978, WYA: WYL547
[246] West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council, Report of the Executive Director of Traffic and Transportation, 10 March 1983, 8
[247] John Grant, *The politics of urban transport planning: an analysis of transportation policy formulation in three UK county boroughs between 1947 and 1974* (London, 1977): 100-104; *Community Action,* No. 5, November-December 1972, 4; *CA,* No. 8, May-June 1973, 6-7; *CA,* No. 6, January-February 1973, 3-4; *CA,* No. 9 July-August 1973, 7-8

organised a militant campaign against a proposed motorway, culminating in an occupation of the building in which the public inquiry was being held.[248] In York, community activists fought the city council's plans for an inner ring road just outside the city walls, setting up the York 2000 group in 1971.[249] In 1970, the campaign against the London ringways plan climaxed when the public inquiry into the Greater London Development Plan (GDLP) commenced.[250] The public inquiry received over 30,000 objections to the GDLP, most of which concerned the ringways: a large proportion of these were either lodged or endorsed by community groups.[251] Grassroots campaigns received support from several recently formed national pressure groups, including Transport 2000, Friends of the Earth, the Conservation Society and the national Civic Trust.[252] Friends of the Earth produced an 'action guide' for environmental protest groups in the UK in 1971 which included two chapters on roads.[253]

Building on the experience of these campaigns, a sophisticated counter-argument to the prevailing orthodoxy in transport policy was articulated by community activists, academics, journalists and planning professionals. In 1969, a critique of the case for urban motorways commissioned by the London Amenity and Transport Association, a coalition of opponents of the London ringways plan, was published.[254] In 1972, Tony Aldous, a journalist at *The Times,* wrote an influential analysis of environmental policy making and argued that citizens needed to play a larger role.[255] *Towns Against Traffic* (1972) by Stephen Plowden, a transport planner, offered a comprehensive critique of orthodox transport planning and advocated an alternative approach.[256] These arguments began to gain currency among policy makers. In 1973, a report of the House of Commons Select Committee on Public Expenditure recommended the scrapping of all urban motorway projects, restrictions on car use and the expansion of public transport.[257] While the government did not implement this set of recommendations in full it asked local authorities to reconsider their urban road plans.[258] The OPEC oil crisis in October 1973 reinforced the wisdom of exploring alternatives to the private car. From the early 1970s, the media began to voice these critical

---

[248] John Tyme, *Motorway versus Democracy: Public inquiries into road proposals and their political significance* (London, 1978): 19-30
[249] York 2000, *People in Protest* (1973); *CA*, No. 9, July-August 1973, 'Burnley,' 7-8
[250] John Davis, ''Simple Solutions,'' 264-269
[251] Davis, '''Simple Solutions,''' 257-8
[252] Nick Hamer, *Wheels Within Wheels: A study of the road lobby* (London, 1987), 68-9
[253] John Barr, ed, *The Environmental Handbook: Action guide for the UK* (London, 1971): 183-197
[254] Michael Thomson, *Motorways in London* (London, 1969). See also, Startkie, *The Motorway Age,* 83
[255] Tony Aldous, *Battle for the Environment* (Glasgow, 1972)
[256] Stephen Plowden, *Town Against Traffic* (London, 1972)
[257] House of Commons, Expenditure Committee on Urban Transport Planning, *Report*: *Volume 1* (HMSO, 1973), Cmnd., 5366. See also: Starkie, *The Motorway Age*, 86-88; McKay and Cox, *Urban Change,* 178-9
[258] McKay and Cox, *Urban Change,* 180; Starkie, *The Motorway Age,* 98

approaches. A *Guardian* report on Leeds in 1973 predicted that the Motorway City 'will remain an ordinary, muddled, problem-ridden city of the seventies, left in a limbo after overreaching itself.'[259]

When mounting economic problems in the mid-1970s prompted a round of spending cuts, the urban road-building programme was identified as a candidate for major economies. The capital cost of urban motorways was large and, in the context of mounting inflation and rising interest rates, the government judged several schemes to be unaffordable. National expenditure on urban roads actually declined in the late 1970s and fewer miles of roads were constructed than in the early 1970s.[260] As we saw in Chapter 1 and 2 community activists found an ally in central government. The government refused to support several major road schemes in the mid-1970s, including the Meadows Relief Road in Oxford and the York Inner Ring Road.[261] The weight of community opposition also moved several authorities to abandon major schemes. In 1972 in Nottingham the newly elected Labour council chose to ration demand for car travel instead of perusing two major roads schemes it had inherited.[262] In 1973, the Labour-led Greater London Council scrapped the ringways proposals, influenced by the community action campaign and the Treasury's reluctance to fund the scheme.[263] In Leeds, the 1970s iterations of the A660 road proposals were, in part a casualty of government cuts. Leeds City Council was also moved by the arguments advanced by the opponents of the road pertaining to the impact of roads on housing and the environment.[264] In June 1975 the North Eastern Urban Motorway was denied funding by the government for cost reasons.[265] By the late 1970s, community activists appeared to be sailing with the wind of political opinion on urban road schemes.

5. The evolution of anti-road campaigning in the 1980s

Despite the shift in national policy over urban road building, the diminishing legitimacy of such projects, and the more austere climate of the 1980s, the county council made a further attempt to expand highway capacity on the A660 in that decade. This phase in the history of the campaign illuminates the way the local state adapted its approach to policy making in response to community action and, in turn, how activists augmented their campaigning

---

[259] *The Guardian*, 22 September 1973, 11
[260] Starkie, *The Motorway Age*, 100-1
[261] Starkie, *The Motorway Age,* 98-105
[262] Starkie, *The Motorway Age,* 85
[263] John Davis, ''Simple Solutions,'' 270-72
[264] Ken Woolmer, quoted in 'Design for Living,' *The Citizen,* 12 October 1973 [LCT]
[265] *YEP,* 25 June 1975, 7

efforts. In 1982, the county council announced that it intended to draw up a highway scheme for the A660 corridor, but not before consulting with the public on various options.[266] The following year, the authority distributed a questionnaire on transport options to 55,000 households in north-west Leeds.[267] This invited households to select their preferred scheme for the A660 corridor from four options, labelled 'themes.'[268] The results of this survey were to inform the county council's decision. This level of consultation was unprecedented in transport policy making in Leeds. It spoke to the influence of community action. As we saw in Chapter 1 and 2, participatory policy making was becoming more common in a range of policy areas.

If the county council's approach to consultation had evolved, the way it conceived of the transport problems of the corridor had not. Whereas in the 1970s, community activists had challenged the public authorities for failing to consult with communities, in the 1980s community activists focused on the perceived failings of the consultation process. The consultation was based on the premises that traffic congestion was a major and problem that would increase as traffic levels increased. Expanding the capacity of the road network was depicted as the only solution to congestion.[269] Public comment, activists argued, was thus confined to selecting where on the corridor highway schemes were to be built, not whether they should be built. Under theme four, for instance, the A660 itself would be left largely untouched, but major road works would take place on other radials in north-west Leeds.[270] The consultation did not allow respondents to record a preference for other approaches: a public transport solution had been explicitly ruled out in the pre-consultation report.[271] The forecast increases in traffic were presented as an unalterable fact.

The political debate over the road proposals revealed a fundamental disagreement over the meaning of participation and consultation. The A660 Joint Council argued that because the county council's approach did not allow citizens to make a meaningful choice, it did not correct the imbalance of power between communities and local government. They asserted that 'consultation should start by asking the affected communities what they want,' before

---

[266] *YEP,* 11 September 1982, 5
[267] *YEP*, 16 November 1983, 5
[268] WYMCC, 'A660 Corridor,' 1983 [LCT]
[269] *ibid*
[270] *ibid*
[271] WYMCC, Report of the Executive Director of Traffic and Transportation, 10 March 1983, Options for Public Consultation, 9-11

proceeding as a discussion between the council authority and citizens. [272] Activists held that 'a mere submission of views' did not constitute 'discussion.'[273] This resembled the criticism levelled by community action groups against the city council's consultation exercises in the late 1970s such as the Chapeltown Local Plan that we examined in Chapter 2.[274] By contrast, the county council still conceived of consultation and participation in the narrower sense of soliciting public views on already mature policy proposals. Options would be discussed within clearly defined parameters.

This debate was connected to a disagreement over the role of local government and organised community groups. The county council, like the city council before it, presented itself as a neutral arbiter between competing interest groups, ranging from community action groups to representatives of the road lobby.[275] Community action groups, argued the council, were one sectional interest group among many others. Of course, community activists rejected the notion that the council began from a neutral standpoint, since they felt its proposals were inherently biased in favour of car users. Through petitions, letters, public meetings and surveys activists sought to show their views were representative of public opinion. One leading activist asserted that the campaign had 'no desire to usurp the proper function of councillors to make decisions and take responsibility for these' but sought to ensure that the views of those most intimately affected by planning proposals were 'given very strong consideration.[276] They did not believe that local people should dictate policy, but that their views had not been given sufficient weight hitherto. This debate ultimately reached a stalemate, since neither side could conclusively prove its approach enjoyed widespread support.

In response to the limited terms of the 1983 consultation, the South Headingley Community Association and Transport 2000 boycotted the questionnaire.[277] Other groups responded by criticising all of the themes.[278] The A660 Joint Council's response documented a litany of procedural and methodological failings, including one-sided public exhibitions, poorly publicised public meetings and the use of 'confusing and off-putting technical terms in

---

[272] A660 Joint Council, Response to Consultation on A660 Corridor, A. Marlow to Councillor K. Patterson, 12 March 1984 [LCT]
[273] A.C. Marlow to J. Tweedle, WYMCC, 1979 WYA: WYL247
[274] Chapeltown News, *Planning to Deceive: a critique of Leeds Council's participation planning exercise*, Chapeltown News Pamphlet No. 1, 1975
[275] Saich to Marlow, 14 August 1979, WYA: WYL247
[276] A.C. Marlow to J. Tweedle, 1979, WYA: WYL247
[277] *YEP*, 9 March 1984, 11; *YEP,* 15 December 1983, 5; *Headline*, No. 28, Autumn 1983, 1
[278] LCT, Response to the Public Consultation Documents on WYMCC Proposals for A660 Corridor, November 1983 [LCT]

documents.[279] These they argued cast doubt on the council's commitment to consultation, even on these terms, and rendered the results meaningless.[280]

The community action movement gained an important ally in November 1983 when the city council declared its opposition to expanding highway capacity on the A660, a position endorsed by all parties.[281] This shift in policy can partly be explained by the influence of the community action on local councillors. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, a new generation of representatives elected from the late 1970s was more amenable to the community action movement. On the A660 corridor, Judy Thomas, a Labour councillor for Headingley between 1980 and 1988, epitomised this change. Thomas was a member of the South Headingley Community Association. She had campaigned against the road proposals in the 1970s and she was committed to more thorough public participation in policy making.[282] In 1982, she pronounced that any confidential road scheme should be 'ripped up.'[283] Labour councillors like Thomas acted as advocates for community action within local government, bringing more pressure to bear on the leadership.

The county council received 237 letters, 1040 pro forma letters and three petitions, mainly from opponents of road-building who had spurned the official questionnaire.[284] The response reveals the breadth of the coalition community activists mobilised against road-building. Some 24 community groups and voluntary organisations responded to the consultation. In addition to the local action groups, objections were submitted by the North West Leeds Social Democratic Party, the North West Leeds Labour Party, Transport 2000, Friends of the Earth and the Ecology Party (the forerunner of the Green Party). Unlike some of the campaigns we explored earlier in the thesis, there was very little organised support for road-building in the 1980s. The Leeds Chamber of Commerce lent cautious support to 'Theme 4.' [285] The Woodhouse Community Association, not a member of the A660 Joint Council, was the only community group to support upgrading the capacity of the A660.[286]

Partly as a result of the diverse range of organisation that supported the community campaign against the highway proposals, the activists' arguments matured in the 1980s.

---

[279] A660 Joint Council, Response to Consultation on A660 Corridor, A. Marlow to Councillor K. Patterson, 12 March 1984 [LCT]
[280] *ibid*
[281] *YEP*, 24 November 1983, 15
[282] *Headline,* No. 38, Spring 1988, 1-2
[283] *YEP*, 11 September 1982, 5
[284] WYMCC, A660 Public Participation, Analysis of Public Response, October 1984, 4
[285] WYMCC, A660 Public Participation, 80
[286] WYMCC, A660 Public Participation, 64; WCA, *Yapstick,* Vol. 2, No. 4, 1975, 5

Having critiqued the council's proposals in largely negative terms in the 1970s, in the 1980s community activists began to articulate an alternative approach to transport policy, better suited to the needs of north-west Leeds. This was informed by allies in pressure groups such as Transport 2000, the Ecology Party and Friends of the Earth, which campaigned against car-orientated transport policy. In the late 1970s, activists in north-west Leeds also made links with the Public Transport Group (PTG), an alliance of unionised bus workers and bus users who were contesting rising bus fares levels.[287] The PTG's insights also informed the case for a new approach to transport strategy. Activists argued that the solution to congestion and the environmental blight caused by traffic on the A660 was to encourage more people to walk, cycle and use public transport.[288] In their alternative strategy, these modes would cater for the vast majority of the city's transport needs. To achieve this, they advocated an enhanced bus service, dedicated bus-only lanes and priority signalling for buses.[289] In order to prevent above-inflation bus fare rises, they advocated high levels of public funding for the county's bus service. Activists argued that capital investment in transport should re-orientated so that a larger share was devoted to public transport systems and cycling provision.[290] For some activists, only a fixed-track public transport system could solve the city's wider transport problems.[291] They outlined plans for metro and tram train systems in Leeds, inspired by Tyne and Wear Metro and systems in mainland Europe.[292]

Activists also argued that planning policy should be leveraged to support public transport. While cars could move throughout the city freely, demand for public transport would continue to decline, increasing the bus system's reliance on subsidy.[293] Throughout the 1970s, activists on the A660 corridor had noted that the council had failed to enforce its policy of tightly restricting the on the supply of commuter car parking, a key tenet of the Leeds Approach.[294] Over the decade, the number of city centre parking spaces, both in purpose built car parks and on vacant land had increased dramatically.[295] Consequently, by

---

[287] *Headline,* No. 18, July 1977 [WYL 5012]
[288] Marlow to Saich, 19 July 1979, WYA: WYL247
[289] Leeds Civic Trust, 'The current situation regarding plans for the A660 and alterations to Central Headingley,' 13 September 1972 [LCT]
[290] *YEP,* 29 April 1977, 7; *LOP,* No. 53, April 16-29 1977, 3
[291] Anon, 'The Headingley bypass – An alternative solution', July 1972 [LCT]; LCT, *Outlook,* No. 21, April 1978, 3; FA Andrews Memo on A660 and Light Rail Alternatives 1983 [LCT]
[292] *ibid*
[293] *YEP,* 14 September 1976, 7; A660 Joint Council, 12 March 1984, Response to Consultation on A660 Corridor [Audrey Marlow to Councillor Kevin Patterson] [LCT]
[294] *YEP,* 13 April 1973, 9; The Leeds Approach, 17-18; *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 26 July 1977, 4
[295] House of Commons, Second Report from the Expenditure Committee, Session 1972-3, Urban Transport Planning Volume II, Minutes of Evidence (HMSO, 1972), Cmnd, 5366, 478

1983, 30 per cent of workers in the central area were car commuters: the Leeds approach had aimed to limit car commuting to the central area to almost half this level.[296] Activists on the A660 corridor thus pushed for more robust stricter controls on city centre car parking to ration demand for car commuting.[297] Demand for roads, they argued, was driven by the supply of parking. By articulating a coherent vision of another approach to transport, activists could present the campaign as a positive response to the city's needs, countering the charge that it was a purely obstructive exercise.

In outlining a new approach to transport policy, community activists contested the discourse of modernity and progress which had been leveraged to justify the road programme. Community activists turned this narrative on its head, portraying urban road-building as one of the follies of post-war planning – a mistake that should be confined to the past. Roads had 'carved up much of South Leeds, destroying whole communities' and transformed 'once pleasant shopping streets' into 'pure traffic arteries.'[298] The South Headingley Community Association described the effects of highway schemes as akin to a 'cancer' in the inner city:

> They start with a junction alteration here, a pedestrian crossing there. They end up spreading to the whole system, turning pedestrians and public transport users (the majority of us) into something like trained mice in a car users' playground.[299]

Like cancer, the danger had to be tackled in the early stages. Activists connected road-building to the well-documented social and economic problems of inner city Leeds. Already, they argued, Headingley was suffering from the early symptoms of inner city decay. Empty buildings purchased by the council stood lined the A660. Derelict spaces became sites of crime and disorder. One report alluded to the fact that Peter Sutcliffe had murdered Jacqueline Hill in November 1980 on 'a grim strip of waste land' behind the Headingley Arndale Centre.[300] This was presented as a chilling warning of the dangers posed by planning blight.

Unsurprisingly, the outcome of the 1983 consultation exercise, which was revealed in late 1984, did not settle the debate. Out of the 2327 respondents, 82 per cent favoured some

---

[296] *YEP*, 11 March 1983, 8
[297] A660 Joint Council, 12 March 1984, Response to Consultation on A660 Corridor [Audrey Marlow to Councillor Kevin Patterson] [LCT]
[298] Leeds Civic Trust and Victorian Society, 'A660?,' 2
[299] *Headline,* No. 26, Autumn 1983, 1
[300] Leeds Civic Trust and Victorian Society, 'A660?', 2; 'Yorkshire Ripper: YEP crime reporter's memories of a murder,' 20 May 2011, http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/latest-news/top-stories/yorkshire-ripper-yep-crime-reporter-s-memories-of-a-murder-1-3402439, accessed, 19 September 2015

highway improvements and the majority opted for improvements on the A660 itself.[301] The county council claimed this revealed 'considerable support from the public' for road building 'countered by a strong lobby against any road construction at all.'[302] The implication was that a silent majority supported road-building. The council posed as the arbiter between 'two strongly conflicting views' in the community, downplaying its own preference for highway construction.[303] Despite claiming a mandate to do so, the county council chose not to bring forward any highway works on the A660.[304] Instead, in April 1985, the authority opted for a more limited programme of capital works on the nearby A65.[305] While the authority linked this to the difficult financial climate, but the breadth and strength of opposition to the road had influenced its decision to allocate its limited resources elsewhere.[306] The defeat of the A660 road proposals at this moment was a significant victory for community action. However, community activists had not yet persuaded the county council to abandon the premise that highway engineering schemes were needed to cope with the predicted increases in traffic flow and car ownership. They had effectively displaced road-building to another road corridor, one that was less well-organised following extensive housing clearance. The authority dismissed the alternative approach promoted by activists, which centred on public transport, as not feasible due to 'financial, practical and legislative limitations.'[307]

There was evidence that local authority officers remained sceptical of the value of public participation.[308] In 1986, a senior highways engineer suggested opponents of the road-building did not understand why non-highway alternatives 'were not feasible' and maintained that many objectors took a 'parochial attitude to the exercise.'[309] The implication of this argument was that consultation should be steered by experts to help the public 'to understand more fully the critical issues and choices.'[310] This view reflected the lingering unease felt by many public officials towards public participation in policy making

[301] WYMCC, A660 Public Participation, Analysis of Public Response, October 1984, 5; WYMCC, Report of Executive Director of Traffic and Transportation, Director of Planning and Director General of the Passenger Transport Executive, 29 April 1985, 3
[302] WYMCC, 'Report of Executive Director of Traffic and Transportation,' 10
[303] WYMCC, 'Report of Executive Director of Traffic and Transportation,' 3
[304] WYMCC, Proposals for the A660 Corridor, North West Leeds, April 1985, Joint Meeting of Public Transport and Traffic and Highways Committees, 29 April 1985
[305] LCT Press Cutting: *YEP*, 26 April 1985 [LCT]
[306] WYMCC, 'Report of Executive Director of Traffic and Transportation,' 9
[307] WYMCC, 'Report of Executive Director of Traffic and Transportation, ' 3
[308] A.G. Barlow, 'Public Participation within the A660 Corridor,' *Highways and Transportation: The Journal of the Institution of Highways and Transportation,* No. 5, Volume 33, May 1986, 9, 14
[309] Barlow, 'Public Participation,' 15
[310] *ibid*

in the mid-1980s.[311] Community activists were also concerned about the parochialism of the general public, but for quite different reasons: they worried it would enable the council to adopt a "divide and rule" approach. An activist in south Headingley cautioned that if everyone focused on 'their own patch' rather than considering the impact on the wider area, the force of the campaign against road-building would be much diminished.[312] Community activists believed it was their role to educate the public so that they would be aware of the 'general threat to the area.'[313] This reflected a broader concern that in the absence of proper public education, even a more methodologically rigorous participation exercise would simply rubber stamp pre-existing decisions. Policy making could only be democratised if citizens were better informed. This also underlined the fact that effective community action relied on people taking a collective rather than individual approach to their problems as we saw in Chapter 1.

The county council had little time to pursue alternative policies. It was abolished in April 1986 as part of the government reform of local government in the metropolitan counties. The city council regained responsibility for strategic highways in the city. In August 1987 the city announced that it had permanently abandoned all major highway schemes on the A660.[314] The city council had no appetite for the scheme in the face of community opposition and spending cuts. In the same month, the city council announced a 'grassroots' approach to transport planning in north-west Leeds.[315] A senior councillor explained this approach as follows:

> "Rather than coming forward right at the start with a set of detailed proposals, we want to give local people an opportunity to set the agenda for discussions and then come back to them again with ideas…"[316]

This was a clear indication of the influence of community action on the way public bodies conceived of policy making. The extent to which the council realised these rather lofty goals deserves separate study but this rhetorical shift was still significant because it opened up space for negotiation between community groups and public bodies. As we saw in Chapter 1 and 2, statements such as this spoke of the council's more positive approach to organised groups of residents in the 1980s. But in the field of transport policy this shift occurred several years later.

---

[311] A. Coon, 'An expensive ritual?' *Highways and Transportation,* No 10., Vol. 33, October 1986; Pat Toms, *SCAR: Sheepscar-City Access Routes: Inner City Highway Design: the Local Impact of Sheepscar Intersection* (Leeds, 1986)
[312] *Headline,* No. 23, Autumn 1983, 1
[313] *ibid*
[314] A660 Joint Council: Press Release, 12 August 1987 [LCT]
[315] *YEP,* 13 August 1987, 6
[316] *ibid*

Community action also affected a shift in the balance between public and private transport in local policy on the A660 corridor and in the city at large. In the early 1980s, the county council opened bus-only lanes on the A660, a measure that had earlier been rejected for its allegedly adverse impact on car flow. In 1985, when the highway proposals were suspended, the Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) proposed enhanced bus and rail services on the corridor and park and ride facilities.[317] In 1988, a new railway station was opened in south Headingley.[318] Between 1981 and 1986, the county council actually succeeded in arresting the overall decline in public transport in West Yorkshire by curtailing fare rises, running more services, extending concessionary fares, branding bus services more effectively, and introducing flexible tickets [see Fig. 3.10].[319] These policies were mainly achieved through higher spending on public transport, which validated the arguments activists made by activists. When the A660 highway expansion proposals were finally abandoned in 1987, the city council worked with the PTE to develop proposals for a rapid transit system on the A660 corridor, which represented a shift towards the view advocated by community activists that public transport was the most effective means of moving commuters on the corridor.[320] Prior to this, fixed track systems had been ruled out as too expensive and impractical.[321] The new direction culminated in the city's 1991 transport strategy, which elevated the role of public transport and contained a more limited road-building programme.[322] At the heart of the new strategy was a proposed tram network, the Leeds Supertram, which would begin with three radial tram lines converging on the city centre.[323] The progress of the Supertram project deserves separate investigation, but its inception in the late 1980s signalled a change in the city's approach to transport.[324] Over a decade of campaigning by community activists was a key driver of this change.

The new approach to transport policy in Leeds never realised its full potential. With the exception of housing, government funding for public transport was cut more than any other

[317] WYMCC, Proposals for the A660 Corridor, North West Leeds, April 1985, Report of Passenger Transport Executive, Improvement of Public Transport – A660 Corridor, Leeds, 29 April 1985
[318] A660 News, August 1988 [LCT]
[319] WYMCC, A660 Corridor: Public Participation Exercise, Report of the Executive Director of Traffic and Transportation, 10 March 1983, 9
[320] *YEP,* 23 March 1986, 1; *YEP,* 30 May 1987, 1; *YEP,*11 August 1988, 1, 4; *YEP,*15 July 88, 1, 8; *YEP,* 27 January 1989, 22; *YEP,* 2 August 1989, 18; *YEP,* 4 May 1995, 10
[321] WYMCC, 'Report of Executive Director of Traffic and Transportation,' 1-2
[322] Leeds City Council, *Leeds Transport Strategy* (Leeds, 1991)
[323] *YEP*; 7 November 1991, 5; Leeds Supertram Act, 1993, c. xv**;** Metro, *Leeds Supertram network development: Headingley* (Leeds, 1995)
[324] The Supertram proposals were not universally welcomed on the A660 corridor and many of those activists who had fought the A660 road proposals campaigned against the Supertram plans for the corridor. See: *YEP*, 30 May 1987, 1; *YEP* 11 August 1988, 1, 4; *YEP*, 15 July 88, 1, 8; *YEP*, 18, 27 January 1989, 22; *YEP*, 2 August 1989, 18; *YEP*, 4 May 1995, 10

item of public expenditure.[325] The Thatcher governments were ideologically hostile to public transport and their policies privileged the role of private transport.[326] Over the 1980s, as we saw in Chapter 1 and 2, the Thatcher governments constrained the ability of local authorities to pursue policies that went against the grain of national policies.[327] As a consequence, a radical embrace of new public transport systems was never possible. Applying its free market ideology to public transport, in 1986 the government deregulated local bus services outside London and promoted the privatisation of municipal undertakings.[328] Deregulation stripped local authorities of their power to determine fares and service levels and opened up the market to private operators.[329] The new private operators focused on the most profitable routes and fare levels were determined by commercial imperatives. The result was that the Leeds bus system, like other provincial cities, deteriorated.[330] The capacity of local government to control the private car was also eroded in the 1980s. The proliferation of car parks on private land continued and the government encouraged office development outside the city centre where land was cheaper enabling developers to provide more car parking.

The erosion of democratic control over public transport made it significantly harder for community and labour activists to wield influence. The new private operators were accountable to their owners, not citizens or passengers. The allies of the A660 Joint Council such as Leeds Transport 2000 survived but they faced a more hostile climate. Finally, in 1989, the Thatcher governments launched a major road building programme consisting of '2700 miles of new and widened roads.'[331] Though the new programme largely affected rural areas, it was a blow to community activists who had campaigned for a new transport strategy orientated around public transport. It would be the focus of a new generation of anti-road protests in the 1990s.[332]

This case study discussed in sections 4 and 5 has a number of implications for activism surrounding transport and roads and for community activism more generally in Leeds and beyond. It shows that well-connected and well-organised community action groups were able to hold back the tide of road building that appeared irresistible elsewhere in the city.

---

[325] Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain,* 179-180
[326] Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain,* 179-180, 205
[327] WYMCC, 'The Future of the Bus Service in West Yorkshire' (1982) [LCT]
[328] Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain,* 181-184
[329] West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority, 'Public Transport in West Yorkshire 1986/87' (1986), WYA: WL2107
[330] Bagwell and Lyth, *Transport in Britain,* 182-5
[331] Joe Moran, *On Roads: A Hidden History* London (London, 2009): 211-212
[332] Derek Wall, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement: Radical environmentalism and comparative social movements* (London, 1999)

North-west Leeds was a particularly fertile ground for community action. The considerable resources – educational, financial and social – of the city's more affluent suburbs and inner city neighbourhoods helped community activism to succeed on issues where it struggled to make headway in more low income areas. The district had a long tradition of opposing road-building and activists mobilised immediately in response to each version of the road plan. The influenced wielded by community action on the A660 corridor was enhanced by the web of pressure groups and voluntary organisations that participated in campaigns against the roads schemes: environmentalists, cycling activists, civic conservationists and public transport campaigners were involved. Community activists developed a strong and multi-faceted counter-argument against the councils' roads proposals. Crucially, this was not simply defensive. Activists developed an alternative vision for transport that challenged the existing strategy.

Campaigners on the A660 corridor never forged strong links with community activists working on transport issues in other parts of the city. As a result of the failure of community activists to construct a citywide alliance against urban road-building, the transport strategy was enacted unadulterated in most other parts of the city. Although Leeds did not build any more urban motorways after 1976, the city continued upgrading existing roads and constructed several complex intersections and new urban roads in the 1980s and 1990s. Stages IV to VI of the inner ring road, built in the 1980s and early 1990s, carved a wide path through inner east Leeds. The Sheepscar Intersection, built in the early 1980s, occupied ten acres of council-owned land in the north inner city.[333] Individually, these schemes were cheaper and more lightly engineered than true urban motorways, but cumulatively their impact on the urban and social fabric of the city was considerable. They required extensive demolition and blighted inner city residential areas. Activists from Richmond Hill and Burmantofts did campaign against these schemes, but they acted without support from other parts of the city.[334] This localised opposition was rebuffed by a council professing to be acting in the interests of the city as a whole, which was becoming increasingly dependent on the car. In the 1980s and 1990s, as car ownership continued to rise, it became harder to contest highway schemes.[335] To challenge road proposals, community activists had to mobilise high levels of concentrated support, as they did in north-west Leeds.

---

[333] LCC, Planning Committee Minutes, 19 June 1978 (v)

[334] *LOP,* No. 192, 9 October 1981, 1, 13; *LOP,* No. 194, 23 October 1981, 3; *LOP*, No. 212, 26 February 1982, 3

[335] Office for National Statistics, Social Trends 40, 2010 Edition, 174, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/social-trends-rd/social-trends/social-trends-40/social-trends-40---transport-chapter.pdf, accessed 20 September 2015

Having united activists across north-west Leeds, it is perhaps surprising that A660 Joint Council did not reach out to community groups in other parts of the city. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, the weakness of community action groups concerned with road-build in other parts of Leeds militated against the formation of a citywide alliance. Even in the late 1970s and 1980s, outside north-west Leeds, community action over road-building was sporadic and groups were short-lived. Since community activists in east and south Leeds tended to be less articulate and adept at generating media attention, community activists in north-west Leeds were less aware of the existence of other campaigns. The population of Richmond Hill was blighted through the 1970s by highway proposals, which drove away many households, and the population was reduced further by later stages of the housing clearance programme, so fewer people remained to contest road schemes.[336]

Secondly, community action struggled to cross class barriers. Community activists in north-west Leeds moved in different social circles to activists in other parts of the inner city. Activists in Headingley and Hyde Park who worked in professional occupations were less likely to count activists in Burmantofts and Richmond Hill among their colleagues and friends. This also explains why community activists in north-west Leeds had only a limited awareness of anti-road activism on the other side of the city. In literature produced by groups on the A660 corridor, other parts of the city are depicted as places where road-building has already run its course, when in fact, additional highway schemes were being prepared into the 1990s. In Chapter 2, we saw how community workers and radical planners functioned as a bridge between working-class and middle-class neighbourhoods, but this was the exception rather than the rule. There were fewer community workers operating in the neighbourhoods of south and east Leeds affected by highway schemes in the late 1970s and 1980s and these neighbourhoods were more geographically isolated from more affluent areas.

Thirdly, while it was keen to form local alliances locally, the A660 Joint Council campaigned in a geographically specific area. Membership of the Joint Council was only open to groups operating in the A660 corridor, a wedge shaped area of the city between the Meanwood and Kirkstall roads, which excluded groups in east and south Leeds.[337] The Joint Council derived its mandate from its constituent organisations. The community groups affiliated to it were passionately committed to their neighbourhoods but most activists'

---

[336] Leeds City Council, Report of the Housing Working Party, 'Housing Clearance Programme – Roll Forward and Publicity,' 12 September 1978, 1-2, WYAS3715; LCC, Report of the Director of Planning, 'Richmond Hill Appraisal,' 7 February 1979, PBC
[337] Letter from Audrey Marlow, *LOP,* No. 299, 4 November 1983, 8

horizons did not extend very far beyond their local area. Activists campaigning on the A660 corridor did begin to articulate a new transport strategy for the whole city, in alliance with other citywide pressure groups, but the chief concern of most activists was opposing road-building in the area. Community action always struggled to overcome this parochialism.

***

This chapter has used community action campaigns on transport issues to develop our understanding of community action. Community action over transport emerged in response to the rise of a new transport strategy in Leeds, which was informed by shifts in national policy, the rise of new forms of mobility and the growth of new professional and commercial interests. In most of the city, the strategy was not contested for its first decade, but as its impact on society, the environment and mobility became clearer, people organised to contest it. Community activists sought to block the construction of new roads and ameliorate the impact of the new urban motorways. They also campaigned to defend the urban environment from the blighting effects of traffic levels and to protect the interests of pedestrians who found it harder to navigate the city.

By comparing different community action campaigns the chapter has explained why community action had more success in some circumstances than in others. Certain pre-existing conditions made community action more likely to flourish: the economic, social and educational resources of a neighbourhood were particularly important. The belief that road-building was inevitable or unstoppable militated against community action. Community activists who articulated a multi-faceted structural argument against the transport strategy and built alliances across the city exercised considerable leverage over the local councils. Community activists who worked in single neighbourhoods and focused only on local problems were less effective. Forging links with trade unions, civic conservationists and environmental pressure groups also extended the influence of community action.

The arguments advanced by community activists over transport questions shed light on their attitudes to the urban environment, community, heritage and mobility. Community activists were, at heart, urbanists who believed the city was better served by public transport, walking and cycling than the motor car. They were advocates of the multi-functional, mixed use street, which was a community asset rather than solely a transport corridor. Community

activists rejected the argument advanced by transport planners in the 1960s that the car could be accommodated in the city without sacrificing the interests of many of its citizens. Community action campaigns over transport articulated the interests of particular social groups – inner city residents, pedestrians, bus users, women, young people, the elderly – whose needs, they argued, had been marginalised by the city's transport strategy.

The chapter has shown how the local state responded to the challenge of community action by adapting its approach to policy making. Councils began to consult local communities on transport policy making to a greater extent, but activists continued to question the extent of the council's commitment to a new relationship with citizens. This debate not only exposed a basic disagreement over how the city should be governed, it also highlighted a problem for community activists about the sources of their own legitimacy. Community action wielded influence over transport policy, reducing the scope of the road-building programme and improving facilities for pedestrians. However, it failed to stop the construction of dozens of miles of new urban roads and nor was it able to prevent the car becoming the dominant mode of transport in the city. The alliance of activists in north-west Leeds failed to link up with isolated community groups in east and south Leeds. Community action failed to transcend class and geographical barriers to become a citywide movement on transport.

By the mid-1980s local policy makers in Leeds had begun to chart a new direction in transport policy, influenced by the community activists' arguments. As in other areas of policy, this new approach was ultimately eclipsed by government policy on transport, which re-prioritised the private car and altered the balance between state planning with market forces to favour the latter. Lacking allies in national government, the community action groups we have explored in this chapter had largely folded by the close of the 1980s. Like community action on council housing and housing renewal, community action over transport emerged in opposition to public policy. We have seen how these community action campaigns were deeply affected by shifts in policy. This was not the only form of community action. The next chapter will consider the ways in which community activists seized the initiative to improve their neighbourhoods and empower citizens. It will ask whether these institutions helped to compensate for the weakness of community action at a citywide level.

Chapter 4

Building Grassroots Institutions:
The Rise of Positive Community Action

If much of the thesis has focused on broadly negative and reactive forms of community action – campaigns to block or change policies imposed from outside the neighbourhood – this chapter will demonstrate that community action was simultaneously a positive force. It investigates how community activists in Leeds organised to create and manage community-run institutions, projects and services. The chapter begins by exploring the context to efforts by community activists to build community institutions, explaining what community activists were seeking to achieve and why there was a need for community-run services. The opening section also considers the main agents of positive community action. The following two sections explore the ways in which community activists built institutions to meet particular needs. The second section focuses on community campaigns for community centres and advice centres, while the third section concentrates on community organising for children's playgrounds and childcare facilities. These sections consider the way in which activists drew on the resources of the community – its people, land, buildings and social networks – and obtained external resources by forming partnerships with the state and voluntary organisations. The fourth section examines one of the goals of positive community action in detail: the drive for greater community control over local services. It shows how activists sought to achieve through creating new institutions and by reforming existing organisation. The section then explores the various obstacles to community control before analysing local involvement in community institutions. Section five considers how community action matured and adapted to new challenges in the late 1970s. The first part explores the way in which community activists organised at a citywide level in order to channel more public resources into community institutions. The second part discusses the work of a community institution that functioned as a nodal point for activism in the city in the late 1970s and 1980s. The final section explores the reason why positive community action declined in the 1980s, focusing on shifts in the political climate.

1. The need for alternative provision

Positive community action had three basic aims. Firstly, it sought to meet a need for particular sorts of amenities and services in urban neighbourhoods. In doing so activists were filling gaps in provision left by existing public, private and voluntary bodies. We will explore the reasons for this dearth of provision below. Secondly, by setting up new institutions and services and restructuring the governance of existing ones, community activists sought to increase community control over local services. This responded to a pervasive feeling that communities were not in control of the forces that were re-shaping urban neighbourhoods. The aim was not complete community autonomy: rather activists endeavoured to re-balance the political relationship between local communities, local government and other agencies. Thirdly, community activists hoped that by building community institutions they would augment help to strengthen community action across the city. Community institutions would function as meeting places or hubs for activists; they would bring people together to discuss shared problems; and they would facilitate networking and provide local campaigning groups with resources and a safe space in which to plan and organise. Positive community action thus had a wider strategic significance: as well as meeting local need, it would contribute to the city's community action infrastructure. Over the course of the 1970s, community activists increasingly focused on linking up community institutions. This was part of an effort to harness the energy of the city's many separate community action groups to build a community action movement in Leeds. The chapter will explore each of these goals in more depth, but it will begin by investigating the first aim in more detail.

The inadequacy of existing facilities and services was the most important driver of positive community action. Positive community action sought to plug this gap to ensure that people's needs were met. This gap was most prominent in inner city areas and on council estates: that is, those areas where community action flourished in the long 1970s. Here, the desire for better services and amenities was widespread. A survey conducted by the Chapeltown Study Group in April 1974 identified strong demand for facilities for children, especially play areas, youth clubs and childcare provision.[1] Chapeltown households also requested 'an advice centre, clubs for the elderly and indoor sports facilities.' Outlying council estates also suffered from a dearth of local amenities. The Wyther Park estate in west Leeds was built in the early 1930s with almost no social facilities. There was no

---

[1] Leeds City Council, Planning Department, 'Chapeltown Local Plan: Final Report,' November 1975, 8

playground for children, no facilities for the elderly, except one room in a pub, and a problem with uncollected rubbish.[2] In Seacroft, a large peripheral council estate built between the 1930s and 1960s housing 80,000 people, was largely devoid of leisure facilities. A member of the Leeds Civic Trust observed that the city council 'provided no cinema, no theatre, no park, no swimming pool and above all no community centres scattered about the estate.'[3]

One of the roots of this dearth of local provision lay in the planning policies of the post-war decades. From the 1950s, urban renewal, slum clearance and road-building had destroyed many of the historic amenities and services of the inner city, such as shops, pubs, schools, churches and other informal community spaces. Many of these were never replaced. Cleared sites were often left vacant for decades pending future development. Council rehousing programmes and the movement of more affluent households to newer private suburbs reduced population densities in inner city areas. The people who remained were usually poorer. With fewer people living nearby, shops, pubs and clubs had a smaller customer base. The services and institutions – public, private and voluntary – that survived the clearances became less commercially viable. The level of provision of amenities and services in new estates, both in the inner city and in outlying areas, did not come close to replicating the density of provision that older areas had once enjoyed. In the mid-1970s, this point was belatedly acknowledged by city planners in relation to Hunslet.[4] Largely as a result of national policy, new housing and roads were prioritised over community, social and recreational facilities in public building projects. The goal of reducing population densities on new estates made it more difficult to justify a high level of local facilities. New services, shops and public institutions tended to be centralised in large district centres, leaving large areas of the city bereft of provision, either housing or industry. As we saw in chapter 3, new road infrastructure absorbed a large quantity of urban space in the inner city and road systems carved up the inner city, making it harder for people to access goods and services in neighbouring areas on foot.

The legacy of urban re-structuring was compounded by economic shifts. From the late 1960s, the restructuring of the economy brought about the decline of many of the traditional industries on which inner city areas had depended. This process accelerated over the 1970s and 1980s. The flight of private capital from the inner city and other poorer areas led to high

[2] *Leeds Other Paper,* No. 85, 21 July-4 August 1978, 1, 8; Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Reports,* 19 July 1978, 1-2
[3] Anthony Moyes, 'Review of Seacroft AP,' 11 April 1972 [LCT]
[4] Leeds City Council, Planning Department, 'The Hunslet and Stourton Appraisal: A Report for Planning Committee,' November 1975, 2

rates of unemployment and material deprivation. This heightened the need for new forms of social provision in inner city areas and council estates, but as disposable incomes fell, private and non-profit organisations that depended on local patronage struggled to survive. A report by the Hall Lane Community Centre on the state of the neighbourhood summarised the set of interlinked problems faced by inner city areas at the end of the long 1970s:

> Many local people have lived under blight for most of the last decade; the new local estates are not yet fully developed and they too have their social problems. In the old houses around Hall Lane many elderly people live alone, young families struggle on a low income or with a lone parent. There is a small Asian community. Local shops and facilities are closing. There is little or no provision for teenagers; demand for playgroup places is high.[5]

Community-led institutions were a response to this intense social need. As Davis has argued, the rise of community action was linked to an increasing awareness of a set of inter-related social problems in inner city neighbourhoods that the welfare state and local government were unable to solve.[6] Community action leveraged a new approach to these problems.

If state intervention had created many of the problems that drove positive community action in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the withdrawal of the state from the mid-1970s deepened the crisis. In 1980, *Community Action* magazine argued that there had been a 'major shift in the kind of demands made by tenants and action groups and other labour movement organisations' over the previous decade: while the 'demands of campaigns in the early 1970s were directed at 'stopping state financed projects,' by the late 1970s community campaigns were no longer 'trying to stop state spending but aimed against the cuts and arguing for more state spending.'[7] The reason for this was that from the mid-1970s, governments began to cut public expenditure. This was driven partly by the economic crises of the period, but from 1979 retrenchment was part of an ideological project to re-structure the state. Spending reductions may have diminished the threat of road-building, housing clearance and redevelopment, but they decimated many public services, particularly those provided by local government. This undermined the already fragile network of services and amenities in older urban areas and in other poorer parts of cities. Spending cuts thus generated a more urgent need for positive community action, but they also diminished the

---

[5] Hall Lane Community Centre, Annual Report 1983/84, 2
[6] John Davis, 'Re-shaping the Welfare State: the London Experience,' Unpublished Paper delivered at Dundee University, September 2010. See also: John Davis, 'Community and the Labour Left in 1970s London,' Chris Williams and Andrew Edwards (eds.) *The Art of the Possible: Politics and governance in modern British history, 1985-1997: Essays in memory of Duncan Tanner* (Manchester, 2015): 207-223
[7] *Community Action,* No. 50, Sept-October, 14

resources available to fund it. Community activists worked to build community institutions to mitigate the effects of the cuts, while simultaneously campaigning for increases in public spending to ensure those community institutions (and other services) were properly funded. The anti-state politics of the latter part of the long 1970s created as many problems for positive community action as opportunities.

The initiative for building community services usually came from existing community action groups. This thesis has already investigated their role in campaigns surrounding housing renewal, transport and council housing. These more defensive campaigns often gave way to positive community action. As we saw in Chapter 2, the initial stimulus to the formation of the South Headingley Community Association in 1973 was the existential threat to the neighbourhood posed by the council's clearance programme. Once these proposals had been curtailed, local activists were keen to ensure that 'the community spirit shown should not be allowed to dissipate until the next crisis [comes] along.'[8] In 1974, the SHCA adopted the broader remit of seeking

> to make South Headingley a better place in which to live, by looking after
> the interests of the people in our area, providing information and pressing for
> the improvement of conditions, amenities and services…[9]

Consequently, activists in the SHCA organised over a range of issues, from hospital investment to adult education.[10] Similarly, the Woodhouse Community Association was formed in response to housing clearance proposals in 1971, before diversifying.[11]

A smaller proportion of community associations were founded from the outset to promote the general improvement of their neighbourhood and only later became involved in defensive campaigns. The aims of the Chapeltown Community Association, formed in 1971, were far-reaching. According its constitution, the organisation existed

> to promote the benefit of the inhabitations of Chapeltown…by associating the local
> authorities, voluntary organisations and inhabitants in a common effort to advance
> education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and
> leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life…

---

[8] Kathy O'Carroll, South Headingley Community Association, Newsletter, No. 2, March 1974, 1,
[9] 'Secretary's Report,' SHCA, Newsletter, No. 3, April 1974, 5, WYA: WYL5012
[10] 'Chairman's Report, SHCA, Newsletter, No. 12, April 1975, WYA: WYL5012
[11] Woodhouse Community Association, *Yapstick,* Vol. 2, No.1, 1975, 2

The CCA formed sub-groups focused on young people, housing, roads and traffic, hospital workers and street cleaning.[12] Although pro-actively setting up organisations and institutions was central to the group's mission, the CCA quickly became involved in defensive campaigns, as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3. The relationship between positive and negative community action was dialectical: reactive campaigning over issues like transport and housing informed institution-building, while setting up institutions influenced the future direction of negative campaigns. Although the central focus of this chapter is positive community action, it will emphasise these connections to more defensive campaigns.

2. Serving the community

This section will explore campaigns for two related forms of community provision: the community centre and the advice centre. It will begin by focusing on the former. A key goal for many community activists was the establishment of permanent community facilities that would function as meeting places and hubs for a range of community activities and services. Several dozen community centres and community advice centres were set up Leeds in the 1970s and early 1980s. The community centre was designed to compensate for the lack of space for non-profit, community-led activities both in the inner city and on council estates. Community groups had some access to rooms in pubs and clubs, religious premises and some public buildings, but the demand for space exceeded the supply. The city council constructed community centres on only a handful of its estates; plans for community centres were frequently excised from building programmes when council finances were squeezed.[13] Council managed centres often did not allow political or campaigning organisations to meet on the premises.[14] By providing space for organisations to develop, activists hoped that community centres would strengthen the sense of community that they believed was 'under pressure from several quarters.'[15] The inner city community centre was not dissimilar from the village halls that had been established in rural England in the early twentieth century or the suburban community halls set up in the middle decades of that century. Several community associations were established by the middle-class home owners in the northern suburbs of Leeds in the 1930s and 1940s.[16] Where they differed, as we shall see, was in

---

[12] CCA, 'Some Examples of the Work of the Chapeltown Community Association,' April 1972, WYA: WYL 2058

[13] Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture*, 139; Alison Ravetz, *Model Estate: Planned Housing at Quarry Hill, Leeds* (Abingdon, 1974): 122-23

[14] *LOP,* No. 125, 7-21 March 1980, 2

[15] Hall Lane Community Centre, Report (1979): 12

[16] Graham Branston, *Alwoodley, Leeds: The History of a Twentieth Century Suburb* (Leeds, 2004): 48-51

their more overtly political orientation and in their focus on alleviating social and economic problems.

Establishing a community centre was a demanding undertaking. Acquiring premises and setting up the centre was not only expensive, it required significant investments of time. Community activists usually sought public assistance to establish community centres. Capital costs were usually met with finance from council budgets or government programmes. A smaller number of community centres emerged from partnerships between community activists and other voluntary organisations. The Hall Lane Community Centre in Armley developed in the early 1970s when local residents asked a group of artists who had occupied a vacant building if they could use part of the space for meetings. The Hall Lane Community Centre became an autonomous part of the Interplay Trust, a community arts organisation.[17] Even with a source of finance, the process of establishing a community centre could be laborious, straining relations between activists and funding bodies. Where the city council owned the land or buildings, the governance of community centres was a source of tension, an issue we shall explore in more depth below. For this reason, the decision to campaign for a community centre could be controversial.[18] During its first decade, the South Headingley Community Association chose to focus on sponsoring smaller centres with a specific purpose rather than campaigning for one general purpose community centre; SHCA members decided that the latter would absorb too energy and distract the organisation from other important issues.[19] The SHCA helped to establish a Headingley Community Centre, a Muslim Community Centre, the Burley Lodge Centre for the neighbourhood and the Brudenell Centre for adult education.[20]

Community centres were accommodated in a mixture of purpose built premises and refurbished properties (see Fig. 4.1-4.2). Community activists frequently repurposed former religious buildings, which became available as local congregations declined or moved away. The Chapeltown Community Centre began life in the former Psalms of David Synagogue on Reginald Terrace. In Harehills and Holbeck, community centres opened in former churches [see Figs. 4.1-4.2]. Like religious buildings, community centres functioned as hubs of the community, providing a base for community groups to meet and operate on territory that was neither state controlled nor run for profit. Unlike religious buildings, inner

---

[17] Hall Lane Community Centre, Report (1979): 14
[18] Parry Thornton, Community Centre Policy, January 1974 and Community Centre for South Headingley, February 1974, WYA: WYL5012
[19] *Headline,* No. 30, Autumn 1984, 6
[20] *ibid*

city community centres were highly pluralist institutions. They welcomed a diverse range of organisations concerned with politics, education, youth activities, the arts and religion. In the mid-1970s Chapeltown Community Centre was used by a playgroup, two youth clubs, the Chapeltown Community Association, a literacy class, the Chapeltown Women's Group, the Young Socialists, the Community Relations Council and a children's dance and drama group.[21] The Holbeck Community Centre and the Hall Lane Community Centre in Armley hosted a similar range of groups.[22]

Community centres also functioned as a base for campaigning, providing a safe and convenient space for activists to meet and hold events. Many of the action groups formed to contest housing clearance met at community centres. Cross Streets Action Group, the work of which we explored in Chapter 2, formed at Hall Lane Community Centre.[23] The Headingley Community Centre hosted meetings for the A660 campaigners.[24] The Editorial Collective of *Chapeltown News* met at the Chapeltown Community Centre.[25] Well-resourced community centres acted as sponsors of community action in the neighbourhood. The Hall Lane Community Centre employed several community workers who helped to facilitate community action across a wide area of west Leeds.[26] In 1979, a Hall Lane worker organised a public meeting for residents of the recently completed Avenues estate which was suffering from 'teething problems' linked to 'the influx of new residents' and design faults.[27] The meeting led to the formation of the New Wortley Community Association. The community worker helped the new Community Association to develop, advising on housing issues and helping to distribute the Association's newsletter. In 1981, with the support of this community worker, the Association successfully applied for funding to build its own centre.[28] Another major area of activity for the Hall Lane Community Centre was promoting community action in housing renewal areas. In the mid-1980s, Hall Lane workers helped residents of the Gledhow Clearance Area to negotiate with the council to obtain rehousing and minor repairs after the clearance order for the area was confirmed.[29] As part of a programme of community arts, the centre worked with local groups to create murals and mosaics around Armley to enliven public spaces.[30] It even initiated a community history

---

[21] *CN,* No. 29, October 1975, 5
[22] See: *Holbeck Voice*, March 1980 and Hall Lane Community Centre Report, 1979, 3-5
[23] Community Housing Working Party, *The Effects of Clearance: Four Case Studies* (Leeds): 3
[24] *Headline,* No. 29, Summer 1984, 8
[25] *CN,* No. 23, February 1975, 8
[26] Hall Lane Community Centre, Report, 1979, 2
[27] Hall Lane Community Centre, Report, 1979, 10
[28] *ibid*
[29] Hall Lane Community Centre, Annual Report, 1984/85, 15
[30] Hall Lane Community Centre, Report, 1979, 7

group. Thus, the Hall Lane Community Centre was a key catalyst for the wider growth of community action and especially positive community action. Rather than leading campaigns, staff at the centre cultivated independent local campaigning groups helping 'local people to take action on their own behalf.' [31] The achievements of community centres like Hall Lane were closely linked to the interventions of paid workers who possessed time, experience and a wide array of contacts, as we shall discuss below.

If the community centre functioned as a blank slate, a resource that community groups could use for various ends, the community advice centre offered a more focused service. The community advice centre was an archetypal community action response to a gap in local service provision. The post-war decades had witnessed an increase in popular demand for information. [32] This was partly driven by the expansion of social services, the planning system, council housing and other public services. Public institutions and bureaucratic procedures became more complex and harder to comprehend. Citizens gained a range of new entitlements, but these were not always clear. The demand for accurate and timely information was heightened by the rise of consumerism and the growth of a popular discourse of rights. [33] However, citizens found it difficult to access detailed information from a neutral source. The mainstream media and the library service were inadequate. The city council established a handful of information centres in the 1970s, but these were too few in number to meet the demand. [34] Council-run centres were not always perceived to be neutral, especially on inquiries pertaining to local authority services and personnel. Voluntary organisations, such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux, were popular but over-stretched. [35] The gap in provision had particularly significant consequences in the inner city and on council estates where people relied more heavily on public services, social problems were more acute, and state intervention, in the form of redevelopment and road-building, was more intensive. In low-income areas of the city, people were less likely to know people – personally or professionally – who could assist them in obtaining information, and they were less likely to have the means to purchase advice.

The Armley Community Advice Centre was instigated in December 1974 by Ed Whalley, a lecturer at Leeds Polytechnic, and Ron Bright, the Chairman of Armley Lodge Community

---

[31] Hall Lane Community Centre, Report, 1979, 10
[32] Peter Hain, 'Introduction' in Peter Hain, ed, *Community Politics* (1976): 11-12
[33] Shapely, *Politics of Housing,* 13-17
[34] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 14 October 1970, 5; Leeds City Council, Minutes of the Housing Services Committee, 25 January 1975, 11(e)
[35] Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau, Housing Report, 1978-79

Centre Management Committee, who obtained a vacant property in a demolition area in Beech Road.[36] They argued that the need for a centre 'had arisen out of an increasing awareness of the problems residents have in obtaining information to assist them with everyday difficulties.'[37] Several indicators of deprivation were present in Armley: the district had an above average share of elderly households, single parent families and unemployed people.[38] The area was undergoing extensive housing renewal and new road-building. Operated largely by non-experts, the Armley Lodge Centre offered basic advice and guided people to other agencies. In its first six months, almost 40 per cent of its inquiries concerned housing and 16.7 per cent related to welfare rights.[39] In December 1974, the South Headingley Community Association opened a similar advice centre in a former shop on Queen's Road to provide information on housing, welfare rights, the law and education.[40] The centre was staffed almost entirely by volunteers who dealt with up to twenty cases per week. The organisers argued that the centre could provide a useful service by drawing on the expertise of a community which contained plentiful experience of housing problems and the social security system.[41]

The self-help approach of community advice centres was sometimes condemned by some professionals.[42] This critique overlooked the fact that the work of lay people at community advice centres was almost always supplemented or supervised by experts; the South Headingley Advice Centre, which employed a full time worker in 1977, was no exception.[43] Whereas the Citizens Advice Bureau had developed into a service for working-class people staffed by middle-class people, the community advice centre sought to be a community service staffed, at least in part, by members of that community. This aim was largely fulfilled. The partnership between local people and professional volunteers or paid workers was key to their success.

While most community advice centres offered a general service, community activists also established a smaller number of specialised advice centres, staffed by largely by paid professionals. The Harehills Housing Aid Centre was formed in 1974 by local activists, using finance from the Urban Programme.[44] Operating from a shop premises on Harehills Lane, the Centre supported residents with housing problems, ranging from damp and repairs

---

[36] Armley Community Advice Centre, First Report, December 1975–May 1976, 1
[37] *ibid*
[38] *ibid*
[39] Armley Community Advice Centre, First Report, December 1975–May 1976, 3
[40] *Headline,* No. 8, December 1974, No. 15, April 1975 and No. 23, October 1978.
[41] *YEP*, 2 May 1975, 11
[42] *YEP*, 8 July 1976, 11
[43] SHCA, Newsletter, No. 19, September 1977, 1
[44] *Chapeltown News,* No. 20, November 1974, 5

to rents and evictions. Since it was not under direct city council control, the Centre was able to criticise the council in the advice it offered to council tenants and people experiencing problems with council services, though its workers feared this might make it a target for grant cuts.[45] This model of specialist independent housing service was common in urban throughout Britain and it was particularly prevalent in London: in Islington, for instance, activists set up the Holloway Housing Aid Centre in the early 1970s.[46]

In 1979, a group of activists established the Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, the first neighbourhood law centre in Yorkshire. This was the outcome of a campaign started in 1975 by a coalition of local community groups from north east Leeds who had identified an acute need for legal advice and representation.[47] Unlike a Citizens Advice Bureau or community advice centre, a neighbourhood law centre employed qualified lawyers who could advise clients and act on their behalf through the legal system including during court litigation. The model originated in the United States where hundreds of neighbourhood law centres or legal clinics were founded in the 1960s by community organisers with support from the Federal Government as part of its War on Poverty.[48] The idea was that giving deprived people the legal means to enforce their rights would help to alleviate poverty. The first neighbourhood law centre was established in north Kensington in 1970; there were 26 British neighbourhood law centres by 1977.[49] The Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre employed several lawyers and non-specialist staff and it quickly developed a large caseload. The vast majority of its work concerned housing, welfare and immigration, reflecting the needs of the local population. The centre secured funding from a range of public and voluntary bodies, which meant it was not beholden to any one organisation. In 1979, the centre had funding from Leeds City Council, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Lord Chancellor's Department.[50] This enabled its workers to support clients who found themselves in an adversarial relationship with public bodies such as the city council's housing department.[51] In London, several of the earliest neighbourhood law centres closed in the late 1970s due to conflicts with the local authority upon whom they were wholly dependent for funding.[52] Later in this chapter, we will explore the extent to which advice

---

[45] *LOP,* No. 28, 14-28 April 1978, 10-11
[46] *CA,* No. 21 Aug-Sept 1975, 5-6; Nottingham People's Centre
[47] Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, Interim Report, 1979, 3
[48] Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, Interim Report, 1979, 2
[49] *CA*, No. 33, Sept-Oct 1977
[50] Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, Interim Report, 1979, 4
[51] Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, Report, 1980, 5
[52] *CA*, No. 40, Nov-Dec 1978, 4-5

centres and other community institutions were able to operate independently and speak critically while retaining public funding.

If the primary goal of community advice centres was to support individuals, they were also designed to fulfil a wider strategic purpose. Public ignorance of the wider political and administrative context of problems like housing, transport, the environment and legal procedures, was an impediment to community action. By disseminating information about citizens' rights and public policy, activists hoped to raise levels of political consciousness and empower local people to organise collectively over common problems. As permanent, accessible facilities containing large repositories of information, advice centres were vital pillars of community action in several neighbourhoods. The Armley Advice Centre helped to catalyse community action on a local council estate by organising a public meeting about the need for repairs, which prompted tenants to approach the council as a group.[53] The South Headingly Advice Centre functioned as a visible, street side advertisement for the work of the Association. Both the Harehills Housing Advice Centre and the Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre became key nodes in community activist networks in north east Leeds. Workers and volunteers from the centres were involved in other groups and campaigns. The centres' accumulated knowledge and expertise was used to support campaigns surrounding housing and welfare. The close relationship between advice centres and activism was clearly revealed in Hunslet where an advice centre evolved from a series of informal clinics on heating and personal debt organised by workers at the Hunslet Parish Community Project. The Hunslet Advice Centre served tenants on the Hunslet Grange estate who, as we saw in Chapter 1, were burdened with large electricity bills and debt.[54] By 1979, in response to the huge demand for information, the Centre had developed into a permanent advice centre, advising people from across Hunslet on a range of social and consumer issues.[55]

Across the country, activists set up hundreds of community and advice centres in the 1970s and 1980s. Sited in prominent locations on high streets, shopping centres and estate precincts, the community advice centre was a highly visible and tangible symbol of community activism. In spring 1977, *Community Action* magazine contended that the flourishing of the community advice centre over the previous five years was one of the main achievements of community action.[56] The journal published a detailed guide for activists

---

[53] Armley Community Advice Centre, First Report, December 1975–May 1976, 3
[54] Barbara Craig, Letters, 7 November 1977
[55] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 7 November 1979, 1-2
[56] *CA*, No.30 March-April 1977, 13-16

setting up advice centres.[57] Tony Parker's oral history of a council estate in south London contains a rich description of the work of a community advice centre run by squatters in a vacant building.[58] In Batley, an industrial town in the Spen Valley south west of Leeds, the Advice Centre for the Town (ACT) became a *cause célèbre* among community activists across the country for its long-running conflict with the local authority.[59] In Leeds, there were no confrontations of this magnitude, but relations between community institutions and funding bodies were often fraught. Community advice centres had consciously sought to avoid being seen as state auxiliaries, but this resulted in a more fractious relationship with the state. We will develop this theme below, after we have examined another area in which community action responded to another unmet need.

3. Children and Community Action

The needs of children were among the foremost concerns of community activists and it was in meeting children's needs that community action groups developed some of the most effective and enduring community-run services. This section will explore the ways in which community activists sought to cater pro-actively for children's needs in the absence of suitable public and private sector services. The focus of these community campaigns was roughly divided between children's play and childcare. There was a close relationship between the needs of children and their parents and other local adults. In providing for children, community activists positioned themselves as serving the whole neighbourhood.

This section will begin by discussing community campaigns for play facilities. Community action for play was ubiquitous in urban Britain in the long 1970s and Leeds was no exception. Community action for children's play flourished in neighbouring Bradford and most other British cities.[60] It was primarily a response to the lack of play space for children in the city and the poor quality of existing playgrounds. Local authority and voluntary youth clubs were usually closed to children under the age of 14. Many of the institutions established by community activists in the period were not particularly welcoming to children. In 1976, a playleader in Chapeltown observed that community groups had neglected the needs of local children: he claimed that even the Chapeltown Community

---

[57] *CA,* 'Action Notes 8: Advice for Free: Setting up an advice centre' (1977)

[58] Tony Parker, *The People of Providence: A housing estate and some of its inhabitants,* (London, 1983), Second Edition, 224-229

[59] *CA,* No. 15, Aug-Sept 1974, 7-8; *CA,* No. 16, Oct-Nov 1974, 10-11; *CA,* No. 21, Aug-Sept 1975, 24; *CA,* No. 23 Dec-Jan 1975/76

[60] For Bradford, see: *CA,* No. 4 Sept-Oct 1972, 10-11. For a British survey of play organising, see *CA,* No. 8, May-June 1973, 25-29

Centre would not let children use its facilities.[61] Inner city areas, with their dense housing, industry and fast roads, had inadequate safe spaces for children to play. Parents lacked the resources to compensate for this. Activists in Chapeltown noted that 'kids haven't got large gardens and traffic free streets to play in. Their parents haven't got the money for summer holidays and weekend outings.'[62] Play facilities were often lost in older areas as a result of redevelopment and road-building projects. In Holbeck, a group of women began to campaign for a playground after their old one was lost to the south-west urban motorway.[63] Council housing estates built in the interwar and post-war decades had similar shortcomings. Though many council estates were built to low densities with generous allocations of undeveloped land, much of this open space provision was of a low quality and poorly managed and maintained.[64] Seacroft typified the paradoxical situation on many council estates in that it had been furnished with large quantities of grassed open space but few interesting places for children to play. On the inner city Ebor Gardens estate, the Tenants Association noted that the official play area was 'an undrained area of ex-clayworks and is waterlogged for 50 [per cent] of the year.'[65] Where traditional fixed equipment playgrounds, with swings and roundabouts, were provided they only provided for narrow range of experiences and did not meet children's needs for imaginative play.[66]

There were a multitude of reasons why community activists believed play facilities were important. Play was seen as a positive end in itself, as an integral part of childhood, and it was seen to fulfil critical educational and social functions: it would help children to develop practical problem solving and creative skills while teaching them how to co-operate, empathise and manage conflicts.[67] The educational value of play was seen to be particularly important in deprived areas where children received less stimulation at home and attended challenging schools. These progressive educational ideas were received official validation in the Plowden report in 1967, which encouraged a 'child-centred' approach to learning and rejected the traditional emphasis on discipline and rote learning.[68] This helped play

---

[61] *CN,* No. 35, June 1976, 1
[62] *CN*, No. 29, Oct 1975, 6
[63] *LOP,* No. 38, 4-18 Sept 1976
[64] Alison Ravetz, c*ouncil Housing and Culture: the History of a Social Experiment* (London, 2001): 189
[65] *The Other Paper,* No. 10, 27 February 1970, 8
[66] Eric Butterworth, Ray Lees and Peter Arnold, *The Challenge of Community Work: The Final Report of the Batley CDP* (York, 1981): 106-7; *Community* Colin Ward, 'Adventure Playground: A Parable of Anarchy,' *Anarchy,* 7, 193-4
[67] Keith Cranwell, 'Adventure Playgrounds and the Community in London, 1948-1970: an appreciation of the ideas and actions that shaped the spirit on the 1960s play movement' in Wendy Russell, Bridget Handscombe, John Fitzpatrick, ed, *Playwork Voices: in Celebration of Bob Hughes and Gordon Sturrock* (London, 2007): 70
[68] Department of Education and Science, *Children and their primary schools: a report of the Central Advisory Council for Education* (HMSO, 1967)

campaigners to access public funds. Play facilities were seen to have a wider social and environmental benefit. By providing a compelling diversion for children and an outlet for both creativity and frustration, they would deter vandalism and socially disruptive behaviour.[69] This experience of the West Yorkshire Police endorsed this view.[70] Campaigns for play facilities were also connected to the community action surrounding road traffic we explored in Chapter 3. Efforts to limit the speed and volume of motorised vehicles on the roads were partly informed by the need create safer spaces for children to play. Activists in Harehills sought to ban vehicles from using back alleys which were a favoured place for children to play.[71] Where the streets could not be made safe activists lobbied for off-street play facilities. In the late 1960s activists in west Leeds cited the high incident of road casualties involving children in support of their case for a playground.[72]

Children's play was an obvious focus for organising at the grassroots level. Because of their limited mobility, children's play needs had to be met near to where they lived. Providing play space was a more readily achievable goal than solving the more complex problems encountered by community activists in the fields of housing and transport. Establishing a playground was a more practical proposition for local people than even setting up a community centre or local advice centre. The costs were lower and less specialised knowledge was required. Materials and tools could be donated or foraged from areas of waste land. Play organising offered community activists an opportunity to effect real tangible change, which demonstrated the potential of community action.

Community campaigns for play took a variety of forms. Most basically, community activists lobbied for more play space in the city. The construction of new estates or the redevelopment of older areas created an opportunity to increase play opportunities. In Chapeltown, the Playspaces Group of the CCA negotiated with the City Architect and Housing Department to provide more dedicated play provision as part of the programme of rehabilitating older houses and streets. They secured a number of new play facilities in back street and on areas of waste land.[73] Despite some noteworthy achievements, community activists never persuaded the council to prioritise play space in its building and redevelopment programmes. To some extent, the council was hamstrung by national funding formulae which incentivised authorities to focus on houses and roads over

---

[69] *LOP,* No. 142, 17 October 1980, 1, 5
[70] A.J. Moyes to J. Hepper, 19 April 1977 [LCT]
[71] *LOP,* No. 285, 5 August 1983, 20
[72] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 16 October 1968, 1-2 and 15 October 1969, 2-3
[73] CCA, 'Some Examples of the Work of the Chapeltown Community Association,' April 1972 [WYL 2058]

community facilities.[74] A related problem was that no single department in the local authority had a duty to promote children's play and it was the experience of activists that the relevant departments evaded responsibility.[75]

Community activists therefore devoted most of their energies to creating their own play facilities. Sometimes these took a temporary or seasonal form. During the summer holidays in 1972 and 1973, the Chapeltown Playspaces Group ran play schemes for sixty local children in Potternewton Park for three weeks.[76] The children mainly came from households where no adult was around to supervise them during the holiday. The play scheme received financial support from the city council and 14 volunteers. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there were dozens of community summer play schemes across the city in Hunslet, Hunslet, Halton Moor, Armley, Hyde Park, Chapeltown and Woodhouse.[77]

The most significant achievement of community activists in the field of play was the creation of adventure playgrounds. The adventure playground had its origin in Denmark in the 1930s and 1940s.[78] The model was exported to London after the Second World War and the concept gradually spread throughout the country in the 1950s and 1960s. In contrast to a traditional playground which was pre-designed and static, an adventure playground empowered children to create (and re-create) their own play facilities.[79] The organisers would provide a range of materials tools and space and encourage children to experiment. Children created huts, climbing structures and dens. They played with a range of materials, including sand, water, soil and fire [see Figs. 4.3-4.5]. Adventure playgrounds were supervised by at least one paid play leader, who usually had some training or experience in the field accompanied volunteers.[80] The philosophy behind the adventure playground was that the social and educational benefits of play were magnified when children had extensive freedom and adult support.

---

[74] Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture,* 138-39
[75] Councillor J. Green to Mr Spellacy, 11 November 1973, WYA: WYL2058
[76] CCA Playgroups and Playspaces, Summer Play Scheme 1973, WYA: WYL2058
[77] *LOP,* No. 18, July 1975, 8
[78] For the history of the adventure playground in Britain, see: Marjorie Allen and Mary Nicholson, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady* (London, 1975): 232-6; Roy Kozlovsky, 'Adventure Playgrounds and Postwar Reconstruction,' in Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith, *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space and the Material Culture of Children* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2008), 13; Keith Cranwell., 'Towards a History of Adventure Playgrounds,' in Norman Nils, Keith Cranwell and Paul Claydon, *An Architecture of Play: A Survey of London's Adventure Playgrounds* (London, 2003), 17-26
[79] National Playing Fields Association, *What is an Adventure Playground?* (London, 1977): 1; Avrid Bengtsson, *Adventure Playgrounds* (London, 1972)
[80] Jack Lambert, *A Personal Account of a Playleader's Work* (London, 1974); Joe Bejamin, *Grounds for Play: an extension in search of adventure* (London, 1974)

The first adventure playground in Leeds was set up in Seacroft in 1968. The Leeds Civic Trust, the LCVS and the vicar of Seacroft worked with local people to set up the playground.[81] They identified a site on a patch of unused grassed space in north Seacroft and successfully lobbied the city council and charitable foundations for funding to meet capital costs and pay the salary of a play leader.[82] By 1971, the playground employed a full time play leader who staffed the playground between 2pm and 10pm. The playground attracted some 50 children per day during term times and up to 150 per day during the school holidays.[83] By 1976, up to 400 children regularly attended the playground.[84] Trips to the Yorkshire Dales and the coast were organised in the school holidays. [85] A second adventure playground was established by the Chapeltown Community Association's Playspaces Group in 1973 on a vacant site close to the proposed community centre on Reginald Terrace. By late 1974, the group had successfully lobbied the council to allocate the land for play space and to provide finance for materials, a building and the play leader's salary.[86]

Not all adventure playgrounds were permanent. Community activists often exploited spare land to set up temporary playgrounds to meet an urgent need. In Burley, activists linked to the Belle Vue and Burley Community Association organised seasonal adventure playgrounds during the summer months between the 1960s and the mid-1970s on various clearance sites in the district (see Fig. 4.3-4.5).[87] They received permission from the city council to use the land but little financial assistance, relying on donated materials and local-fund raising to build a play space consisting of 'climbing frames, an aerial ropeway, slide and anything a child's imagination can get to work on.'[88] These examples of positive community action show how community activists sought to utilise wasted or abandoned urban spaces, often the products of slum clearance or road-building. This continued into the 1980s when activists in Hyde Park transformed a small patch of waste ground in council ownership into a community play garden.[89] Activists occupied idle ground to set up play

[81] A.J. Moyes, 'Seacroft Adventure Playground,' 10 September 1971 [LCT]
[82] *ibid;* A.J. Moyes, 'Recent Activities Connected With Seacroft Adventure Playground: April 1972,' 11 April 1972 [LCT]
[83] John Hepper, Memo to LCT, 13 July 1972 [LCT]
[84] Memo, Leeds Civic Trust, 15 January 1976 [LCT]
[85] Leeds Civic Trust, Annual Report 1982, 9
[86] *CN,* No. 4, January 1973, 1; *CN,* No. 13, December 1973, 2; *Chapeltown News,* No. 20, November 1974, 7
[87] *The Other Paper,* No. 1, 10 October 1969, 2; *YEP,* 14 August 1971, 5
[88] *ibid;* Leeds City Council, Minutes of the Planning Committee, 26 July 1974, 44; LCC, Planning Committee, 2 April 1973, 30
[89] *Headline,* No. 24 Spring 1983, 8; *Headline,* No. 31, New Year 1985, 1

facilities across the country. In the early 1970s in De Beauvoir Town in Hackney they established a playground on waste land formerly occupied by prefabricated housing.[90]

Looking beyond their immediate goal of providing for children, community play initiatives had a wider impact on the vitality of grassroots activism. By bringing people together, play organising often stimulated further community organising. *Community Action* journal observed that play projects

> create the opportunities for parents to come together to pool problems and skills, and for everyone to discover the resources in their immediate neighbourhood. A temporary playscheme can lead not just to permanent play facilities, but also to advice centres and Food Co-Ops and a greater awareness of shared problems in housing and education. Community play is therefore a good starting point for community organisation and community power.[91]

There were numerous instances of community action for play acting as a catalyst for other campaigns.[92] Like the community centre, the adventure playground often functioned as a hub for other community organisations and services. They were focal points for activists and linked different community campaigns. Play organising politicised people with little previous political experience, including older children. In summer 1976, the organisers of the Chapeltown Adventure Playground worked with adult activists to campaign for continued funding for the playground.[93] They presented this 'campaign as part of the wider struggle against the cuts.'[94] This shows that community action surrounding play supported community action across the city.

If community campaigns for play facilities chiefly focused on children's needs, community campaigns for childcare facilities concentrated on the needs of their parents. The playgroup and nursery were a common form of community-run service in this period. They were organised by established community associations and groups of activists who came together specifically for that purpose.[95] The growth of community childcare provision was a response to the failure of public policy to keep pace with socioeconomic change. As women's participation in the labour force rose and the number of single parent families increased over the 1960s and 1970s, the demand for childcare grew.[96] In Leeds, in 1978

---

[90] *CA,* No. 8, May-June 1973, 28-29
[91] *CA*, No. 19, April-May 1975, 20
[92] *CA*, No. 1, February 1972, 6-7
[93] *YEP,* 13 August 1976, 2
[94] *CN,* No. 29, October 1975, 6
[95] *LOP,* No. 85, 21 July-4 August 1978, 1, 8
[96] Trade Union and Community Resource and Information Centre, *Bulletin,* No. 3 July/August 1978, 2

there were 6320 mothers with children under five who worked for at least eight hours per week.[97] Though the main purpose of childcare was to enable women to work, a key secondary function was to offer mothers some relief from childcare responsibilities in their leisure time. The state did operate childcare facilities, but this provision almost always failed to meet demand.[98] In Leeds, local authority childcare provision was patchy at the beginning of the 1970s and the cuts in public expenditure caused the council to cut the nursery capital building budget by 87 per cent.[99] In 1977, Leeds had 51,000 children under five in the city, but only 504 council nursery places – fewer than in the neighbouring town of Dewsbury.[100] Unsurprisingly, there were long waiting lists for council nurseries and families were subjected to rigorous means testing before places were allocated.

The community playgroup and nursery was a pragmatic response to this vacuum in local public provision. While community activists had lobbied the council to devote more resources to childcare groups by forming a Playgroups Action Committee, they recognised that public policy change in this area would be slow.[101] Grassroots interventions could help to ameliorate the situation more rapidly. There were strong positive reasons why childcare facilities would benefit from community management. Playgroups and nurseries operated most effectively when they were provided on a small scale close to where people lived. State facilities tended to be larger and more centralised. Setting up a grassroots childcare facility was a more viable project for community groups than, for example, building housing, operating a bus service or even setting up a community centre. Like playgrounds, the capital costs of community-run playgroups and nurseries were lower because they could use existing community centres, tenants' halls or religious buildings. It was easier to find suitable workers in the neighbourhood.

The national pre-school playgroup movement, co-ordinated by the Pre-School Playgroups Association, founded in 1962, was one manifestation of the community response to childcare needs.[102] Pre-school playgroups usually catered for children between the ages of two and five for a few of hours during the day. They were operated by volunteers, generally

[97] *ibid*
[98] Valerie Charlton, 'A lesson in day care,' in Marjorie Mayo, ed, *Women in the Community* (1977), 32
[99] TUCRIC, *Bulletin,* No. 3 July/August 1978, 2
[100] LCC, *Verbatim Report,* 20 July 1977, 128-9
[101] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 20 July 1977, 128-9
[102] Brenda Crowe, *The Playgroup Movement* (London, 1983); Jill Faux: 'The Pre-School Playgroups Association: a learning experience for us all,' in Helene Curtis and Mimi Sanderson, ed, *The Unsung Sixties: memoirs of Social Innovation,* (London, 2004): 381-93; Ann Henderson, *Insights from the playgroup movement: equality and autonomy* (London, 2011). See also: 'Playgroup movement,' http://www.playgroupmovement.org.uk/, accessed 18 September 2015

local parents. This was a pervasive and highly successful form of community action: in 1977, there were 200 pre-school playgroups across Leeds.[103] However, in low-income areas of the city the standard pre-school playgroup model did not fully meet the needs of parents.[104] In such areas, women with young children were more likely to work than their counterparts in more affluent areas. There were also more single parent families who could not share childcare with a partner. As a result, in the inner city the demand for childcare was greater, but local women were less able to volunteer at playgroups, especially during the working day. Community activists recognised this context. While the Hall Lane Community Centre Playgroup 'encouraged [parents] to participate in all activities and help regularly on the rota,' its organisers acknowledged that 'in an area like Armley a playgroup is not seen immediately as a self-help activity but more as a service.'[105] Community activists adapted the playgroup model to meet this need by employing paid workers to run the playgroups, extending their opening hours and accommodating older children. The boundary between the playgroup and nursery in inner city areas was thus somewhat blurred.

The Chapeltown Children's Centre provides a useful case study in community action surrounding childcare shedding light on the way community activists sought to meet local needs. The Centre was founded in 1973 by a group of local activists to the widespread local need for affordable childcare provision.[106] The child population in Chapeltown was above the city average and the neighbourhood contained a high proportion of single parent families and working mothers.[107] Many mothers were relatively recent migrants who lacked family support networks in the area. In 1978, there were 1600 children under the age of five in Chapeltown, but the city council provided only 202 childcare places for this age group.[108] There were two private nurseries but these were too expensive for local people. The Children's Centre began as a morning playgroup operating from a local church, but in 1975 it moved to larger premises and began opening in the afternoons. In 1979, the centre extended its hours again in response to pressure from local parents, and it ran an after school club.[109] The Centre functioned as a playgroup and a nursery, providing for mothers who worked during the whole day and those who needed a break of a few hours. The centre catered for parents who did not qualify for a place at a council nursery and those who found

[103] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 20 July 1977, 128-9
[104] *CA*, No. 5, Nov-Dec 1972, 24-25. See also: *CA,* No. 31 May-June 1977, Letters
[105] Hall Lane Community Centre, Report 1979, 12
[106] Chapeltown Community Playgroup/Nursery Association, The Children's Community Centre, Chapeltown, 1978
[107] The Chapeltown Children's Centre, Chapeltown, Report No. 2, Chapeltown Children's Community Centre, June 1982, 3
[108] CCP/NA, The Children's Community Centre, Chapeltown, 1978
[109] The Chapeltown Children's Centre, Chapeltown, Report No. 2, Chapeltown Children's Community Centre, June 1982, 4-5

council facilities unwelcoming.[110] Weekly fees for the service were kept low. Unlike local authority nurseries they did not require parents to sign an attendance register, in recognition that many mothers had complex schedules and unpredictable working hours.[111] Local activists understood that the Centre could not be 'operated on a purely voluntary basis' due to the work commitments of local parents. Paid staff and a manager were employed to run the centre. The workers' salaries were paid by funding from the Manpower Services Commission, the Inner City Programme and the STEP scheme.[112] This enhanced the quality of the service the Centre could provide to the local community, but it created organisational challenges. Obtaining finance and maintaining independence from funding bodies was a constant struggle and the Centre experienced several funding crises.[113] Nevertheless, it sought to be a community-controlled service and, despite the presence of paid staff, the Centre was run by a management committee elected annually by local parents and some interested outsiders.[114] The Centre was part of the ecology of community action in Chapeltown, collaborating with other community-run institutions, such as the Chapeltown adventure playground. The Chapeltown Children's Centre was not unique in Leeds. The Hall Lane Community Centre and the Osmondthorpe Community Centre offered similar services. Comparable children's centres were established by community activists across the country, especially in London.[115] Like community playgrounds, community playgroups and nurseries also became a base for wider activism. In 1977, activists from playgroups in Holbeck, Chapeltown and Armley united to lobby against local spending cuts.[116] They presented community facilities as a response to – but not a substitute for – public provision.

Community organising around childcare reveals that community activists were able to run services that met a genuine local need in the absence of suitable public or private provision. Like play campaigners, childcare activists responded to the particular needs of inner city neighbourhoods. Like other forms of positive community action, the long-term success of campaigns for community play and childcare facilities would depend on their ability to secure internal and external support, and to work productively with activists across the city.

---

[110] CCP/NA, The Children's Community Centre, Chapeltown, 1978
[111] *LOP*, No. 104, 11 May-25 May 1979, 8-9
[112] The Chapeltown Children's Centre, Chapeltown, Report No. 2, Chapeltown Children's Community Centre, June 1982, 4
[113] *LOP*, No. 250, 19 November 1982, 10-11
[114] The Chapeltown Children's Centre, Chapeltown, Report No. 2, Chapeltown Children's Community Centre, June 1982, 1
[115] *CA,* No. 50, Sept-Oct 1980, 11-31; Charlton, 'A lesson in day care'
[116] *TUCRIC Bulletin,* No. 3, July/August 1978, 3

4. Towards community control

If filling gaps in service provision and meeting the needs of local people was the primary driver of pro-active community action, extending community control over local services was the second objective. Community control implied that power over community facilities lay with local people and users. Campaigns for community control were an attempt to inject more direct democracy into the way local services and institutions were run. The term 'community control' had its roots in the American New Left and the black liberation movement. Securing community control of public schools was the objective of a fiercely fought grassroots campaign by black activists in New York City in the late 1960s.[117] In 1973 in Britain a *Community Action* editorial referred to 'the need for community control over organisations and activities whether set up by government, voluntary [bodies] or grassroots initiatives.'[118] Not all activists in Leeds use this particular rhetoric, but regardless of the language they used, the goals of community-run groups were directed towards this end. One of the objectives of Hall Lane Community Centre was 'to involve local people at all levels, to respond to problems which they identify and to undertake activities which they choose.'[119] The South Headingley Advice Centre, was to be 'not only run for local people but by them as well.'[120] This section will explore why community activists sought to transfer power to the neighbourhood level before exploring how far it was realised in practice.

There were several reasons why community activists were committed to community control. The main argument was that people felt frustrated and disillusioned with public services and the planning system because they were controlled by remote bureaucracies that were inflexible and insensitive to people's particular needs, or even openly hostile.[121] Most elected politicians, it was argued, were too aloof from their electorates to bridge this gap. If anger was one response to this situation, apathy was more common: people withdrew from the political process because they believed they had no purchase on it.[122] In their first report, the organisers of the Chapeltown Children's Centre summarised this argument:

> Many people in Chapeltown, as in other similar areas, feel alienated from and hostile to the State and all those in authority. By becoming involved with the

---

[117] Alan Altshuler, *Community Control: The Black Demand for Participation in Large American Cities* (1970)
[118] *CA,* No. 8, May-June 1973, 2
[119] Hall Lane Community Centre, Report, 1979, 2
[120] *YEP*, 2 May 1975, 11
[121] George Clark, 'Neighbourhood Self-Management,' in Hain, ed, *Community Politcs,* 99-100
[122] Clark, 'Neighbourhood Self-Management,' 101

Nursery/Playgroup and being on the committee they feel at least to a certain extent in control of its destiny.[123]

The same report maintained that the parents who use the Centre 'are used to seeing the local authority in a punitive role, as an outside body that does not understand their needs.' [124] Community organisations could avoid this perception if they were locally controlled.

There were also practical reasons for promoting community control over local institutions, like adventure playground and community centres. Unless local people felt community services were accessible and relevant to their needs, they would not use them. Involving local people would engender a sense of ownership and trust. It also ensured community organisations could 'respond very quickly' to changing local requirements.[125] The organisers of the Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre explained that 'user control' was essential because

> in areas like Harehills and Chapeltown it is only through bodies identifiable by the community as by them, of them and for them that any real advancement can take place…a lot of money seems to have been wasted in the past on providing services and agencies which the community experiences as imposed on them and to which accordingly they do not actively respond or learn from…[126]

Community control would not only make services more effective, it would also play an educative function. According to the organisers, participating in the management of the Chapeltown Children's Centre gave 'local people the chance to learn more about childcare, play and facilities.'[127] By working with other people in the neighbourhood to manage a community amenity, people would develop skills – financial, administrative and social – and more self-confidence. This was particularly important in neighbourhoods where most people were granted little autonomy in their working lives. People who became more intimately involved would develop an understanding of public policy in the field and the relationship between neighbourhood organisations and the local authority. In other words, community institutions provided a political education.

The main vehicle for facilitating community involvement was to create a management structure in which representatives of the local community or service users were in the majority. The Hall Lane Community Centre was 'autonomously managed by local residents.'[128] Local people occupied a majority of places on the management committee of

[123] CCP/NA, The Children's Community Centre, Chapeltown, 1978
[124] *ibid*
[125] *ibid*
[126] Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, Report (1980): 2
[127] CCP/NA, The Children's Community Centre, Chapeltown, 1978
[128] Hall Lane Community Centre, Report (1979): 2

the Seacroft Adventure Playground.[129] The Chapeltown Children's Centre was managed by a committee consisting of local parents, voluntary staff and other interested local people; the Centre's workers were accountable to this committee.[130] As we saw in Chapter 2, the community housing co-operatives were run by their members rather than external funding bodies. This applied not only to community institutions but the community action groups that spearheaded the campaigns for community-run provision. The Chapeltown Community Association was governed by a Council composed of five members who had to be approved at an annual general meeting.[131] All residents of Chapeltown were members of the Association and could vote at this meeting where policy could be changed. The convenors of the Association's working groups were elected by secret ballot at 'vigorously contested' elections.[132] Some community institutions sought to facilitate community control through a federated model. The management committee of the Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre was composed of representatives of ten local community organisations.[133] This structure recognised the fact that the Law Centre served a fairly large geographical area and worked on a range of issues. In this context, it was less meaningful to elect committee members on a purely residential basis; instead, the structure allowed different interest groups into the local area to feed in their concerns.

Realising meaningful community control presented several challenges in practice. A key variable was the quality of the relationship between the organisation and external funding bodies, which might limit the extent to which the institution could run its own affairs. Whereas some community institutions were relatively independent of external bodies, others were more dependent on them for land, buildings and resources. In such circumstances, community control could not be taken for granted. It had to be negotiated. As the major guardian of local funding and a powerful landowner, the city council was often in a position to define the limits of community control. The debate over the governance of the Chapeltown Community Centre illustrates this point. The local authority administered the grant that had been used to establish the centre, but community groups were to be the main users of the centre. As advocates of community control, in May 1974, the standing committee for the community centre asserted that '[t]he Community centre

---

[129] A.J. Moyes, 'Seacroft Adventure Playground,' 10 September 1971 [LCT]
[130] CCP/NA, The Children's Community Centre, Chapeltown, 1978
[131] Chapeltown Community Association, Draft Constitution, u.d. WYA: WYL2058
[132] Tim Mobbs, 'Local Groups in Action: The Chapeltown Community Association,' *Outlook,* No. 2, August 1972, 11-12
[133] These organisations were Chapeltown Citizens' Advice Bureau, Chapeltown Community Centre Management Committee, the Leeds Community Relations Council, Harehills Housing Aid, Indian Workers' Association, Muslim Cultural Association, Trades Council, the Trade Union and Community Information and Resource Centre, United Caribbean Association and Uhuru Arts. See: Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, Interim Report (1979): 4

MUST be managed by Chapeltown people.'[134] Since most local people worked full time, community activists also requested funding for a warden to help local people to operate the centre. They maintained that the warden should be directly answerable to the community not the council.[135]

The city council's approach to community involvement was initially ambiguous. Councillors claimed to support giving Chapeltown people '"the utmost say in running [the centre]."'[136] When pushed to elaborate on this principle an officer implied that local groups would only play an advisory role in the running of the centre.[137] Eventually, activists negotiated a compromise position. The centre was run by a Management Committee formed of 15 members elected by local people, three councillors and one council officer.[138] It had power over the internal affairs of the centre, but the council remained in control of the budget and building. Without an independent source of finance, community activists had to share power with the city council. The working relationship was often uncomfortable. The Chairman of the Management Committee resigned in October 1975 because he felt like he was in 'a straightjacket.'[139] Over the next five years activists frequently accused the council of squandering the potential of the community centre. In August 1975, the Management Committee complained that the centre was under-used due to a lack of facilities and restricted opening hours.[140] The Management Committee had to wait until 1979, when it received Urban Programme funding, to appoint a warden.[141] In 1980, the council again rejected plans for full time opening and never approved community proposals for a gym in the basement, drop-in services for the unemployed and discos for young people.[142] While the centre did provide a base for a range of groups and activities, it never developed into the multi-functional, dynamic centre activists had hoped for. The level of council intervention had proved inhibiting. The Chapeltown model of community centres – local authority ownership with partial community group management – was replicated across the city in the later 1970s.[143] It was a compromise on the radical demand for community control that many community groups were prepared to accept.

---

[134] *CN*, No. 16, May 1974, 8
[135] *ibid*
[136] *CN,* No. 6, April 1973, 1
[137] *CN,* No. 12, November 1973, 7
[138] *CN,* No. 17, June 1974, 3
[139] *CN*, No. 29. October 1975, 5
[140] *CN*, No. 28, August 1975, 8; *Chapeltown News*, No. 27 June-July 1975, 10
[141] Leeds City Council, Leeds Inner City Action, First Urban Programme Report, September 1978
[142] *Come-Unity News*, No. 5, October 1981 [WYL5041/12]
[143] *YEP,* 21 December 1978, 5

The city council did, however, leave many of the community institutions it supported to their own devices. After grant-aiding the Chapeltown Adventure Playground and allocating the land, the council stated that the 'onus' would be on local residents and it would only step in if there was mismanagement.[144] The Management Committee of the playground was composed solely of Chapeltown residents with no council representatives or overseers.[145] The Seacroft Adventure Playground enjoyed a similar level of autonomy. This more *laissez faire* approach is perhaps explained by the fact that playgrounds and play schemes had fewer fixed capital assets than community centres based in large buildings.

Campaigns for community control were not limited to setting up new organisations. Activists also endeavoured to democratise existing services and institutions. In Chapters 1 and 2, we explored how activists tried to increase resident participation in the management of council housing. State-run institutions were not the only target of such campaigns. Many voluntary organisations were also managed in a way that militated against community involvement. The campaign to reform the governance of the Studley Grange Children's Centre in Chapeltown in the early 1970s is an insightful case study into campaigns for community control of local non-governmental organisations. The Centre was a voluntary body founded by local mothers in 1967 to provide recreational and educational services for children and their families.[146] Like the community initiatives we have explored it responded to the social need in the area, providing language classes, pre-school nursery courses, classes in woodwork, cookery, drama and a playgroup.[147] Unlike the community-run organisations promoted by community activists, the Studley Grange Centre was governed on paternalistic lines. Control of the centre shifted from its founders to a committee of people who lived outside Chapeltown in the city's more affluent suburbs.[148] The management committee members were mostly white and from professional or managerial backgrounds. Local people were 'discouraged from taking part in the management of the centre' and instead they were encouraged to take part by helping up with menial tasks.[149]

Latent tensions between the management committee and local people surfaced in September 1972 when the Management Committee sacked the warden who was popular with parents and children. Supporters of the warden formed the Chapeltown Parents and Friends group to

---

[144] *CN,* No. 6, April 1973, 2
[145] *CN,* No. 16, May 1974, 3
[146] *YEP,* 19 April 1967, 3; *CA*, January-February 1973, 5
[147] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 6 December 1967, 1-2
[148] *CA*, January-February 1973, 5
[149] *CA*, January-February 1973, 5

call for greater community control in the running of the centre.[150] In response to this demand, the Management Committee threatened to withdraw funds from the Centre and suggested that the jobs of the remaining staff would be at risk if local people took more control. Undaunted, Chapeltown Parents and Friends published a leaflet criticising the committee for being unrepresentative of the community, highlighting in particular the lack of black members. The Parents and Friends group was supported by other activist groups, including *Chapeltown News*, which expressed its support for 'community control' and rejected 'paternalism from outside Chapeltown, whether from the benign ladies of Roundhay or from "White Liberals" from Hyde Park.'[151] At the Annual General Meeting in November 1972, 200 people 'crowded into the centre and demanded the right to participate in the administration of the centre.'[152] The activists accused the committee of 'suppressing parents' feelings' and they sought to elect new candidates to the executive committee to 'ensure a fairer reflection of the racial composition of Chapeltown.'[153] The management committee sought to prevent members of Chapeltown Parents and Friends from voting on the grounds that they were not members of the Association. When the activists refused to back down, six members of the management committee, including the Secretary, walked out of the meeting.[154] This dramatic confrontation gave way to more productive negotiations and the management committee eventually agreed to reconstitute itself with only two "external" members and six members who lived in Chapeltown of West Indian and Asian heritage.[155] The result was a distinct shift in the balance of power from outsiders to local people.

It was not, however, a wholesale revolution. Several members of the old committee remained active on sub-committees and the decision to remove the warden – which had triggered the struggle – was confirmed, leading one local commentator to contend that Studley Grange was still 'suffering from the heavy hand of suburban paternalism.'[156] Still, the partial local takeover appeared to have unsettled the city council. A grant issued on the eve of the community campaign by the city council to Studley Grange to set up a Mother and Baby Unit had still not been spent in March 1975. Community activists alleged that the authority did not trust the new committee to spend the money.[157] For some activists, this

---

[150] *CN,* No. 1, October 1972, 1
[151] *CN,* No. 3, December 1972, 1
[152] *CN,* No. 3, December 1972, 1
[153] *The Guardian,* 30 November 1972, 5
[154] *CN,* No. 3, December 1972, 1
[155] *CA,* January-February 1973, 6
[156] *CA,* January-February 1973, 6
[157] *CN,* No. 24, March 1975, 2. See also: Max Farrar, 'Racism, education and black self-organisation,' *Critical Social Policy*, 12:53 (1993)

was 'proof that the Corporation will do all it can to hinder local control.'[158] The Studley Grange campaign took place in a period when local people in Chapeltown were seeking to extend community influence over several local institutions.[159] In 1973, parents of children attending the Earl Cowper Middle School organised to demand the removal of a headteacher whom they considered racist.[160] Following several months of protests, including a strike by the school's pupils, the headteacher was transferred by the city council.[161] The success of this campaign and others suggested that a determined community campaign could impact on the way local services were governed. Community control was a salient and emotive issue in the city in, capable of galvanising large numbers of people behind a cause.

The battles for community control in Chapeltown were intensified by the politics of race as largely white management committees clashed with mainly black and Asian service users. Campaigns for self-determination also took place in more ethnically homogenous areas. The issue of who should control local resources and institutions was still salient. For its first two years, the Seacroft adventure playground was managed by a committee composed of people 'resident well away from Seacroft,' many of whom had been appointed as representatives of established voluntary organisations.[162] The Leeds Junior Chamber of Commerce, the main sponsor, provided the 'moral leadership.' In 1968, local parents took objection to the committee's decision to sack the playground's full time playleader who was popular with the children. The parents 'rose in revolt,' led by a woman who later became the chair of the committee.[163] In the face of this pressure, the Chamber reversed its decision on the playleader and invited local people to occupy half the places on committee.[164] Following this showdown, the balance of power on the committee shifted from the organisations that had initiated the enterprise to local people. By the early 1970s, members of the community held a majority of places on the committee. Local people did not sever their links with outside groups. Despite the change of management at Seacroft, parents continued to work closely with outsiders: they 'retained the three old "squares"' from the church, the Civic

[158] *CN*, Pamphlet Number 1, 'Planning to Deceive: A Critique of Leeds Council's 'participation planning exercise' (1975) *3*
[159] Max Farrar, *The Struggle for Community in a British multi-ethnic inner city area: paradise in the making* (New York, 2002)
[160] *CN,* No. 8, June 1973, 1
[161] *CN,* No. 12, November, 1973, 2
[162] A.J. Moyes, 'Leeds Civic Trust: Review of Activities Concerned with the Seacroft Adventure Playground,' 11 April 1972, 2 [LCT]
[163] A.J., Moyes, 'Leeds Civic Trust: Review of Activities Concerned with the Seacroft Adventure Playground,' 11 April 1972, 2-3 [LCT]
[164] LCT Annual Report 1982, 8

Trust and the Council of Social Service as 'advisors'.[165] Several local NGOs and the city council retained their representatives on the management committee.[166] Like at Studley Grange, the outcome of the campaign was a shift in the balance of power rather than a total community takeover.

Some activists maintained that co-operating with government bodies or other agencies was incompatible with community control because it would lead to the 'absorption of community strength,' but this overlooked the fact that community-run institutions were always the product of a partnership between community groups and the state or other local voluntary organisations.[167] This was true of the community-run bodies we explored above as well as organisations like the Hunslet Housing Co-operative, which was established with the support of the city council, the Leeds Federated Housing Association and the Housing Corporation as we saw in Chapter 2. Campaigns for community control shifted the balance of power in favour of local people and service users, but activists needed to maintain good working relationships with external bodies. Community groups could not provide services in isolation.

For some community activists, the involvement of community workers and other paid professionals in community institutions presented another threat to community control.[168] According to this argument, paid workers would leverage their superior skills and experience to take control of community projects. Rather than acting in the interests of the community, workers would operate as agents of whoever paid their salary. These critics viewed the expansion of community work in the public sector as an attempt by the local state to steer the course of community action.[169] If the role of community workers was contentious in certain publications and among particular theorists, in Leeds the issue generated far less controversy. As we have seen throughout this thesis, community workers and other professionals played a central role in the growth of community action and, far from limiting community control, they promoted it. In Chapter 1 we saw that community workers were one of the pillars of community action on the Hunslet Grange estate. Chapter 2 demonstrated that community workers and other professionals helped to instigate campaigns against housing clearance and for alternative forms of housing renewal. As we

---

[165] A.J., Moyes, 'The Seacroft Adventure Playground,' 1971 [LCT]
[166] A.J. Moyes, 'Leeds Civic Trust: Review of Activities Concerned with the Seacroft Adventure Playground,' 11 April 1972, 2 [LCT]
[167] *CA,* No. 8, May-June 1973, 2
[168] *CA,* No. 21 Aug-Sept 1975, 31-32
[169] Elizabeth Wilson, 'Radical Social Work: myth or reality,' in John Cowley, et al., *Community or Class Struggle?* (London, 1977): 94-100; Cynthia Cockburn, *The Local State: Management of Cities and People* (London, 1977): 110-131

showed in Chapter 3, sympathetic professionals helped community action groups to construct strong arguments against urban road-building.

The support of community workers and other professionals was particularly critical for effective positive community action. People in deprived parts of the city were less likely to have the skills, resources and time to operate community institutions on a full time basis, submit funding applications or make contacts on a citywide level. As we have seen in this chapter, many community institutions employed staff to undertake crucial work. Community advice centres employed professionals to provide legal and other forms of specialist advice. Adventure playgrounds were supervised by paid playleaders. Operating from institutions like the Hall Lane Community Centre, community workers helped to stimulate community action across a wide area. In Osmondthorpe in east Leeds between 1972 and 1983 community workers funded by Dr. Barnado's worked with local people to cultivate several community institutions, including a playgroup, and an advice centre.[170] In districts like Osmondthorpe and Armley, community action would have been restricted to short-lived negative campaigns without the support of professional workers. The local population lacked the educational resources, political experience and social connections to influential decision-makers. In its 1979 annual report, the Hall Lane Community Centre outlined the difficulties faced by local community groups in Armley before arguing that 'the only way such groups could take effective common action' would be with the support of a full time worker.[171] In its 1984 report, the Centre expanded upon this point:

> If community action in an area is to continue to develop [and] attract new interest and tackle new areas then it is important for it to have access to an agency with a broader base to help bring issues to attention and inject information of additional community work help at key times.'[172]

In a period of mounting uncertainty surrounding funding for community institutions the Centre's message to funding agencies was clear: the resources and skills available in inner city neighbourhoods were not sufficient to sustain community action. Community action needed paid professionals to realise its full potential. Community action groups might have been distinguished by their resolutely local focus, but they needed to marshal resources from both 'in and outside the community.'[173]

---

[170] Alan Wolinski, *Osmondthorpe: The Area That Time Forgot*, Dr. Barnado's Practice Working Paper (Essex, 1984)
[171] Hall lane Community Centre Report 1979, 12
[172] Hall Lane Community Centre, Annual Report, 1984/85, 3
[173] Hall Lane Community Centre, Annual Report, 1984/85, 3

This position was not only advanced by professional community workers whose jobs depended on funding as some critics alleged. Residents of the inner city were keen to secure community workers. In December 1982 when the city council decided to redeploy Tony Hermann – one of the few community workers on its payroll – from Halton Moor to South Seacroft, community activists from Halton Moor campaigned to retain him.[174] In a deputation to the council, the Halton Moor Tenants Association waxed lyrical about the way Hermann had helped tenants to set up services and projects, including a community centre, two playgroups, a good neighbours' scheme, and a communal flat for the elderly. Three months later, three tenants' associations from the Osmondthorpe lobbied the city council to fund a community work post on their estate after Barnardo's withdrew their grant.[175] These campaigns challenge the notion that working-class community activists were controlled or manipulated by middle-class community workers. Community activists in the inner city stressed that they had formed productive partnership with community workers. That the partnership bridged the class divide did not imply either side was being exploited.

The role of community workers in developing community action campaigns underlines the point that community action was a cross-class alliance. This is perhaps why it unsettled some on the Left for whom such pluralism was anathema. This Leeds experience suggests it strengthened working-class organisations. The real problem for activists in most working-class areas was that community workers were few in number. The radical planners and architects who lent their support to action groups were also in short supply. While middle-class activists with professional skills often worked with action groups in neighbouring areas, they rarely ventured across the city. The cross-class alliance operated in certain neighbourhoods but not at a citywide level. This militated against the formation of a citywide community action movement.

If complete community control was always an implausible goal, community activists did increase the extent to which institutions and services were managed by the local people who used them. New institutions were structured to promote local control. Existing public and voluntary organisations were reformed to achieve similar ends. Public and voluntary organisations did not cede control willingly, but periods of confrontation were usually short and community activists usually developed good working relationships with external bodies. Community control did not mean a community struggling in isolation. Activists enlisted the support of community workers and other professionals to help local people to

[174] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 8 December 1982, 2-3
[175] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 2 March 1983, 5

increase their effective power. Of course, community control was only possible if community institutions could overcome a number of internal challenges.

Debates over community control tended to assume that local people were both willing and able to take part in running community institutions. This was not always the case. Although in the city generally there was considerable enthusiasm from local people to get involved in running community centres, adventure playgrounds and training centres, in certain contexts community organisers had to work particularly hard to facilitate community involvement. This was significant because community-run institutions did not simply cultivate local support for ideological reasons: they depended on it to survive. Although many community institutions employed paid staff, they relied on volunteers to perform essential tasks. Apathy was one of the most significant obstacles to running effective community institutions. Community control was irrelevant if local people did not want to control grassroots organisations. Volunteers were needed to prepare sites for adventure playgrounds, to staff advice centres, to help run play schemes, to marshal community festivals, to manage community centres, and to attend meetings with city council officers. The growth of community projects was in large part driven by the willingness of local people to give up their time and contribute their expertise or local knowledge. Since public and charitable grants were tied to capital costs or salaries, constant fundraising was required to meet basic running costs. Strong local support was a prerequisite for successful local fundraising campaigns. In 1975, the Seacroft Adventure Playground held several events to raise money for the playground, including a jumble sale, two galas, a medieval fair and a bingo session.[176] In an earlier year, the playground organised cake sales, a car raffle, brass band concerts and a Yorkshire pudding making competition.[177] Each of these initiatives had to be run by willing volunteers. Endless rounds of local fundraising could be wearisome, sapping the morale of even the most dedicated activists. It was a constant challenge.

Community institutions had to be seen as legitimate by the local community to survive. Local people had to understand the purpose of the organisation and feel some sense of ownership over it or they would not participate. Persistent negative feedback and complaints to local councillors could kill a community project. This was a particularly salient issue for the more visible or unusual initiatives, such as playgrounds, and those that attracted large numbers of people to a street, such as community centres. Adventure playgrounds were sometimes greeted with suspicion and hostility by neighbouring residents who were suspicious of their anarchic spirit and unorthodox design. The organisers of the

---

[176] A. J. Moyes, Memo to Leeds Civic Trust, 15 January 1976 [LCT]
[177] A.J., Moyes, Seacroft AP, 11 April 1972 [LCT]

Chapeltown adventure playground noted that '[w]e often have trouble with local people. They expect swings and a roundabout and are surprised by all the mess and noise.'[178] Adventure playgrounds organisers often erected fences to appease local residents and, crucially, they endeavoured 'to tell local people what it's all about,' to encourage a sense of common ownership.[179] Maintaining good public relations was a critical part of community activism. An analysis of particular local projects shows that the success of a community institution was closely related to the degree of public support. In the early years of the Seacroft Adventure Playground, when there was limited local involvement, children burned down the playleader's caravan and vandalised the toilet block.[180] After parental participation increased at the end of the 1960s, there were no further incidences of major vandalism.[181] Reflecting on the first decade of the playground's life in 1976, one organiser observed that 'Seacroft has been the grave of many similar projects but this one has "stuck".'[182] This, he argued, was a testament to the strength and continuity of community support.[183] Following the completion of major renovation work in April 1980, the playground managed to sustain its momentum for most of the 1980s.[184]

Activists struggled in particular to encourage people to participate in the management of the projects. While moments of crisis and confrontation, such as the Studley Grange episode, generated major public participation, there was less enthusiasm for more mundane activities involved in governing a community institution. There were perennial complaints about poor attendance at committee meetings and public meetings.[185] At the third AGM of the Chapeltown Adventure Playground the Secretary lamented that, while 100 children used the playground each week, 'it is given very little support from local people. We desperately need an interested committee who are willing to put enthusiasm and energy into the organisation of the playground.'[186] Not even the promise of ample resources could guarantee success if an institution lacked enthusiastic community support. The Meanwood Community Association, founded in 1976, was awarded £55,000 in Inner City Programme funding in 1979, but struggled to identify how to spend it.[187] A local organiser at the centre lamented that the '"apathy of local people is worrying…Local people should have a say in

[178] CCA Playspaces Group, Minutes, 15 March 1973, WYA: WYL2058
[179] *ibid*
[180] A.J., Moyes, 'Seacroft Adventure Playground,' 10 September 1971, 2 [LCT]
[181] A.J., Moyes, 'Leeds Civic Trust: Review of Activities Concerned with the Seacroft Adventure Playground,' 11 April 1972, 4 [LCT]
[182] A.J. Moyes to J. Hepper, 17 November 1976 [LCT]
[183] A.J. Moyes to J. Hepper, 30 January 1978 [LCT]
[184] *YEP*, 22 April 1980, 1, 8
[185] *CN,* No. 16, May 1974, 3
[186] *CN,* No. 34, May 1976, 3
[187] *YEP,* 24 April 1979, 7

how their community centre is improving…But now we are giving them an opportunity to say what they think, they just aren't interested."'[188]

In certain contexts, activists acknowledged that there were unsurmountable obstacles to deep participation. The activists running the Chapeltown Children's Centre noted that many of the parents whose children attended the Centre were unable to attend meetings and certainly could not join the management committee because they worked for long hours during the day or did shift work; most women had domestic responsibilities in the evening. The organisers noted that 'few Asian women are able to come [to meetings]' due to cultural expectations surrounding the role of women.[189] As a result, the Centre's workers were tasked with identifying the views of local people through 'outreach work' in the neighbourhood. This work would entail talking to people in their homes or on the streets to ensure their opinions were still heard even though they could not attend meetings. In other words, the Centre's organisers adapted the notion of community involvement to account for the reality of local people's lives. All types of participation were valued equally, from 'helping to run the occasional jumble sale' to 'becoming an active officer of the committee.'[190]

Campaigns for community control also assumed that there was a community who wished to take control of local institutions and services. Setting up a community institution implied that residents of a particular locality shared a collective identity and so would feel a sense of common ownership over a community institution. This was not always the case. Like many inner city neighbourhoods, Chapeltown was socially diverse in the 1970s. As a key reception area for migrants from south Asia, the Caribbean and Europe, it was home to a number of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The Chapeltown Community Association (CCA) was an avowedly multi-ethnic organisation and it believed that the Chapeltown Community Centre would act as a base for different community groups in the area.[191] However, throughout the 1970s community groups representing particular ethnic and religious groups had also submitted funding applications to the council to set-up their own community centres.[192] They rejected the claim that one centre could represent the different communities.[193] When the Chapeltown Community Centre finally opened in 1975, it did attract a variety of organisations, but the demand for separate community centres for

---

[188] *ibid*
[189] The Chapeltown Children's Centre, Chapeltown, Report No. 2, June 1982, 5
[190] CCP/NA, The Children's Community Centre, Chapeltown, 1978
[191] CCA, 'A Community Centre for Chapeltown,' 1972 u.d., WYA: WYL2058
[192] *CN,* No. 8, June 1973, 2
[193] *CN,* No. 2, November 1972, 1

different ethnic and religious groups did not disappear.[194] The local Islamic Society, for instance, did not identify with the Chapeltown Community Centre.[195] The trend in Chapeltown during the late 1970s and 1980s was for different ethnic and religious groups to establish their own community centres. In 1975, the council agreed to split a £68,000 Urban Aid grant for between four different Asian organisations who did not want to share the Asian Institute.[196] *Chapeltown News* criticised this development, cautioning that '[b]y fighting each other we are playing into the hands of those who seek to control us,' but the tide had already turned.[197] In 1979, the city council awarded funding for a West Indian Centre for Chapeltown; an Islamic Centre opened on Spencer Place in 1983 and in that year a Sikh Community and Sports Centre opened on Chapeltown Road.[198] The Jamaican Society applied for funds to open a community centre in 1986.[199] The Chapeltown Community Centre, which moved to a new site in the 1980s, never functioned as a central hub of the community in the way that activists had envisaged in the early 1970s.

Play campaigners in Chapeltown were also challenged on their claims to represent the whole community. This criticism stemmed from the ethnic cleavages in the neighbourhood. In 1975, the United Caribbean Association complained that whilst its appeals 'for money and land for a youth club had been repeatedly turned down,' the Chapeltown Adventure Playground had received £60,000 from public funds.[200] The UCA believed that black-run groups were being discriminated against. The group lobbied for a black playleader for the playground and was disappointed when the first playleader was white.[201] For activists who stressed the existence of different communities in Chapeltown, the notion of the adventure playground as a community facility was contentious. However, the UCA's protests belied the fact that the playground's management committee had several black representatives and the facility was well-used by black children. Its objections were as much a function of competition between different community groups rather than between different ethnic groups. In summer 1976, the playground employed a black playleader who lived in Chapeltown.[202]

---

[194] *CN,* No. 17, June 1974, 3
[195] *YEP,* 10 March 1975, 5
[196] *CN,* No. 28, August 1975, 5
[197] *ibid*
[198] *YEP,* 29 December 1979, 1; *YEP,* 15 March 1983, 14; *YEP*, 14; 7 September 1983, 4
[199] *YEP,* 18 November 1986, 5
[200] *CN*, No. 8, June 1975, 2
[201] *ibid*
[202] *CN,* No. 35, June 1976

Like Chapeltown, south Headingley and its environs were ethnically and socially diverse. The South Headingley Community Association's efforts to establish a purpose built community centre to serve a range of groups underlined the difficulty of uniting people behind such projects. The divisive issue was not race but locality. As a condition of their Inner City grant for the community centre, the SHCA was required to construct community workshops to help alleviate local unemployment.[203] A patch of land on the edge of the district was identified as a possible site for the workshops but a group of residents on an estate neighbouring the site objected, claiming that they would encroach on a local green space. These residents were not prepared to sacrifice this local amenity for the sake of community centre project because they did not identify with the south Headingley community. As one local resident pointed out, they fell under the orbit of a different community association.[204] These case studies reveal that the way the community was defined and delineated was contentious. This was not always related to ethnic divisions: it could just as easily be a product of geography. Community activists never solved this problem. It seemed to be an inherent difficulty of organising in a socially diverse environment. However, intra-community division was the exception rather than the rule since, as we explored above, activists usually struggled to stimulate local interest of any sort in community projects. Consequently there was generally little scope for internal division. Where a neighbourhood, like Chapeltown, was internally divided over community projects, this was in some respects an indication of the vibrancy of local community action. In socially diverse neighbourhoods, community activism was prevalent, but fragmented and potentially fractious. In the long term, ethnic, religious and geographical cleavages militated against the formation of a citywide community action movement. For activists to build a movement they had to feel a sense of shared identity and support a set of common aims. As community action in Chapeltown became increasingly fragmented on ethnic and religious lines, the development of a community action movement became less likely. Disputes between neighbouring community groups had a similar effect.

If local support was the first pillar of positive community action, external support was the second. In order to run community institutions, activists had to secure resources from public and non-state organisations. Activists did raise revenue in the community but local fundraising was never sufficient to meet the scale of their ambitions. Some community institutions levied modest user fees but because they served low-income areas these charges could never cover the full capital or running costs. As we have seen, the city council was a

---

[203] *LOP,* No. 337, 3 August 1984, 2-3
[204] *LOP,* No. 338, 10 August 1984, 9

major source of finance for community projects, despite its often frosty relationship with community activists. The Planning, Housing, Further Education, Education and Social Services Committees made contributions to various community-run institutions. Central government was also an important source of revenue. The city council channelled finance from various central government funding streams to community initiatives, a process that we shall explore in more detail below. The Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre secured finance from the Lord Chancellor's Department, which had in 1977 identified 'an ocean of unmet legal need.'[205] Community advice centres derived finance for workers' salaries from government programmes designed to boost employment by emphasising their commitment to hiring local people as workers. In 1978, the South Headingley Advice Centre employed a worker using Job Creation Scheme (JCS) funds.[206] Workers at the Chapeltown Children's Centre and the Hall Lane Community Centre were financed by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) another job creation programme financed by the government.[207] Hall Lane also employed temporary staff using funds from the Youth Opportunities Scheme (YOPS) which provided short term work placements for young people. Community activists appealed to non-state bodies for finance. Large national organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Gulbenkian Foundation were important benefactors of community organisations in Leeds. The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust awarded grants to the Hall Lane Community Centre, the Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, the Trade Union and Community Information and Resource Centre (TUCRIC) and the community activist Ron Weiner for an adult education class.[208]

The most successful community institutions wove together funding from a diverse range of sources. The growth of the Seacroft Adventure Playground illustrates this point. The playground was initially financed by the Leeds Junior Chamber of Commerce which grant aided the playground its first three years. The council then picked up its salary costs. The playground also obtained grants from Leeds trusts like the Wades Charity and specialised charities such as the National Playing Fields Association. The playground was supported by the North Seacroft Community Association, a local community group. The Leeds Civic Trust issued loans to the playground and an architect member of the Trust designed a building for the playground.[209] By the financial year 1975/76, 20 per cent of the Seacroft

---

[205] Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, Interim Report, 1979, 4; Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, 1980 Report, 1
[206] *Headline,* No. 8, December 1974, No. 15, April 1975 and No. 23, October 1978.
[207] CCP/NA, 'The Children's Community Centre: A Report,' 1978; Hall Lane, Community Centre, Report, 2
[208] *ibid*; Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre, Interim Report, 1979, 4; JRCT Minute Books, September 1978 2468.axi; JRCT Minute Books, March 1975, 2284.n
[209] A.J. Moyes, 'Recent Activities Connected With Seacroft Adventure Playground: April 1972,' 11 April 1972, 3 [LCT]

Adventure Playground's revenues came from charitable donations, 30 per cent from the local authority and the remainder from local fund-raising.[210] This underlines the point that effective community run institutions were founded on partnerships between the community, voluntary bodies and the state.[211]

In the long 1970s, this public and voluntary funding usually came with few strings attached which gave groups considerable freedom. However, community institutions rarely secured permanent funding. Grants from charitable foundations were usually awarded for a fixed term, usually for no more than years. This was intended as seed funding, to help an institution become established. The Joseph Rowntree Rowntree Charitable Trust grant aided TUCRIC for three years in the late 1970s, but the TUCRIC's application to the Trust for a further grant in the early 1980s was unsuccessful.[212] Government programmes were also unwilling to agree to open-ended funding commitments. Grants from the Urban Programme and MSC grants were limited to no more than three years. Unsurprisingly, then, funding crises were a regular occurrence for community institutions and the threat of closure was ever-present. In August 1976, only two years after opening, the Chapeltown Adventure Playground came close to folding after it exhausted its charitable grants and public donations.[213] The organisers of community institutions devoted much of their time pursuing funding opportunities, leaving them with less time for campaigning and developing services. For want of secure funding, even well-established community institutions existed in a perpetual state of instability and struggled to make long term plans. This problem became acute in the mid-1980s.

5. Citywide organising

By the mid-1970s community activists in Leeds had developed an infrastructure of service providing community organisations. Playgrounds, playgroups, community nurseries, community centres, advice centres, training schemes, play schemes and housing co-operatives were emerging across the inner city and on council estates. Despite this momentum and enthusiasm, community action lacked coherence at a citywide level. It had not matured into a citywide movement. There were few unifying institutions that could co-ordinate and support the work of community organisations. Citywide bodies like the Community Housing Working Party and district-wide alliances like the A660 Joint Council

---

[210] A. J. Moyes, Memo to Leeds Civic Trust, 15 January 1976 [LCT]
[211] A. J. Moyes to G. Mudie, 23 April 1985 [LCT]
[212] JRCT Minute Books, June 1983 [JRCT]
[213] *YEP,* 13 August 1976, 2

helped to glue local groups together, but they did not speak to community activists across the whole city. The mobilisation of community action had produced a diverse but fragmented range of community groups campaigning on different issues. Citywide activist networks were comparatively weak and confined to a small proportion of activists, usually middle class professionals and community workers. There had been little attempt to define the broad aims of community action in Leeds in a way that would unite the city's diverse range of community action groups. This section explores the ways in which community activists began to form citywide institutions in the late 1970s. The need to secure public funding was a key impetus for this.

One of the drivers of citywide organising was the opportunity to obtain grants from the government's Urban Programme. From the late 1960s, governments began targeting public resources at inner city areas. The term 'inner city' signified the ring of residential and industrial districts mainly dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which encircled the city centre, though became a geographically unspecific term for deprived urban areas. This represented a departure from the interwar and post-war decades, when governments had underwritten the centrifugal movement of people, housing, services and employment from central areas to the suburbs and new towns.[214] The urban turn in public policy was driven by the rediscovery of poverty in the 1960s, which was found to be disproportionately, if not exclusively, concentrated in inner city areas.[215] Another driver was the demise of the industrial base of inner city areas from the late 1960s which drove up unemployment rates and exacerbated social problems. The growth of the service sector and new manufacturing industries tended not to benefit the inner city.[216] There was a fear among policy makers that, if left unattended, the inner city would become a site of racial or class conflict, not least because immigrants from commonwealth countries had settled there.[217] British policy makers were keen to an acutely painful American-style experience of urban decline.[218] The Urban Programme, launched by the Wilson government in 1968, was a key plank of the government's approach to remedying inner city malaise. It allowed local authorities to bid for Urban Aid grants to support projects in inner city areas run by either public or voluntary bodies. The 'inner city' as defined by Leeds City Council incorporated

---

[214] Ravetz, *Re-making Cities,* 27-30
[215] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal*, 169-170; Ravetz, *Re-making Cities,* 105-7
[216] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 275; Ron Weiner, *The Economic Base of Leeds* (Leeds, 1977): 10-12
[217] 'Race trouble flares again in Leeds, *The Guardian,* 29 July 1969, 1; *CN,* No. 33, 9 June 1976: Special Bonfire Night Edition; *CN,* No. 35.June 1976, 10; *LOP,* No.180, 17 July 1981; *LOP,* No. 247, 29 October 1982, 4-5
[218] Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (1996)

the inner ring and several large peripheral council estates.[219] The Urban Programme quickly became a major benefactor of positive community action. Many of the initiatives we explored in this chapter were supported by Urban Aid between 1968 and 1977. In north-east Leeds alone, the Chapeltown Community Centre, *Chapeltown News* and Harehills Housing Aid received Urban Aid money.[220] This financial assistance notwithstanding, community activists were critical of the way the city council administered Urban Aid. They alleged that the authority did not consult community groups about its Urban Aid bids and tended to favour its own departments over community groups.[221] This was a common complaint. In Nottingham, community activists took the city council to the Local Government Ombudsman when it refused to support an Urban Aid bid accusing the authority of being biased against community projects.[222]

In 1977, in response to the acceleration of urban decay and the continued deterioration of the inner city's economic base, the government re-launched the Urban Programme and quadrupled its budget. Leeds became eligible for £2 million of inner city grants per year. The expanded Urban Programme was intended to focus on the structural economic causes of inner city decline and the government placed a clear emphasis on 'the active participation of the people who live, work and invest in the inner areas,' both in preparing plans and implementing schemes.[223] This objective spoke to the criticism of Urban Aid voiced by community activists. As we saw in Chapter 2, governments had made recourse to a discourse of participation in response to the community action mobilisation since the late 1960s, but earlier attempts to promote participation had given way to disappointment. The new Urban Programme seemed to offer community groups the opportunity not only to access a higher proportion of inner city funding but to become active partners in the process of urban renewal. This raised expectations among activists.

In its first years, however, there was a considerable gap between the goals of the Urban Programme and the administrative reality. In 1978 the city council set up a working party composed solely of officers to prepare its submission to government. The Inner City Working Party spoke to the Leeds Council for Community Relations (LCCR) and Leeds Council for Voluntary Service (LCVS) but these discussions had little impact on the

---

[219] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal,* 276
[220] *Chapeltown News,* No. 35.June 1976, 10
[221] TUCRIC, *Bulletin,* No. 2, May/June 1978, 6; *LOP,* No. 23, December 1975, 9
[222] *CA,* No. 19 April-May 1975, 25-6
[223] Gibson and Langstaff, *Urban Renewal*, 199

eventual submission.[224] There was no direct consultation with community groups. For community activists, this approach fell far short of the participatory spirit of the Programme. The *Leeds Other Paper* reported that the value of a bid from the Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre had been reduced because Peter Sparling, the Conservative chair of the Policy and Finance Committee, disagreed with the Centre's stance on council policy.[225] Even the normally cautious LCVS, accused the council of preparing its plans in secret and of failing to explain the process.[226] The Liberals and even the Labour Party condemned the poor lines of communication between Conservative-run council and civil society.[227] Sparling defended the arrangement, arguing that the direct involvement of community groups in policy making would be too complex and bureaucratic.[228] He maintained that there was no impartial way of deciding which community groups should join the council working party, of the hundreds that might want a place, so it was fairer to consult indirectly.

In summer 1978 the council revealed that it had decided to concentrate the resources of the Urban Programme on the Meanwood Valley and Sheepscar areas to stimulate industrial development on vacant land.[229] Grants to projects in these areas dwarfed grants to any single voluntary or community group project. Overall, council-led schemes absorbed 85 per cent the city's bid.[230] The Leeds Community Workers' Group argued that the council had unfairly excluded parts of the city that were equally deserving of public funds.[231] If one area was to be prioritised, activists argued, this should be identified in consultation with community groups. This debate spoke to a deeper tension between two different approaches to renewing the inner city. The Conservative-run council contended that it had to consider the relative contribution of the private sector, the council and voluntary organisations when setting priorities.[232] This had led to a bid which privileged private industry and physical infrastructure such as new roads. This foreshadowed the direction of government policy in the 1980s, as we shall see below. For community activists, the residents of the inner city were key to its revival. As we saw in Chapter 2, activists promoted a community-led approach to renewal in housing. The LCVS maintained that the 'best value for money will be obtained by supporting voluntary initiatives from people in the areas concerned' so

---

[224] Leeds City Council, Leeds Inner City Action, First Urban Programme Report, September 1978, 77-78
[225] *LOP,* No. 78, 14-28 April 1978, 10-11
[226] *LOP,* No. 80, 12-26 May 1978, 3
[227] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 26 April 1978, 482-3; LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 11 October 1978, 58-60
[228] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 26 April 1978, 482-3; LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 11 October 1978
[229] LCC, Leeds Inner City Action, First Urban Programme Report, September 1978, 62-63
[230] *LOP,* No. 90, 12-27 October 1978, 4
[231] *LOP,* No. 85, 21 July-4 August 1978, 8
[232] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 11 October 1978

investment 'must be in people rather than bricks and tarmac.'[233] They held that it was inappropriate to use public funds to subsidise private industry.[234] Community activists argued that the state was one of the chief instigators of the urban crisis, citing slum clearance, industrialised building and motorway construction.[235] These policies been carried out with little consultation with local people. The historic failure of public policy undermined the state's claim to understand inner city problems and validated the argument that alternatives were needed. Summarising this perspective, a *Leeds Other Paper* editorial on the Urban Programme argued that local people should be given the power 'to decide how and where the money is spent. They know their needs far better than anyone else.'[236]

If the first year of the programme was not an unmitigated disaster for community institutions – groups like the Chapeltown Adventure Playground and the Chapeltown Community Centre received substantial grants – community activists felt that its potential was unrealised.[237] Consequently, in March 1979, community activists across the city formed the Inner City Forum to represent the interests of community and voluntary organisations who wished to bid for Urban Programme grants.[238] The Forum hoped that by presenting their funding applications with 'one voice' community groups would exert greater influence over the Programme and increase the proportion of funds allocated to them.[239] While the Leeds Community Workers' Group initially questioned whether the Forum would represent the whole community, these concerned proved unfounded.[240] The Inner City Forum held public meetings across the inner city area, enabling local groups to contribute their views and discuss funding priorities.[241] The Inner City Forum became an important citywide institution for community activists. Working together towards a shared objective accentuated the extent to which community activists across the city felt a sense of share identity. Local meetings of the Inner City Forum functioned as a focal point for community action in particular districts of Leeds.[242] In response to the challenge of a well-organised coalition of community activists, the city council adapted its approach to community consultation for the Second Inner City Programme in 1979. This included 'regular liaison'

---

[233] *YEP*, 27 August 1980, 7
[234] *LOP,* No. 83, 23 June-7 July 1978, 2
[235] *LOP,* No. 85, 21 July-4 August 1978, 8
[236] *LOP,* No. 85, 21 July-4 August 1978, 8
[237] LCC, Leeds Inner City Action, First Urban Programme Report, September 1978
[238] *YEP*, 5 March 1979, 5
[239] *ibid*
[240] *LOP,* No. 99, 2-16 March 1979, 10-11
[241] *YEP*, 27 August 1980, 7
[242] Hall Lane Community Centre Report, 1979, 12

with the LCVS and LCCR.[243] The council's submission devoted a higher proportion of funding to community groups and incorporated several organisations that had previously been excluded. The Harehills Housing Aid Centre, whose workers had forcefully criticised council policy on several occasions, received £15,000 per year for three years to pay staff salaries.[244] Community groups in Armley, Holbeck, Meanwood, Chapeltown, Harehills and Hunslet were allocated funding. By organising collectively and thinking strategically, community activists had increased their leverage over the council.

This shift was confirmed and extended when Labour took control of the city council in May 1980. As we saw in Chapter 1 and 2, a new generation of city councillors developed close working relationships with community activists; some of these councillors were former community activists. Community groups were integrated more closely into the decision-making process. Beginning with the third Urban Programme, recommendations from the Inner City Forum were fed directly into the council's submissions to government. The council held public meetings on Programme bids and advertised funding opportunities in local media. The bias towards economic and industrial projects of the early years diminished, though such projects were certainly not excluded. In the city's third Urban Programme submission, bids from community and voluntary groups collected almost half the total funding, a significant increase on previous years.[245] Funds were awarded to previously spurned community institutions, such as the Chapeltown Children's Centre, which directly competed with council services.[246] In announcing the council's fifth inner city programme in 1982, Michael Simmonds, the Chair of the Inner City Sub-Committee applauded the 'determination and enthusiasm of the community groups' and declared that the council wished 'to provide every assistance to these voluntary groups' and 'to combine the efforts of the community with the work of the Council.'[247] Although some community activists continued to highlight the gap between the council rhetoric and practice, this downplayed the fact that community activists had increased their leverage over the council through more effective joint organising. In the city's Third Urban Programme submission, bids from non-statutory agencies collected almost half the total funding, a significant increase on just two years previously.[248]

[243] Leeds City Council, 'Leeds Inner City Action: Second Urban Programme Report,' (1979) 1, 45-46
[244] LCC, 'Leeds Inner City Action: Second Urban Programme Report' (1979)
[245] *LOP*, No. 135, 25 July-8 August, 1980 11
[246] The Chapeltown Children's Centre, Chapeltown, Chapeltown Children's Community Centre, June 1982, 4
[247] *LCC*, 'Leeds Inner City Action: Fifth Urban Programme Report,' 1982
[248] *LOP*, No. 135, 25 July-8 August, 1980 11.

From the late 1970s, then, national urban policy created opportunities for positive community action. However, funding from the Urban Programme did not automatically flow to community institutions. To access this finance, community activists organised at citywide level to increase their bargaining power. They presented themselves as key agents in the urban renewal project. In doing so, they challenged both the statist and market-based approach to urban renewal. The council was influenced by this campaign and began to treat community groups as partners. Using resources from the Urban Programme activists were able to develop the infrastructure of community-run services and institutions.

The Leeds Inner City Forum was one manifestation of a growing tendency for community activists to organise at a citywide level. Like Leeds, in Birmingham, community activists, assisted by the local Council for Voluntary Service, formed the Inner City Campaign to promote public participation in that city's Urban Programme.[249] The Leeds Council for Voluntary Service (LCVS), which in the 1960s had largely eschewed community groups engaged in political issues began to support community action groups in the 1970s. Groups like the Hall Lane Community Centre, the Chapeltown Neighbourhood Group and the Saxton Gardens Tenants Association had joined the LCVS by 1980.[250] With its secretariat, newssheet, library and mailing list, the LCVS became a focal point for many community action groups in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[251] The need to make connections, within and between cities, was an increasingly prominent theme in activist literature as community action began to mature in the late 1970s.[252] Seasoned community activists who had participated in the Community Development Projects contended that only joint organising would allow activists to tackle the structural causes of the problems they encountered in their neighbourhoods.[253] In Leeds, activists sought to create new community-run institutions that supported grassroots organisations over a wide area. The Trade Union and Community Resource Centre (TUCRIC), which operated in central Leeds between 1978 and 1987 was both emblematic and constitutive of this trend in the city. The origins of TUCRIC lay in an adult education class in political economy organised by Ron Weiner at the Extra-Mural Department of Leeds University between 1975 and 1977. Weiner was an organiser in the NALGO union and a community activist in north Leeds, where he had campaigned against speculative office development.[254] The Leeds Political Economy Class brought together

---

[249] *CA*, No. 35, Jan-Feb 1978, 'News'

[250] Leeds Council for Voluntary Service, Annual Report, 1980, WYA: WYL507

[251] *ibid*

[252] Jim Radford, 'The Community Movement,' in Peter Hain, ed., *Community Politics* (1976): 65-76

[253] Community Development Project Inter-Project Editorial Team, *Gilding the Ghetto: the State and the Poverty Experiments* (London, 1977): 63-64

[254] *CA,* No. 23, Dec-Jan 1975/76, No. 8-9

activists and professionals from different backgrounds, including 'local government officers, community workers, and lecturers' to consider the roots of the problems facing the city.[255] The class published three reports on economic and social change in Leeds.[256] The reports concluded that the causes of issues like poor housing, unemployment, inadequate childcare, environmental degradation and deteriorating public transport were closely connected. They argued that there was an urgent need for joint organising to bridge the political silos of the labour movement, feminism and community action to confront shared problems.[257]

The Leeds Political Economy Class was not alone in reaching these conclusions. The Community Development Projects, funded by central government to explore the causes of urban decline, had made similar arguments in a series of reports in the mid-1970s.[258] Across urban Britain, community activists were beginning to consider the structural causes of local problems and seeking to build alliances with trade unionists and women's groups, as we saw in Chapter 2 and 3. In 1977, *Community Action* concluded a review of the achievements of community action since 1972 by arguing that linking up different struggles across existing organisational boundaries would be critical in the years ahead.[259] In several large cities, activists had founded institutions to conduct research and co-ordinate campaigning. The Newcastle Trade Union Studies Information Unit and the Coventry Workshop were two pioneering examples.[260] In Leeds, neighbourhood community advice centres were fulfilling a similar function at a local level, but the city lacked a citywide centre for activism, advice and research.

Informed by these models and the conclusions of the Political Economy Class, Weiner worked with Kevin Ward, an academic, and Ursula Huws, a women's activist, to fill this gap in the activist infrastructure of Leeds. TUCRIC opened in 1978 in offices near the University before relocating to the Kirkgate Market. TUCRIC acted as an intelligence service and clearing house for activists across Leeds. It helped to co-ordinate citywide campaigns and actively facilitated links between groups. Like many community-run institutions, TUCRIC provided these services by employing workers. To pay the salaries of

---

[255] Barbara Craig Letter, 14 January 1976, BHC
[256] Ron Wiener, 'The Engineering Industry in Leeds,' May 1976; Ron Wiener, *The Economic Base of Leeds* (Leeds, 1977); Ron Wiener, *The Need to Change the Way We Live: The Social Base of Leeds* (Leeds, 1977)
[257] TUCRIC, 'A Two Part Application to the Community Projects Foundation for Funds for Leeds Trade Union and Community Resource and Information Centre (TUCRIC)', 1977, WYA: WYL:1468
[258] CDP Reports
[259] *CA*, No. 30 March-April 1977, 13-16
[260] TUCRIC, *Bulletin*, February 1978, 1

the centre's six members of staff, the organisers obtained finance from national trusts and public bodies: the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Manpower Services Commission and the Community Projects Foundation.[261] When these grants expired, TUCRIC acquired funding from the West Yorkshire County Council and Leeds City Council.[262] The Centre was supported by community groups, women's groups and trade unions branches in the city that paid a membership subscription.[263]

TUCRIC developed a comprehensive library of resources on subjects of interest to activists, such as local government, employment, housing and public health, many of which were not available outside specialist institutions.[264] Workers at the centre offered an information service to activists, conducting research on subjects to support campaigns. The information service was extremely well-used and handled 1100 enquiries in its first year, reaching its ten thousandth enquiry in January 1985.[265] Many of the community groups we have explored in this thesis utilised the service. In April 1978, TUCRIC supplied Harehills Housing Aid with information on housing associations in Leeds to inform its research on the North British Housing Association which was operating in north east Leeds.[266] In September 1978, workers from the Hall Lane Community Centre consulted council housing committee minutes and reports at TUCRIC.[267] TUCRIC workers also undertook long-term research projects for particular campaigns. Between 1979 and 1980, TUCRIC joined the Leeds Federated Housing Association to undertake housing condition surveys in older residential areas.[268] The survey data was a useful tool for community action groups when negotiating with the council for improvement grants. As we saw in Chapter 3, TUCRIC provided research assistance to the Public Transport Campaign in the late 1970s, furnishing the group with data on local government finance, transport economics and national legislation.[269] TUCRIC wrote and published reports on the economy, planning and housing, which

---

[261] TUCRIC, Progress Report for the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, November 1980 [JRCT]; TUCRIC Publicity Leaflet, u.d., WYA: WYL1468
[262] TUCRIC, Annual Report, 1982/3, WYA: WYL1468
[263] TUCRIC, 'Application to Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for Funds to Support the Work of Leeds TUCRIC,' 21 January 1980, WYA: WYL:1468
[264] John Battle, Letter of Recommendation for TUCRIC, 1983, WYA: WYL1468
[265] Keith Mollison/David Jenkins, TUCRIC Progress Report for the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, November 1979 [JRCT]; Press Cutting, *Yorkshire Evening Post,* 25 January 1985, WYA: WYL1468
[266] TUCRIC, Day Book No. 1, April 1978–July 1979, WYA: WYL1468
[267] *ibid*
[268] *ibid*
[269] Leeds TUCRIC Funding Application JRCT August 1978 [JRCT]; TUCRIC, *Bulletin,* No. 2, May/June 1978, 2

became valuable resources for activists. [270] TUCRIC workers published a bi-monthly newsletter, *Bulletin,* to communicate these findings to a wider audience.

In addition to meeting the research needs of activists, TUCRIC helped to reinforce activist networks. The Centre sponsored several conferences on damp and housing action between 1979 and 1981. Following one of these meetings, the Leeds Housing Action Group was formed, an umbrella group for tenant activists across the city. TUCRIC also helped to build citywide coalitions on issues like childcare and road safety.[271] TUCRIC workers helped to establish the Inner City Forum, the work of which we explored above. The Centre seconded a worker to the Forum to help community groups prepare Urban Programme funding applications. TUCRIC was a key sponsor of anti-cuts activism in the city, organising a conference on the cuts in April 1980.[272] TUCRIC had some success in building links between community activists and trade unionists. Until the late 1970s, contact between community activists and trade unionists had been negligible. TUCRIC aided the Public Transport Group, an alliance of bus users and bus workers formed in 1977 to oppose fare rises, which was a model for joint organising in the city.[273] In 1979, TUCRIC helped to establish the West Yorkshire Housing Action Group (WHAG), an umbrella group 'made up of representatives of tenants associations, advice centre workers, community workers and members of the public works shop stewards committee' to act 'as a contact point for people seeking information or assistance on housing repairs, improvement [and] damp.'[274] The rationale behind WYHAG was that council tenants and local authority workers would be able to campaign more effectively to maintain standards in the housing service if workers and tenants understood each other's perspective and needs. Another innovative example of joint organising promoted by TUCRIC was an alliance between community activists campaigning against the number of juggernauts on roads in east Leeds and workers in the road haulage industry concerned with deteriorating working conditions.[275] Looking beyond

---

[270] Leeds Trades Council, *Which way home? A report on housing in Leeds by Leeds Trades Council* (Leeds, 1978); TUCRIC, 'A Critical Guide to the West Yorkshire Structure Plan,' Autumn 1978; TUCRIC, 'Leeds Leads – From Behind,' 3 April 1980; TUCRIC, 'Industry and Employment in Leeds 1981' (1981). See also: *LOP,* No. 178, 3 July 1981, 6-7.

[271] Keith Mollison/David Jenkins, TUCRIC Progress Report for the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, November 1979 [JRCT]; TUCRIC, Report on Partnership between Leeds TUCRIC and CPF, 21 January 1980, WYA: WYL:1468

[272] *LOP,* No. 128, 18 April-2 May 1980

[273] Kevin Ward, 'Leeds public transport,' in Gary Craig, Marjorie Mayo and Nick Sharman, ed, *Jobs and Community Action* (London, 1979): 177-78; TUCRIC, Progress Reports: 1978-80, 3 April 1980, 5 [JRCT]; TUCRIC, Day Book 1, April 1978 to July 1979, WYA: WYL1468; TUCRIC, 'A Critical Guide to the West Yorkshire Structure Plan,' Autumn 1978 [JRCT]; West Yorkshire Public Transport Group, 'The Bus Fight Goes On,' February 1978 [LCT]

[274] Keith Mollison/David Jenkins, TUCRIC Progress Report for the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, November 1979, JRCT

[275] Report on Partnership between Leeds TUCRIC and CPF, 21 January 1980, WYA: WYL1468

Leeds, TUCRIC helped to connect the city's community activists to national networks. By the early 1980s, there were dozens of resource centre like TUCRIC across urban Britain.[276] In 1980 , TUCRIC joined the Network of Labour and Community Resource and Information Centres, the 'national federation of research and resource centres.'[277] Members of the Network held conferences across the country and organised national events for community groups. In summer 1982, the Network met at Beechwood College in Leeds to discuss workers' and users' plans in industry and public services.[278]

Just as neighbourhood advice centres, playgrounds and community centred helped to fill a gap in local provision, TUCRIC had met the need for a citywide research and intelligence service and a central hub for activists. Whereas neighbourhood institutions served people directly, TUCRIC chiefly served activists and not just community activists, but also trade unionists and feminists. It helped activists to broaden their horizons beyond the confines of their organisation or campaign and beyond the city boundaries. In doing so, it responded to calls by community activists across the country that citywide and regional networking would help community action to develop into a fully-fledged movement. The development of TUCRIC occurred during the high noon of positive community action in the late 1970s when community institutions were able to access funding from a range of public and private sources and as they developed closer relationships with local authorities.

6. Crisis and decline

The ascendency of community controlled institutions proved to be short-lived. The two key pillars of positive community action – partnerships with external bodies and local support – began to crumble in the 1980s. Public spending cuts undermined a major source of finance for positive community action and public finance became progressively harder to obtain as government programmes were steered towards different objectives. Over the 1980s, the Thatcher governments not only reduced the value of Leeds City Council's Inner City Programme allocation in real terms, they also challenged the 'social bias' of the city's submissions.[279] This remark was a thinly veiled reference to those community schemes that were not directly linked to economic and industrial development. For the Thatcher

---

[276] Nick Bailey and Marilyn Taylor, 'Resource centres and participation,' Leo Smith and David Jones, ed, *Deprivation, Participation and Community Action* (London, 1981): 153-167
[277] TUCRIC, *Bulletin*, No. 26, Autumn 1982, 12. See also: Network of Labour, Community Research and Resource Centres, 'Pooling our resources,' in Gary Craig, Nick Derricourt and Martin Loney*, ed., Community Work and the State: Towards a Radical Practice* (London, 1982): 115-127
[278] TUCRIC*, Bulletin*, No. 25, Summer 1982, 2
[279] *LOP,* No. 158, 13 Feb 1981, 1, 3

government, the function of Urban Programme was to restore private sector confidence in the inner city and reignite private enterprise by underwriting the risk of investing in the inner city. This heightened the tension between the community action approach to urban renewal, centred on local organisations, and the market-led approach to regeneration, focused on private capital. In 1980, the government rejected five voluntary sector schemes from Leeds, including two community worker positions, community architecture services and a play scheme.[280] In February 1983, the Secretary of State turned down Leeds City Council's entire Urban Programme submission, before later accepting an amended submission with its value cut by a third.[281]

Though the Urban Programme remained a key source of community group finance throughout the 1980s, community groups faced greater competition from private sector-led bids. By the late 1960s, the Urban Programme was being used to support city centre private property development.[282] As the decade wore on, community groups consulted less thoroughly on the content of the city's Urban Programme. In 1986 the Leeds Council for Voluntary Service reported that it had not been consulted on the Urban Programme in the past year.[283] The LCVS looked back longingly to the 'good old days' of the late 1970s when the government spoke in favour of public participation, noting that the network of consultative committees on housing, education and social services that had existed at that time had been abolished.[284] Other central government programmes, such as the Manpower Services Commission, which had once furnished community groups with finance were phased out or directed towards other goals.

Local councils were no longer in a position to compensate for the contraction of central government support. In the context of cuts to the rate support grant, rate capping and restrictions on its ability to borrow, Leeds City Council was unable to maintain the plethora of community institutions that had emerged during the long 1970s. The gap between the demand for funding and the council's ability to finance grassroots initiatives grew over the 1980s. In the ten months between June 1982 and March 1983 alone there were seven deputations to the council from community groups on this subject.[285] One of these organisations was the Hall Lane Community Centre, which struggled through a series of

---

[280] *LOP,* No. 124, 22 Feb-7 March 1980, 16
[281] *LOP,* No. 271, 22 April 1983, 3
[282] Leeds City Council, *Leeds Urban Programme 1979-89: A Decade of Action for the Inner City* (1989)
[283] Leeds Council for Voluntary Service, Annual Report, 'General Secretary's Report,' 1986, 4, WYA: WYL507
[284] *ibid*
[285] LCC, *Verbatim Reports,* 30 June 1982, 6-7

funding crises between 1980 and 1982 after its charitable grants expired and various council committees turned down its requests for support.[286] In an appeal to the council for funding, the Centre complained that it was 'forced to exist on a hand-to-mouth basis with no security for the work that we do or the workers we employ.'[287] The Centre survived this crisis when it obtained funding from a number of agencies. Nevertheless, its 1985 annual report noted that the year had been one of 'great uncertainty' and the coming period was unlikely to be 'a kind one.'[288] Many community projects were even less fortunate than Hall Lane Community Centre. Lack of external funding nipped many projects in the bud in the 1980s. In the early 1980s, two well-organised campaigns for adventure playground funding in south and west Leeds failed to secure local funding and, as a result, the groups behind them folded.[289]

TUCRIC was another victim of these shifts in the political landscape. In 1986, the abolition of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council precipitated a funding crisis at the Centre. TUCRIC's affiliates were unable to contribute additional support and appeals to charitable trusts were unsuccessful as they focused their support on new initiatives rather they mature organisations.[290] Leeds City Council offered to fund TUCRIC's staffing costs for one year but only if the Centre accepted various conditions, including allowing council representatives to sit on TUCTIC's management committee.[291] The Centre's management committee felt this would compromise the Centre's independence and judged it unlikely that TUCRIC would find an alternative source of finance in twelve months.[292] In June 1987 they reluctantly decided to close the Centre.[293] TUCRIC's relationship with the city council had soured somewhat in its final years, after the Centre antagonised the Labour leader and the local Conservative Party.[294] However, TUCRIC's demise was principally the result of the same budget cuts that had decimated community institutions across the city during the 1980s. After the abolition of the metropolitan county councils in 1986, the new unitary district authorities did not receive the full county budget for their area, so they were unable to honour all of the county council's funding commitments. Alongside TUCRIC, several

---

[286] *YEP,* 20 May 1981, 7; *YEP,* 18 November 1980, 5
[287] LCC, *Verbatim Reports*, 24 September 1982, 2-3
[288] Hall Lane Community Centre, Annual Report, 1984/85, 21
[289] *LOP,* No. 142, 17 October 1980, 1, 5; *LOP,* No. 166, 10 April 1981, 13; *LOP,* No. 324, 4 May 1984, 3; *LOP,* No. 324, 4 May 1984, 3
[290] A. Howarth to G. Mudie 31 March 1987, WYA: WYL1468
[291] J. Rawnsley to TUCRIC 7 January 1987, WYA: WYL1468
[292] A. Howarth to G. Mudie 6 July 1987, WYA: WYL1468
[293] TUCRIC to Affiliated Organisations, 3 June 1987, WYA: WYL1468
[294] *LOP*, No. 484, 19 June 1987, 6-7; TUCRIC Press Cutting: *YEP,* 19 March 1985, WYA: WYL1468

other voluntary and community organisations that had been supported by the county council were forced to close.[295]

The council's liberal approach to grant aid was another casualty of the austere financial climate. In the 1970s, the recipients of council funding were afforded considerable freedom. Over the 1980s, the beneficiaries of grant aid were subjected to more thorough oversight as councils sought to extract maximum value from their more limited resources. Local authorities created ever more sophisticated accountability mechanisms and monitoring systems. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, voluntary sector policy evolved into a commissioning system in which voluntary groups were invited to bid for contracts to provide public services; the successful bidders would then be legally obliged fulfil the terms of the contract.[296] The city council's final funding offer to TUCRIC in 1987 was reflective of this trend: the council intended to monitor TUCRIC to ensure money was spent 'to the satisfaction of the council.'[297] In this new political and regulatory landscape, it became almost impossible to operate a fiercely independent community institution, with links to politically sensitive campaigns, using public funding. The new 'contract culture' favoured larger, more professional voluntary organisations at the expense of community groups.[298] The demise of TUCRIC and other community institutions that had relied on public funding underlined a key dilemma for positive community action: community activists endeavoured to operate independently of the state, but without public resources they could not meet their basic running costs. They had no independent source of finance, like the trade union levy, to keep themselves afloat during the austere 1980s.

The willing participation of local residents was the second key pillar of positive community action. Community institutions haemorrhaged local support over the 1980s. The challenging economic climate in the inner city in the 1980s, characterised by high rates of unemployment, decaying public services and societal dislocation, was not conducive to volunteering. This occurred at a time when it was increasingly difficult to finance the wages of staff to operate community-run services. In spring 1984, the South Headingley Community Association's advice centre closed for the final time due to a lack of local support: the organisers were unable to find ten volunteers to fill the rota.[299] The Seacroft

---

[295] *LOP*, No. 484, 19 June 1987, 6-7
[296] Voluntary Action – Leeds, Annual Report, 1989, 'Introduction', 1 and 'General Secretary's Report,' 4, WYA: WYL507
[297] J. Rawnsley to TUCRIC 7 January 1987, WYA: WYL1468
[298] *ibid*
[299] *Headline,* No. 28, Spring 1984, 3

Adventure Playground was another victim of this decline. In the late 1980s community local support began to fade and by 1989 'the people who ran the playground association [had] either moved away or lost interest and nobody new came forward to run it.'[300] By autumn 1989, the site was 'deserted, overgrown and rat-infested,' leading to complaints by neighbouring residents.[301] The council attempted 'to recall the local voluntary management committee for meaningful discussion' but without success. When the council decided to dismantle the playground in October 1989, there was no resistance from local people. Apathy killed the project. Two years later, the Chapeltown Adventure Playground found itself hamstrung by a dearth of local support. A 1991 report suggested that the community had come to take the playground for granted, relying on the play workers to keep it running.[302] The playground was struggling to raise funds locally and it, too, folded a few years later.

It is not always possible to date the demise of community institutions as this was not usually reported in the local press. Since closure often happened with limited forewarning, community group records often simply stop with no explanation for what had occurred. Most of the community institutions we have discussed gradually faded from the historical record over the 1980s and few survived into the 1990s. Positive community action had thrived during the long 1970s by building alliances between local people, professionals, the state and voluntary bodies. A decade later these partnerships had disintegrated as the political and economic conditions that had sustained them were eroded.

***

This chapter has shown that positive efforts to build community institutions were a central feature of community action. Community activists did not simply campaign against public policy and the state. They pro-actively built the sorts of services and amenities they wanted to see in the city. The rise of positive community action mirrored the growth of the more reactionary community action campaigns, beginning quietly in the late 1960s and reaching a crescendo in the mid to late 1970s. These community institutions responded to range of urgent social and economic needs in the inner city and other deprived parts of the city. These problems were the result of long-term spatial, economic and political developments. The community centre responded to the lack of space for community activities. The community advice centre was a reaction to the demand for information and guidance.

---

[300] *YEP,* 13 October 1989, 15
[301] *ibid*
[302] Chapeltown Adventure Playground, Annual Report 1990/1

Community play facilities met children's need for play space. The community nursery answered parents' need for accessible childcare. These institutions privileged control by local residents and service users. Where it was not possible to build new institutions, community activists sought to democratise existing ones. The experience of establishing institutions informed campaigns, just as institutions were influenced by earlier more defensive campaigns.

Professionals –lawyers, community workers, housing experts – played a key role in community institutions. Their expertise was leveraged to solve complex problems and to run services on a full time-basis. The community institutions that enjoyed the most success did so because they forged a productive partnership with the state and other voluntary organisations. Public and private bodies were a source of finance and guidance. Maintaining community control within this relationship was challenging and community activists always had to compromise on the lofty goal of community autonomy. Community activists seized opportunities presented by national urban policy to access large amounts of funding. In order to exert greater influence on public bodies, community activists began to organise at a citywide level in the late 1970s. This helped them to channel more resources to community projects. As the political and economic climate presented new challenges they also began to form connections with other political movements, especially the labour and women's movements. This joint organising assumed an institutional form in TUCRIC, which provided an intelligence service to a variety of campaigns and helped to strengthen links between activists in Leeds and beyond. Despite these achievements, the drive to build a community action movement was ultimately unsuccessful. Citywide institutions like TUCRIC and the Inner City Forum proved too weak to counter the centrifugal tendency in community action. While middle-class professionals were an asset to community action groups, few middle-class activists reached out across the class barriers in the city to work with activists in working-class areas. Alliances between community groups in working-class and middle-class areas were weak. The growth of community organising on ethnic and religious lines in inner city areas like Chapeltown also inhibited the development of a unified community action movement.

As the 1980s progressed, the external political climate became more hostile to community activists. Reflecting on this in 1982 the founders of the Advice Centre for the Town in nearby Batley maintained that community action worked better in the 1970s due to the availability of public money so councils 'could afford to give here and there' but 'as the

cuts began to bite and authorities hardened, community action became less easy.'[303] Most of the community institutions that had been founded in the community action boom of the long 1970s had closed permanently by the end of the 1980s. Neither the state nor voluntary bodies were able to fund community institutions on a truly long-term basis. The internal resources of low-income, inner-city neighbourhoods were rarely sufficient to support community-run services, but since they were not statutory services, community institutions had no automatic right to tax revenue. Full absorption into the public sector would undermine their ability to provide an independent, community-led service. In his study of the Notting Hill Housing Trust, Holmes showed that as grassroots organisations evolved into more formal service-providing organisations, they had to balance their campaigning goals against the need to secure public grants.[304] This was a dilemma that community activists never entirely resolved.

---

[303] *LOP,* No. 218, 9 April 1982, 11
[304] Holmes, *The Other Notting Hill*

Conclusion

I. Towards a history of community action

In 1972, in discussions with editors of *Community Action,* the sociologist Peter Marris described community action as a 'new [kind] of political action' distinguished by 'the attempt to find ways of mobilising people outside the traditional political processes, so that they now demand a voice in decisions, which affect them.'[1] This thesis has shown that contemporaries had good reason to be so excited by community action and it has shown why it deserves historians' attention. Since this thesis is the first systematic study of community action, its first goal was to describe community action. Community action was a new form of political activism that emerged in Leeds in the mid- to late 1960s. It was a place-based form of activism in which people organised at the neighbourhood level to campaign on issues that impacted on their everyday lives. Community activists were particularly concerned with the built environment, housing, transport, local public services and neighbourhood amenities. Community activists formed grassroots organisations – referred to variously as tenants' associations, community associations and action groups – to spearhead their campaigns. Community action could be negative, designed to block contentious proposals, but it was often simultaneously positive, seeking to building community-run institutions and provide services. A core goal of community action was to enable people to exert more influence over the policies and economic processes that impacted on their everyday lives.

A diverse range of individuals participated in community action in Leeds. It straddled class, gender, ethnic, tenurial, educational and generational boundaries. Private renters, council tenants and owner occupiers alike participated in community action. Women played a central role in many community action groups, often undertaking the bulk of the organising work, though they were less likely to speak publicly for the groups. In several inner city areas, community action groups were multi-cultural organisations with black and Asian members. Community action united together young adults born after the Second World War who came of age in the 1960s and middle-aged and elderly people who remembered the inter-war era. Many community activists had prior experience of other forms of political or social activism, from the trade union movement to consumer organisations, but many had not previously participated in politics. Among this social diversity, an underlying theme was

---

[1] *Community Action,* No. 3, July-August 1972, 38

an individual commitment to the future of the inner city. This could be a professional or intellectual commitment to the integrity of inner-city neighbourhoods, a personal attachment to a certain urban lifestyle, or a material interest in the survival of the older housing stock. The core alliance in community action was between working-class residents and middle-class professionals. The former provided local knowledge and a local mandate while the latter furnished action groups with expertise and social contacts.

Community action groups were fluid with close links to other organisations with which they shared members and ideas. In Leeds, community action was supported by the civic conservation movement, radical planners, community workers, trade unionists, public transport campaigners, Anglican clerics, and environmentalists. These groups and individuals had a shared interest in housing, the urban environment, community enterprises and transport issues. Community action received moral and practical support first from a revived Liberal Party and, from the later 1970s, a new generation of Labour activists, whose commitment to decentralisation and democratisation was informed by community action. Community activists used a variety of methods, from traditional campaigning tactics to techniques borrowed from the social movements this period. They organised petitions and marches, wrote letters to the press, distributed local newsletters and staged street marches and demonstrations. The more militant groups organised sit-ins in council offices, road-blocking demonstrations and picketed committee meetings. The twin goals of most of these activities were to force the authorities to the negotiating table and to raise public awareness of their campaigns. Community activists challenged the state's monopoly on expertise by producing their own research and analysis of local problems, and by asserting the value of local experience against the views of council officers.

The second goal of this thesis was to explain the progress of community action in Leeds between 1960 and 1990. Shifts in public policy in the late 1950s and early 1960s set the scene for the growth of community action. In Leeds, community action first emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This was a period when the post-war consensus was beginning to unravel in the face of economic problems and changing social attitudes in a more affluent, but still unequal, consumer society. New social movements were flourishing and industrial militancy re-emerged on a scale unseen since the 1930s. Citizens began to challenge the paternalism that characterised local policy making. There was a widespread desire for greater direct local control over policy-making and public services. In Leeds, the unpopularity of key council policies on planning, housing and transport and the council's failure to acknowledge shifts in public opinion on these issues were key drivers of

community action. Existing political organisations and voluntary organisations did not act as conduits for this tide of feeling and community action filled the vacuum. This attracted both radical middle-class professionals who lived or worked in the inner city and assertive working-class residents to community action.

Community action matured over the long 1970s. This was a response to the difficulty of organising within socially diverse and often economically deprived neighbourhoods and in reaction to the city council's dismissive attitude to the first round of campaigning. To increase their bargaining power, community activists worked together at a city level and forged links with action groups in other cities. Some community activists allied with the labour movement while others developed a closer working relationship with the local Labour Party. The result was that community action achieved many of its short-term goals, blocking particular policies, and in the medium term, it succeeded in steering the course of council strategy in housing, transport and planning. Community activists were also able to channel resources into community-led institutions and experimental approaches to urban policy that prioritised neighbourhood participation. The success of community action in the 1970s is also explained by the fact that activists were able to explain how their goals were conducive to the objectives of national policy. In doing so, they exposed fissures between local and central government policy, which they leveraged to their advantage by exhorting the city council to conform to national guidelines. Below, we will evaluate the challenges community activists faced in the 1980s and reasons for the decline of community action in that decade.

The thesis has four key implications for the field of twentieth century British history. Firstly, it has raised our awareness of a form of political activism that has not been studied systematically. Community action was a significant 'path not taken' in the history of political activism in Britain. It was a form of politics that never fulfilled its early promise, but was influential during the long 1970s. Historians should be concerned not only with forms of political activism that survive today, but also in those that faltered and declined several decades ago. The thesis not only enriches our understanding of how and why political activism develops, but also of how such activism can wane. The history of community action is pertinent to students of feminism, environmentalism, trade unionism and others. No strand of political activism operates in isolation and there was always overlap between community action and social movements.

Secondly, it has shown that in order to understand political change in late twentieth century Britain it is necessary to broaden our focus to a political realm beyond the national level,

outside established institutions and beyond traditional political organisations. The history of community action encourages historians to broaden their understanding of the political. It shows that a wider range of issues became the subject of politics in this period and politics took place in a more diverse range of places. Extra-parliamentary politics was not confined to the workplace and nor was it solely concerned with issues of identity. Community action is an example of everyday politics, located close to where people lived and worked, walked and shopped, played and studied. At the neighbourhood level, political organisations were less clearly constituted and more fluid and ephemeral than the organisations that are commonly the subject of political histories. Community action is harder to define, its edges were more blurred and it does not fit easily into the standard theoretical frameworks used to categorise political activism, but its contribution to political change in this period was not diminished as a result.

Thirdly, it has demonstrated that conventional research methodologies are not particularly well-suited to studying this sort of political activism. To study community action, historians must probe for sources in unconventional places, contact former activists and piece together narratives from an unusually diverse range of sources. Fourthly, while this thesis is not a work of planning, transport, local government or housing history, it has shown that the history of these fields in the long 1970s is incomplete without an understanding of community action. Narratives orientated around party politics, national governments and national NGOs are insufficient. Community action shaped the development of public policy, urban governance and urban development for at least two decades. As we shall discuss below, even after community action had fragmented, its influence as an approach to politics persisted.

Community action is a fertile area for future historical research. In describing community action and examining its oscillating fortunes over the period of study, the thesis has raised numerous questions that deserve further study. Firstly, research is needed to investigate community action beyond Leeds, including in other large industrial cities, smaller urban centres, rural areas and, of course, London. This would reveal the extent to which the conclusions drawn in this thesis are applicable in other contexts. Such work would also help to illustrate how far community action was influenced by particular local contexts and national trends. Eventually, a history of community action in Britain as a whole could be constructed from a varied set of local case studies. Secondly, this thesis began to explore the links between community action and the major social movements, but its conclusions were necessarily tentative. Community activists made strenuous efforts to forge closer

relationships with the trade union movement in particular and it would be useful to understand why these endeavours enjoyed such little success. This would nuance narratives of the decline of the trade union movement in this period. The relationship between community action and feminism, which the thesis has only touched upon in passing, deserves further research. Thirdly, community action was not only a British phenomenon. In other countries it has enjoyed a longer and more distinguished history. To understand why community action flourished in the United States while it proved short-lived in Britain will require further work. Comparative analysis of community action across Europe would help to highlight the distinctive aspects of British community action. From the 1960s to the 1980s, several British activists were inspired by their experiences of community action in the United States. British community activists were also in contact with activists in Australia where links between community organisers and trade unionists were well-developed.[2] These transnational links merit further research.

Fourthly, while this thesis has been orientated around particular campaigns, issues and policy areas, future research into community action might be framed by the work of individual community activists. This would allow historians to probe the social composition of community action groups in more depth and to isolate personal motivations and explore the background of activists in greater detail. By exploring the life trajectories of community activists, historians could document the relationship between community action and social movements. Such work could reveal how an individual's experience of community action influenced their participation in other forms of activism, public policy and academic research beyond the 1980s. While community action declined in this decade, the people who participated in it endured. The interview data collected as part of this thesis could support such a project. Fifthly, the thesis has shown that community action was informed by a multiplicity of political ideas and distinguished by its pluralism. It also argued that community action was the product of a 1960s and 1970s political culture distinguished by political radicalism, cultural innovation and social change. This thesis was not, however, intended to be an intellectual or cultural history of community action. Future work could probe more deeply into the intellectual foundations of community action, interrogating some of the key texts we discussed in the introductions. This would enrich our understanding of how contemporaries understood community action.

---

[2] Leeds Civic Trust, *Outlook,* No. 15, February 1977, 6-8; *Community Action,* No. 24, Feb-March 1976, 30-31

2. The legacy of community action

In 1980, *Community Action* offered a sober assessment of the current state of community action in Britain:

> Despite several successes in some places, in many areas of the country there have been few if any gains, and what has been won elsewhere (often at the expense of weaker groups with [fewer] resources) is now threatened if not already cut. Few campaigning groups or federations have kept going for long. Many people have become worn out, disillusioned and divided frightened to risk the loss of tenancies or jobs…No powerful trade union/community alliances have developed with enough strength to fight off attacks on jobs and services…[3]

The journal suggested that in order to survive in what it anticipated would be an even more hostile economic and political climate in the 1980s, community activists needed to build stronger alliances with established movements, organise at a regional and national level, and develop a narrative to contest the government's emerging anti-state ideology. Community action did not evolve in this direction. From its apogee at the close of the 1970s, it declined. There was no clear moment that marked the demise of community action: rather, it faded slowly and unspectacularly. Community action groups stopped meeting, activists dropped out or moved on and community-run institutions closed.

This brings us to the central question driving this thesis. Did community action ever amount to a movement like the other social movements of this period? In the introduction, we outlined the core features of a movement. Movements were networks of activists and organisations sharing a coherent set of ideas and methods, who worked together at a regional or national level to achieve common goals. Activists in a movement possessed a collective identity and they were aware that they were part of a movement. During the long 1970s, community action in Leeds exhibited many characteristics of a movement. Many community activists were sharing ideas and co-ordinating campaigns at a citywide level. Comparing two directories of community groups in the city published eleven years apart in 1972 and 1983 reveals the expansion of grassroots organising in the city.[4] The number of active community groups had more than tripled and they were active across all corners of the city. Community action groups across the city were supported by central institutions like TUCRIC, the CHWP, the LCVS and the Leeds Housing

---

[3] *Community Action,* No. 50, Sept-Oct 1980, 16
[4] Leeds Polytechnic Alternative Society, Leeds and District Directory (1972); Leeds Council for Voluntary Service, Director of Social and Community Services (1983)

Action Group. Links to activists in other cities had been formed by groups like the Hunslet Grange Tenants Association. National advocacy bodies like SCAT were assisting community action groups in Leeds. Several Leeds-based community action groups had identified a wider set of objectives, beyond their short term goals, relating to the distribution of power in the city. Activists campaigning for gradual renewal and a new transport strategy were arguing for a more participatory approach to policy making. However, while community action in Leeds was always on the cusp of developing into a movement, it did not mature into a movement comparable to the other social movements in this period, such as feminism or environmentalism, or earlier social movements such as the peace movement and trade unionism. Community action in the city occupied a space between a chaotic mass mobilisation and a more focused and coherent movement. Further research is needed to assess whether community action was ever a movement at a national level, but the Leeds experience suggests this was unlikely.

Given the speed of its growth and its numerous achievements, why did community action not evolve into a movement? Writing in 1984, during the twilight of community action, Jeremy Seabrook addressed this question:

> In the 1960s, there was a considerable surge of community action…The action groups were often extended campaigns and, although widely supported by the residents of any area, they didn't have the impetus of long-term involvement. People moved on; the immediate reason for action disappeared – councils modified their plans, made concessions; areas were cleared; roads were constructed or the money ran out and they were postponed; people were re-housed on new estates. Action groups became institutionalised, the mass support of the early years fell away.[5]

For Seabrook, community action was short-termist and bereft of long-term aims, which made it unsustainable. He also suggests that partnerships with local government sapped community action of its energy. This chimes with the Leeds experience in some respects, particularly since community action struggled to maintain its momentum when some of the key threats of the early 1970s passed, but Seabrook's points did not apply universally in Leeds. Many community action campaigns were able to successfully transition from a defensive to a creative posture. Positive community action always existed alongside negative campaigns. In most cases, co-operation with the council strengthened community action groups, bringing them closer to achieving their goals. This thesis suggests that there were four core reasons for the failure of community action to mature into a movement.

---

[5] Jeremy Seabrook, *The Idea of Neighbourhood: What local politics should be about* (London, 1984): 113-4

Firstly, the links between community activists in different parts of Leeds and between activists in Leeds and activists in other cities remained weak throughout this period. Since community action derived much of its legitimacy and appeal from its intimate focus on neighbourhood problems, the centrifugal forces were always powerful and militated against the formation of citywide, regional and national organisations that might have helped to build a strong community action movement. Community action depended on middle class professionals to facilitate networking between activists in different neighbourhoods and to connect the Leeds movement to other parts of the country. The middle class advocates of the movement were limited in number and they were not in contact with all of the city's community action groups. Coalitions of action groups in largely middle class areas, such as the A660 Joint Council, were not in contact with their counterparts in working class areas. In certain parts of the city neighbourhoods became increasingly divided on ethnic, religious or geographical lines, which militated against the formation of a movement. Notwithstanding strenuous efforts by some activists, connections between community activists and the most powerful social movement in the city, the labour movement, remained weak. Trade unions were overwhelmingly concentrated on the workplace. There were no examples in Leeds of sustained joint action between community activists and trade unions on the scale of Australia's Green Ban movement.[6]

Secondly, community action in Leeds never developed a coherent ideology or clear methodology. For critics on the left, in order to build 'lasting structures,' community activists needed to integrate socialist theory into their practice.[7] For others, American theories of community organising were more instructive.[8] Neither approach was assimilated by community activists in Leeds. The heterogeneity and pluralism of community action was simultaneously an asset and a weakness. Community action was flexible, responsive and incorporated a diverse range of people and interest groups, but it lacked a sufficiently clear ideology or strong sense of identity to hold this coalition together in the long term. The leading advocates of community action in Leeds struggled to imprint a sense of common identity on the

---

[6] Jack Mundey, *Green Bans and Beyond* (London, 1981)
[7] Mike Fleetwood and John Lambert, 'Bringing socialism home: Theory and practice for a radical community action,' in Gary Craig, Nick Derricourt and Martin Loney*, ed, Community Work and the State: Towards a Radical Practice* (London, 1982): 48-58
[8] Pitt, James, *Community Organising – You've Never Really Tried It: the Challenge to Britain from the USA* (Birmimgham, 1984)

range of place-based community action groups and single issue campaigns. Many community activists were focused on achieving short-term goals and did not identify with a wider set of movement goals. This lack of shared identity was another reason why community activists struggled to build citywide, regional and national networks. Many of those who participated in community action did not identify as community activists, nor were they necessarily conscious of the fact that they were engaging in what had been defined as community action. Activists working at the neighbourhood level often did not consider this to be particularly important and relatively little thought was devoted to the issue in Leeds. This obstructed the evolution of community action into a movement.

Thirdly, over the 1980s, the wide range of social groups and campaigning interests participating in community action pulled in different directions. Community activists were drawn into the orbit of different movements and campaigns. Many council housing activists increasingly identified with the tenants' movement.[9] Community activists concerned with planning and mobility identified with environmentalism or public transport campaigns. Others were drawn into the orbit of radical left groups.[10] Campaigns to defend public services from outsourcing and marketization drew the attention of another tranche of community activists. In 1988, the merger of *Community Action* with *Public Service Action,* an anti-privatisation journal, was symptomatic of this trend.[11] Community activists in ethnically diverse areas began to organise around particular ethnic or religious identity groups, while others focused on the politics of race and anti-racism. A small but significant cadre of community activists stood for local office, usually on a Labour Party ticket, and pursued their goals from within local government.[12] In some respects, community action came full circle: in the late 1960s and early 1970s it had attracted those who were disillusioned with party politics, but over the 1970s community action groups had drawn closer to elected bodies and by the 1980s some of them had entered those institutions. As a result of this exodus to other campaigns and movements, community action faded as a distinctive form of political activism. Since so many community activists continued to participate in politics in another guise, the decline of community action was a process of evolution. Activists transmitted the ideas, insights and practices they had learned as community activists to their new institution and organisations.

---

[9] Quintin Bradley, *The Tenants Movement: Resident Involvement, Community Action and the Contentious Politics of Housing* (New York, 2014)
[10] Interview with Max Farrar
[11] *Public Service Action: An Anti-privatisation Newsletter for the Labour Movement,* SCAT Publication (London, 1983-1996)
[12] *Headline,* No. 38, Spring 1988, 1-2

Fourthly, the political context to the decline of community action cannot be ignored. Over the 1980s, national policy became progressively unfavourable to community activists – even more so than *Community Action* had predicted. Community activists' creative solutions to urban problems, which depended on a partnership between local government and community groups, were rendered impractical or illegal by a raft of Thatcherite reforms and spending cuts. The energy of many activists was absorbed by other struggles, such as the defence of trade union rights. In the inner city, economic conditions became more inimical to neighbourhood organising. Social networks fragmented and fewer people identified with a community and turned inwards. The optimism in the face of adversity that had characterised the long 1970s subsided over the 1980s.

While any lingering optimism that community action might develop into a movement had dissipated by the end of the 1980s, community action persisted as an approach to politics, both in Leeds and nationally. The methods, strategies, rhetoric and ideas popularised by community activists left a lasting mark on public policy, activism and political culture. The legacy of community action was visible in the 1980s, 1990s and the 2000s in the expansion of tenants' participation in social housing, the growth of community architecture, the decentralisation of local government services, consultation programmes in planning and community-based initiatives in a range of policy areas from unemployment to education.[13] Two political developments in particular were deeply indebted to community action. Firstly, the new left Labour councils of the 1980s were influenced by the community action critique of local government. As we saw above, many members of the Labour Left in this period were former community activists and others were influenced by community action.[14] These administrations endeavoured to disperse power to the neighbourhood level by restructuring service provision. They brought community activists closer to the centre of the decision-making process and their grant-aiding polices transferred significant sums of public money to community groups. For commentators like Seabrook, this community action provided the inspiration for a

[13] Liz Cairncross, David Clapham and Robina Goodlad, *Housing Management, Consumers and Citizens* (London 1996); Graham Towers, *Building Democracy: Community Architecture in the Inner Cities* (London, 1995): *157-174;* Jeremy Seabrook, *The Idea of Neighbourhood: What local politics should be about* (London, 1984); Danny Burns, Robin Hambleton and Paul Hoggett, *The Politics of Decentralisation: Revitalising Local Democracy* (London, 1994)

[14] Gerry Stoker, *The Politics of Local Government* (Basingstoke, 1991): 45; Hilary Wainwright, *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties* (London, 1987): 98; Daisy Payling ''Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire': Grassroots Activism and Left-wing solidarity in 1980s Sheffield,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 25:4 (2014): 8-9 [online edition]

new form of government centred on the neighbourhood.[15] The Thatcher governments nipped many of these pioneering initiatives in the bud, but some of the democratising ideas of the New Urban Left persisted into the New Labour era.[16] Secondly, the bottom-up, political mobilisations of the 1990s around road-building, the environment and the Criminal Justice Bill betrayed the influence of community action.[17] If community activists had embodied the second part of the famous imperative, "think globally, act locally," their activist successors in the 1990s developed a stronger awareness of the global dimension to local problems, which helped them to build transnational networks.

The long-term impact of community action is also evident in the fact that since the 1980s, the notion that groups of people living in close proximity to one another might organise collectively to campaign on a neighbourhood issue is no longer considered remarkable or controversial. The idea that grassroots groups might exert influence over policy making is taken seriously by citizens and elected representatives alike. A guide book for neighbourhood activists published in 1986 exemplified the new mood. After outlining a series of fictitious scenarios in which ordinary citizens faced seemingly intractable problems, it asked:

> Is it possible that Cathy Smith can beat the Transport Ministry, and the road lobbies? Can Brian Hunter through [Smithsville Housing Action Committee] force the borough to change its plans? Can Augustine Kirkwood persuade her local MPs to help the elderly? Can Marie Sheedy get the lights turned on? Of course they can. And so can you. Persuading the authorities may not be easy – but it *is* possible.[18]

This shows that while community action did not endure as a movement, its central optimistic message – that people can organise in their neighbourhood to achieve change – left an indelible mark on British politics. Indeed, it is partly because community action as an approach to politics became normalised so rapidly that its history was quickly forgotten. Although grassroots activism is ubiquitous in contemporary Britain, contemporary community groups are not linked by regional or national institutions and they rarely possess a sense of shared identity or movement consciousness. The collective strength of community groups across cities or regions is rarely leveraged to steer public policy. Since

---

[15] Seabrook, *The Idea of Neighbourhood,* 114

[16] Lansley, Stuart, Goss, Sue and Woolmar, Christian, *Councils in Conflict: The Rise and Fall of the Municipal Left* (London, 1989): 175-206

[17] George McKay, ed., *DIY Culture: Party and protest in Nineties Britain* (London, 1998); Derek Wall, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement: Radical environmentalism and comparative social movements* (London, 1999)

[18] Des Wilson, ed., *Citizen Action: Taking action in your community* (Harlow, 1986): 3

the 1980s, community action has been less than the sum of its parts. It is a form of activism but not a movement.

In exploring the limitations of community action in Britain, this thesis has shown why community action failed to mature into an established movement in Britain. By contrast, in the United States community organising had developed into a powerful nationwide movement by the 1970s. Community organising in the United States was sustained intellectually by the writings of influential community organisers, which provided the movement with a set of shared ideas, and it was supported organisationally by institutions at city, state and national level.[19] While American community organisers enjoyed a head start of several decades, their achievements within a similar time period outshone their British counterparts. As a result, American community organising has been the subject of historical scholarship for several decades.[20] Despite efforts to learn from their counterparts across the Atlantic in this period, British community activists were unable to reproduce the foundations of the American movement in the long 1970s.[21] More recently, the continued success of community organising in the United States has prompted a new round of efforts to create a community action movement in Britain. Since the late 1990s, there have been renewed efforts to build networks of community organisers in London and other major British cities by drawing on American methods.[22] In the early 2010s, the Labour Party consulted a leading American community organiser on how it might revitalise its base.[23] These developments are beyond the scope of this thesis, but they point to the renewed salience of community action in the twenty-first century. This thesis has shown that grassroots politics in Britain has a long history and our need to understand this history is increasingly urgent.

---

[19] Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York, 1971); Harry Boyte, *Backyard Revolution: understanding the new citizen movement* (1980); Gary Delago, *Organising the Movement: the Roots and Growth of ACORN* (Philadelphia, 1986); Ed Chambers, *Roots for Radicals: Organising for Power, Action and Justice* (New York, 2003)

[20] Robert Fisher and Peter Romanofsky, *Community Organizing for Urban Social Change: An Historical Perspective* (1981); Wini Breines, *The Great Refusal: Community and Organisation in the New Left* (1989); Robert Fisher, *Let the People Decide: Community organising in America* (New York, 1994); Jennifer Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organising and the New Left* (2001)

[21] James Pitt, *Community Organising – You've Never Really Tried It: the Challenge to Britain from the USA* (Birmimgham, 1984)

[22] Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship and the Politics of a Common Life* (Cambridge, 2015). See also: 'Citizens UK,' www.citizensuk.org, accessed 5 September 2015

[23] Rowenna Davis, 'Arnie Graf: the man Ed Miliband asked to rebuild Labour,' *The Guardian,* 21 November 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/nov/21/arnie-graf-labour-party-miliband, accessed 5 September 2015

Figures

Fig. 1.1 The site of the Hunslet Grange estate in the 1950s showing streets of back-to-back houses. Most of these streets were cleared in the early 1960s. [Ordinance Survey via Digimap, digimap.edina.ac.uk, accessed 15 September 2015]
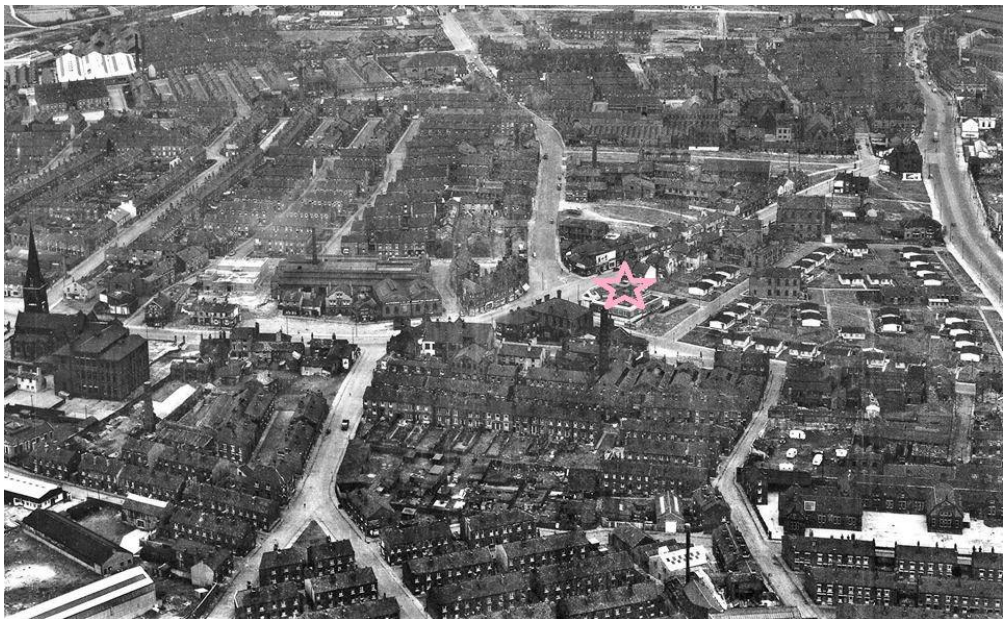

Fig. 1.2 Hunslet from the air in the 1950s, looking west over Church Street and the future site of Hunslet Grange. Post-war prefabricated dwellings are visible on the right. Slum clearance can be seen advancing over Hunslet from the top of the image. St Mary's Parish Church is visible on the left. ['the leek street flats rocked society,' Facebook group, https://www.facebook.com/groups/333104160630/photos/, accessed 1 September 2015]
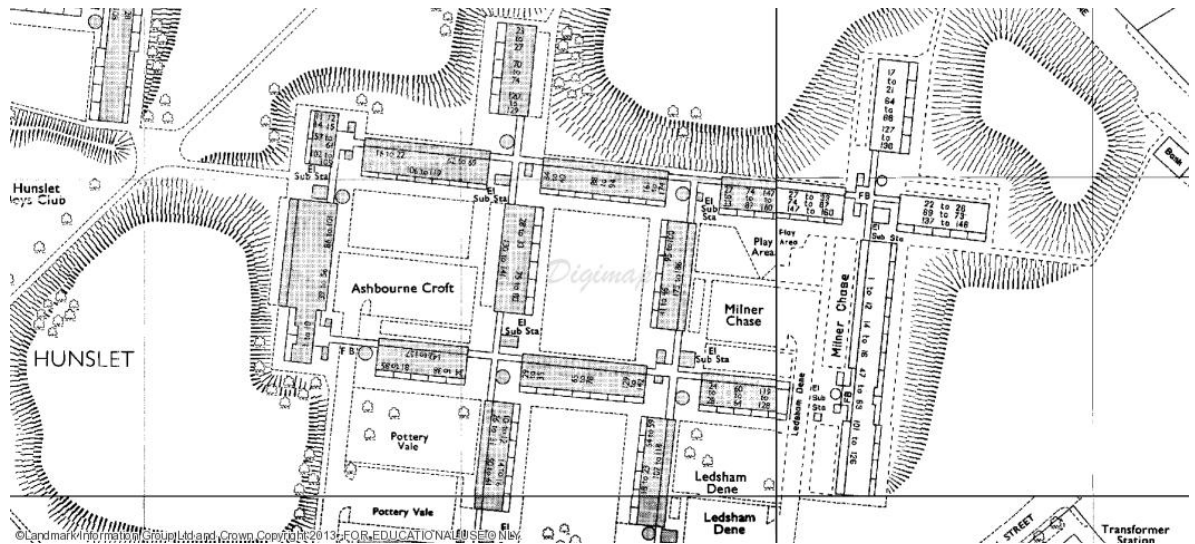
Fig. 1.3 Hunslet Grange in the early 1980s, revealing the transformative effect of the estate on the older built environment seen in Fig. 1.1. The rectangular blocks of the estate, arranged around courtyards, surrounded by open space, replace the traditional street pattern. [Ordinance Survey via Digimap, digimap.edina.ac.uk, accessed 15 September 2015]

Fig. 1.4 A view of the Hunslet Grange estate from ground level. Undated image. ['the leek street flats rocked society,' Facebook group, https://www.facebook.com/groups/333104160630/photos/, accessed 15 September 2015]

Fig. 1.5 One of the raised walkways at Hunslet Grange in 1968, showing the entrances to the flats. [Clifford Stead, flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/cliffordstead/albums, 15 September 2015]

Fig. 1.6 An internal courtyard within the estate. Undated image. [Clifford Stead, flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/cliffordstead/albums, accessed 21 September 2015]

Fig. 1.7 Hunslet Grange viewed from the periphery of the estate, showing the grassed open space surrounding the residential blocks. The spire of St Mary's Church is visible. ['the leek street flats rocked society,' Facebook group, https://www.facebook.com/groups/333104160630/photos/, accessed 15 September 2015]

Fig. 1.8 Hunslet old and new: Hunslet Grange rises up on raised behind a traditional shop frontage near the centre of Hunslet. Undated image. [Clifford Stead, flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/cliffordstead/albums, 15 September 2015]

Fig. 1.9 The demolition of one of the blocks on the estate in the mid-1980s. Undated image. ['the leek street flats rocked society,' Facebook group, https://www.facebook.com/groups/333104160630/photos/, accessed 15 September 2015]

Fig. 2.1 Back-to-back and through terrace housing in Harehills in 1953. The junction of Roundhay Road and Rosevill Road is visible in the bottom left. The grounds of St James' Hospital are seen in the bottom right. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 10 September 2015]

Fig. 2.2 Back-to-back houses in Armley in 1968. This street was later demolished in the housing renewal programme. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 10 September 2015]

Fig. 2.3 Part of the council's Seacroft estate abutting open countryside on the edge of east Leeds in 1963. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 10 September 2015]

Fig 2.4 An aerial view of Burmantofts in inner east Leeds in 1964, showing clearance areas and newly built inner city council housing. This was the site of major highway works in the 1960s and 1970s with the upgrading of the York Road to a dual carriageway with flyovers. The 1930s Quarry Hill estate is just visible at the bottom of the image. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 17 February 2015]

Fig. 2.5 Looking north over Woodhouse towards Sugarwell Hill. The back-to-back streets in the foreground were the subject of a community campaign against clearance proposals in the late 1970s. Undated image from the 1970s or early 1980s. [Clifford Stead, flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/cliffordstead/albums, accessed 20 September 2015]

Fig. 2.6 The Cross Streets area of Armley in the 1970s (highlighted) consisting mainly of back-to-backs and some through terraces. The Cross Streets Housing Action Group campaigned for several years to substitute clearance for rehabilitation of the older houses. The area was cleared in the early 1980s. [Ordinance Survey via Digimap, digimap.edina.ac.uk, accessed 15 September 2015]

Fig. 2.7 Parts of the south Headingley and Hyde Park neighbourhoods in north west Leeds in the 1950s, showing the mixture of back-to-backs, small through terraces, substantial terraces and interwar semi-detached houses. This area was the site of several community action campaigns in the 1970s to preserve and improve older housing. [Ordinance Survey via Digimap, digimap.edina.ac.uk, accessed 15 September 2015]

Fig. 3.1 Hunslet Road in 1954, showing diverse street scene made up of cyclists, pedestrians, a tram and motor vehicles. In subsequent decades, this road was transformed into a dual carriageway and all the buildings on the left were demolished. [Clifford Stead, flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/cliffordstead/albums, accessed 17 February 2015]

Fig. 3.2 Headingley Lane at the junction of Cumberland Road, looking towards Headingley Hill, showing the street scene in the post-war period. The street features mature trees, stone walls and York stone paving. This section of the road was to be widened as part of the expressway plans of the 1970s. The trams had been removed by 1959. Undated image, probably dating from the 1950s. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 17 February 2015]

Fig. 3.3 North Street and Hartley Hill on the edge of Leeds city centre. Almost all the buildings in this image (except the old public dispensary on the far right) were demolished for the construction of the inner ring road and car parking ['Leeds Back in the Day,' Facebook group, https://www.facebook.com/LeedsBackInTheDay/photos_stream, accessed 10 September 2015]

Fig. 3.4 The construction of the inner ring road on the northern fringe of central Leeds in the late 1960s. The Civic Hall and Leeds General Infirmary can be seen in the top left. To the left of the line of the inner ring road is the site of Leeds Polytechnic, while to the right is the expanding Leeds University precinct. Woodhouse Lane, the beginning of the A660, crosses the ring road on the bridges in the centre of the image. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 17 February 2015]

Fig. 3.5 The inner ring road under construction at its junction with Clay Pitt Lane on the eastern side of the city centre. Three newly constructed tower blocks in Little London are visible beyond the bridge. Some old industrial buildings remain in what was a densely populated residential area. Undated image from the late 1960s or early 1970s. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 17 February 2015]

Fig. 3.6 The south east urban motorway close to the where it crossed Hunslet Moor, showing facilities for pedestrians wishing to walk between Hunslet and the city centre. Express buses are seen using the motorway. The two tower blocks of the Moor Crescent estate can be seen in top left of the image. [Clifford Stead, flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/cliffordstead/albums, accessed 25 February 2015]

Fig. 3.7 Construction of a flyover on the York Road in the late 1960s. The image is taken from the Woodpecker Junction showing the junction of the York Road with Regent Street. Part of the 1930s Quarry Hill estate can be seen on the left. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 17 February 2015]

Fig. 3.8 Aerial view of central Headingley in 1937 showing the main Otley Road. Part of the line of the proposed 1930s by-pass is marked in red. The by-pass schemes of the late twentieth century followed a similar route. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 17 February 2015]
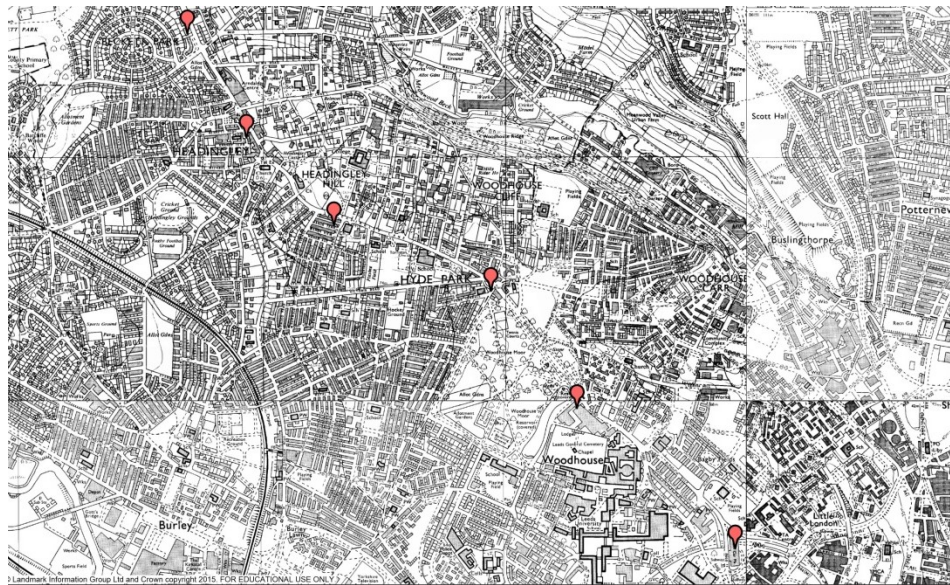
Fig. 3.9 The route of the A660 between the inner ring road and Beckett Park (marked). This section of the road was the subject of road-building proposals between the 1930s and the 1980s [Ordnance Survey via Digimap, digimap.edina.ac.uk, accessed 25 September 2015]

Fig. 3.10 Top: A publicly owned Metrobus travel down the York Road towards the city centre on the eve of deregulation in 1986. Below: a Metro Saver Strip, a multi-use ticket designed to minimise passenger loading time at bus stops and make bus travel more attractive [Clifford Stead, flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/cliffordstead/albums, accessed 17 February 2015]
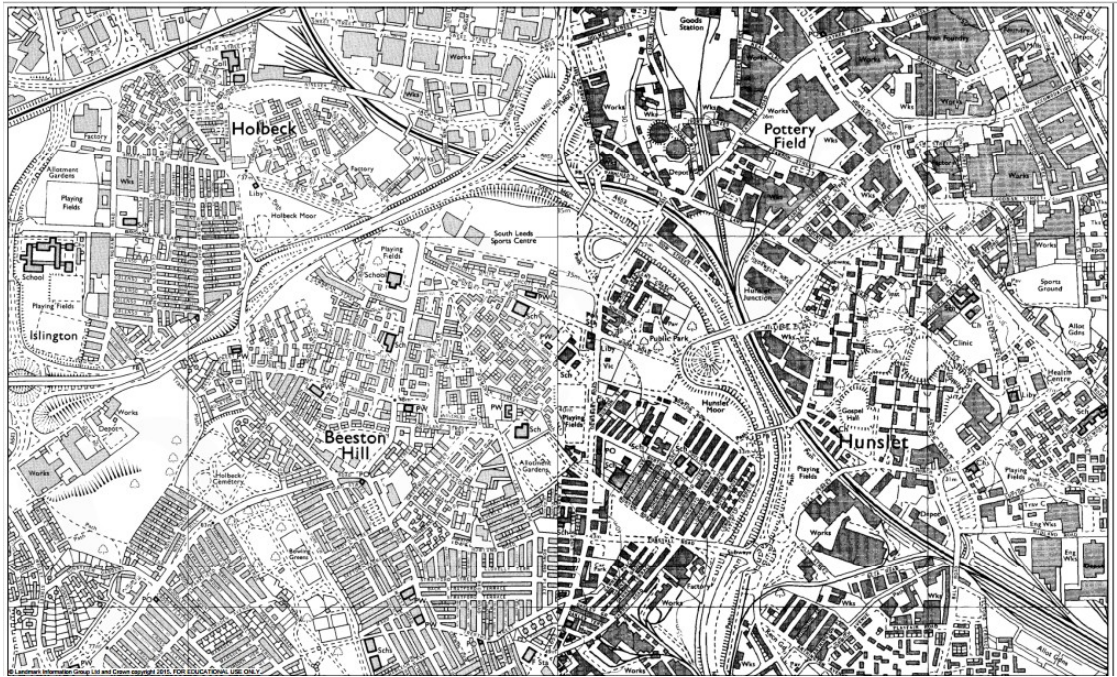
Fig. 3.11 By the 1980s, the south-west Urban Motorway (left) and the South East Urban Motorway (right) together formed a U-shaped band of grade segregated highway in south Leeds, less than a mile from the city centre. The urban motorways traversed Hunslet and Holbeck Moors and severed Holbeck, Hunslet and Beeston Hill. The Hunslet Grange is shown on the right, above 'Hunslet.' [Ordinance Survey via Digimap, digimap.edina.ac.uk, accessed 15 September 2015]

Fig. 4.1 The Harehills Place, a community centre for Harehills, established by the Harehills Community Association, opened in 1983 in a former United Reform Church on Harehills Lane [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 20 September 2015]

Fig. 4.2 The Holbeck Community Centre, operated by the Holbeck Community Association, opened in a former church building on Colenso Mount in the late 1970s. Undated image. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 21 September 2015]

Fig. 4.3 One of the adventure playgrounds established by the Belle Vue and Burley Community Association in the mid-1970s was situated on a clearance site on steeply sloping land at Rosebank Burley Road. Undated image. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 20 September 2015]

Fig. 4.4 Community activists set up a temporary summer adventure playground on clearance land at Woodsley Road in Burley in the early 1970s. Undated image. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 20 September 2015]

Fig. 4.5 Children and adults build play structures using salvaged scrap materials and items donated by local firms at the Woodsley Road adventure playground. Undated image. [Leeds Library and Information Services, http://www.leodis.net/, accessed 20 September 2015]

List of Abbreviations

A list of abbreviations used in the main text and the footnotes.

ALC	Alison Ravetz Collection (private)
BHC	Barbara Hancock Collection (private)
BSC	Bob Shaw Collection (private)
CA	*Community Action*
CCA	Chapeltown Community Association
CCP/NA	Chapeltown Community Playgroup/Nursery Association
CHWP	Community Housing Working Party
CN	*Chapeltown News*
CSHAG	Cross Streets Housing Action Group
DOE	Department of the Environment
EAG	Ebors Action Group
EBC	Eric Bowen Collection (private)
HGHAG	Hunslet Grange Heating Action Group
HRA	Headingley Residents Association
LCC	Leeds City Council
LCT	Leeds Civic Trust collection (private)
LFHA	Leeds Federated Housing Association
LLFHL	Leeds Local and Family History Library
LOP	*Leeds Other Paper*
NHPNA	North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association
PBC	Peter Baker Collection (private)
RCC	Richard Crossley Collection (private)
SCAT	Shelter Community Action Team / Services to Community Action and Tenants[1]
TOP	*The Other Paper*
TUCRIC	Trade Union and Community Research and Information Centre
WCA	Woodhouse Community Association
WHAG	Woodhouse Housing Action Group
WYA	West Yorkshire Archive

---

[1] SCAT changed its name in the late 1970s

WYMCC	West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council
YDG	Yorkshire Development Group
YDGTA	Yorkshire Development Group Tenants Association
YEP	*Yorkshire Evening Post*
YP	*Yorkshire Post*

Bibliography

1. Manuscript sources

(a) Private collections

Alison Ravetz, Leeds

Barbara Hancock, Southampton

Bob Shaw, Leeds

Eric Bowen, Leeds

Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, York

Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust, York

Leeds Civic Trust, Leeds

Peter Baker, Leeds

Richard Crossley, Leeds

Tony Comber, Leeds

Tony Ray, Leeds

(b) West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds

WYL1080: Leeds Political Pamphlets, 1974-1988

WYL1468: Trade Union and Community Resource and Information Centre, Records, 1978-1978

WYL1795: Michael Meadowcroft, Local Political Records

WYL201: Leeds Social and Cultural Leaflets, 1974-1987

WYL2071: Pudsey-Dishforth Motorway Action Group Records, 1973-1986

WYL247: Mrs A Marlow, Leeds, papers relating to the North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association and the A660 Campaign, 1972-1994

WYL5012: South Headingley Community Association and Cardigan Road Action Group, Records, 1968-2000

WYL5041, WYL2058, WYL564: Dr Max Farrar, Records Relating to Leeds West Indian Carnival and Community Work in Chapeltown and Harehills, 1970-2000

WYL507: Leeds Council of Social Service and Voluntary Action Leeds, Records, 1909-2004

(c) Leeds University Library Special Collections

Leeds Election Literature
Leeds Other Paper
MS1562: Community Development Project (Home Office) papers

(d) Leeds Local and Family History Library

Leeds City Council, Minutes of the Housing Services Committee

Leeds City Council, Minutes of the Planning Committee

Leeds City Council, *Proceedings*

Leeds City Council, *Quarterly Reports of the Director of Housing*

Leeds City Council, *Verbatim Reports*

Leeds Pamphlet Collection

(e) Feminist Archive North

TUCRIC Collection

2. Official publications

Advisory Committee on Housing Co-operatives, *Co-operatives and Housing Policy: A Report by the Advisory Committee on Housing Co-operatives in response to the Consultative Document on Housing Policy* (London, 1977)

Central Housing Advisory Committee, *Our Older Homes: A Call for Action* (HMSO, 1966)

Department of Education and Science, *Children and their primary schools: a report of the Central Advisory Council for Education* (HMSO, 1967)

Department of the Environment, Better Homes the Next Priorities (HMSO, 1973)

Department of the Environment, *Better Homes: The Next Priorities* (HMSO, 1973): Cmnd. 5339, 5

Department of the Environment, *Housing Act 1974: Renewal Strategies* (HMSO, 1975)

Department of the Environment, *New Life in Old Towns* (HMSO, 1970)

Department of the Environment, *New Life in Old Towns* (London, HMSO, 1971)

Department of the Environment, *Widening the Choice* (HMSO, 1973)

Department of the Environment, *Working Party on Housing Co-Operatives, Final report of the Working party on Housing Co-operatives* (London, HMSO, 1975)

House of Commons, Second Report from the Expenditure Committee, Session 1972-3, Urban Transport Planning Volume II, Minutes of Evidence (HMSO, 1972), Cmnd, 5366, 478

Leeds City Council, 'Draft City Development Plan' (1951)

Leeds City Council, 'Housing Action Areas, 1975-1980'

Leeds City Council, 'Inner City Action, Second Urban Programme Report' (1979)

Leeds City Council, 'Leeds Inner City Action, First Urban Programme Report' (1978)

Leeds City Council, 'Leeds Inner City Action: Fifth Urban Programme Report' (1982)

Leeds City Council, *A Short History of Civic Housing* (Leeds, 1954)

Leeds City Council, First Review of City Development Plan, Report of Survey (Written Analysis, Submission Edition), July 1968

Leeds City Council, Hunslet Grange, Leeds 10 (Leeds, 1982)

Leeds City Council, *Leeds Planning Handbook* (Leeds, 1984)

Leeds City Council, Leeds Urban Programme, 1979-1989: A Decade of Action for the Inner City (1989)

Leeds City Council, Ministry of Housing and Local Government and Ministry of Transport, Planning and Transport: the Leeds Approach (HMSO, 1969)

Leeds City Council, Older Housing in Leeds: An Assessment of Redevelopment Potential and Priorities (1971, 1972)

Leeds City Council, Older Housing in Leeds: An Assessment of Redevelopment Potential and Priorities, 1971-1991, Volume 1: Survey and Analysis (Leeds, 1971)

Leeds City Council, Older Housing in Leeds: An Assessment of Redevelopment Potential and Priorities, 1971-1991, Volume 2: Formulation of Strategies (Leeds, 1972)

Leeds City Council, Older Housing in Leeds: An Assessment of Redevelopment Potential and Priorities, 1971-1991, Volume 3: The Clearance Programme and its Local Effects (Leeds, 1972)

Leeds City Council, South Leeds Local Plan, Draft Written Statement, 1984

Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Central Housing Advisory Committee, *Our Older Homes: A Call for Action* (HMSO, 1966)

Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Old Houses into New Homes* (HMSO, 1968), Cmnd. 3602

Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Old Houses into New Homes* (HMSO, 1968), Cmnd. 3602

Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Our Older Homes: A Call for Action* (HMSO, 1966)

Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *People and Planning: report of the Committee on Public Participation in Planning* (HMSO, 1969)

Ministry of Transport, *Traffic in Towns: A study of the long term problems of traffic in urban areas* (HMSO, 1963)

Nottingham Corporation, *St. Ann's: Renewal in Progress* (Nottingham, 1970)

West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council, 'A660 Corridor: Public Participation Exercise,' 1983

West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council, 'Proposals for the A660 Corridor, North West Leeds,' April 1985

West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council, West Yorkshire Structure Plan, Written Statement, Consultation Draft, October 1977

3. Newspapers and Periodicals

276

Anarchy

Architect's Journal

Architectural Review, The

Armley Free Press

Chapeltown News

Come-Unity News

Community Action

Guardian, The

Hackney Action

Hackney Gutter Press

Hansard

Hearsay

Holbeck Voice

Housing Review

Islington Gutter Press

Journal of the Institute of Highways and Transportation

Leeds Mercury

Leeds Other Paper

Leeds Weekly Advertiser

Municipal Journal

New Society

New Yapstick

Other Paper, The

Outlook

Platform

Public Service Action

Roof

Searchlight

The Observer, The

TUCRIC Bulletin

Yapstick

Yorkshire Evening Post

Yorkshire Post

4. Interviews

Baine, Sean, London, 2013

Bowen, Eric, Leeds, 2014

Comber, Tony, Leeds, 2014

Cowley, John, London, 2013

Crossley, Richard, Leeds, 2013

Doogan, Marie, London, 2013

Farrar, Max, 2013, Leeds

Garthwaite, Alison, Leeds, 2014

Hancock, Barbara, Leeds and Southampton, 2014

Harcup, Tony, Leeds, 2014

Hill, Matthew, Leeds, 2014

Kenyon, Stan, Leeds, 2008

Kojan, Roger, Leeds, 2014

Mayo, Marjorie, London, 2013

Meadowcroft, Michael, Leeds, 2013

Mollison, Keith, Leeds, 2014

O'Malley, John and Jan, London, 2013

Paice, Diane, London, 2013

Pitt, James, York, 2013

Power, Anne, London, 2013

Ravetz, Alison, Leeds, 2013

Redman, Pete, London, 2012

Shaw, Bob, Leeds, 2014

Thornton, Parry, Oxford and Scarborough, 2009

Weiner, Ron, Leeds, 2012

Whitfield, Dexter, Leeds, 2012

5. Books, articles and dissertations

Adeney, Martin, *Community Action: four examples* (London, 1971)

Aldous, Tony, *Battle for the Environment* (London, 1972)

Alinsky, Saul, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York, 1971)

Allen, Marjorie and Nicholson, Mary, *Memoirs of an Uneducated Lady* (London, 1975)

Altshuler, Alan, *Community Control: The Black Demand for Participation in Large American Cities* (New York, 1970)

Anson, Brian, *I'll Fight You For It: Behind the Struggle for Covent Garden* (London, 1980)

Armitage, Annie, *Both Sides of the Sheets* (Leicester, 2011), 235

Bagwell, Philip and Lyth, Peter, *Transport in Britain, 1750-2000: From Canal Lock to Gridlock* (London, 2002)

Bale, Tim *The Conservative Party from Thatcher to Cameron* (London, 2011)

Barr, John, ed., *The Environmental Handbook: Action Guide for the UK* (London, 1971)

Beers, Laura, *Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (London, 2010)

Ben Jones, 'The Uses of Nostalgia: Autobiography, Community Publishing and Working-Class Neighbourhoods in Brighton,' *Cultural and Social History*, 7 (2009): 355-374

Bengtsson, Avrid, *Adventure Playgrounds* (New York, 1972)

Beresford, Maurice, *East End, West End: Leeds During the Face of Urbanisation* (Leeds, 1988)

Black, Lawrence, 'The Lost Worlds of Young Conservatism,' *Historical Journal*, 51: 4 (2008): 911-1024

Black, Lawrence, Pemberton, Hugh, and Thane, Pat, *Reassessing 1970s Britain* (Manchester, 2013)

Boddy, Martin and Fudge, Colin, *Local Socialism? Labour Councils and New Left Alternatives,* (London, 1984)

Boyte, Harry, *The Backyard Revolution: Understanding the New Citizen Movement* (Philadelphia, 1980)

Bradley, Katherine, *Poverty, Philanthropy and the State: Charities and the Working Class in London, 1918-1979* (Manchester, 2009)

Bradley, Quintin, *The Tenants' Movement: Resident Involvement, Community Action and the Contentious Politics of Housing* (New York, 2014)

Branston, Graham, *Alwoodley, Leeds: The History of a Twentieth Century Suburb* (Leeds, 2004)

Breines, Wini, *Community and organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: the Great Refusal* (New York, 1982)

Bretherton, Luke, *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship and the Politics of a Common Life* (Cambridge, 2015).

Brewis, Georgina and Finnegan, Anjelica, 'Archival Review: Volunteering England,' *Contemporary British History, 26:1* (2012): 119-128

Brewis, Georgina, 'From Service to Action: Students, volunteering and community action in mid-twentieth century Britain,' *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 58:4 (2010): 439-449

— 'Youth in action? British young people and voluntary service: 1958-1970,' in Melanie Oppenheimer and Nicholas Deakin (*eds.*), *Beveridge and Voluntary Action in Britain and the Wider British World* (Manchester, 2011): 94-118

— *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and Beyond, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke, 2014)

Brown, Bernard, *Ideology and Community Action: the West Side Organisation of Chicago, 1964-1967* (Chicago, 1978)

Browne, Sarah ''A Veritable Hotbed of Feminism': Women's Liberation in St. Andrew's, Scotland, c.1969-79,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 23:1 (2012): 100-123

Burns, Danny, Hambleton, Robin and Hoggett, Paul, *The Politics of Decentralisation: Revitalising Local Democracy* (London, 1994)

Burt, Stephen and Grady, Kevin, *An Illustrated History of Leeds* (Derby, 2002)

Butterworth, Eric, Lees, Ray and Arnold, Peter, *The Challenge of Community Work: The Final Report of the Batley CDP* (York, 1981)

Cairncross, Liz, Clapham, David and Goodlad, Robina, *Housing Management, Consumers and Citizens* (London, 1997)

Callaghan, John, 'Industrial Militancy 1945-79: The Failure of the British Road to
      Socialism,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 15:4 (2004)*:* 388-409

Callaghan, John, *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict: The CPGB 1951-68* (London, 2003)

Campbell, Jane and Oliver, Mike, *Disability Politics: Understanding Our Past, Changing
      Our Future* (London 1996)

Carter, Harold, 'Building the Divided City: Race, Class and Social Housing in Southwark,
      1945–1995,' *The London Journal*, 33 (2008), 155-185

Cassidy, Robert, *Livable cities: A Grassroots Guide to Rebuilding Urban America* (New
      York, 1980)

Castells, Manuel, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-cultural theory of social urban
      movements* (Berkeley, 1983)

Caunton Avenue Flats Tenants Association, *The Lost Civilisation: Caunton Avenue: An
      Estate in Crisis* (1985)

Chambers, Ed and Cowan, Michael, *Roots for Radicals: Organising for Power, Action and
      Justice* (New York, 2003)

Clark, Janet, 'Sincere and Reasonable Men? The Origins of the National Council for Civil
      Liberties,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 20:4 (2009): 513-537

Clark, Kenneth and Hopkins, Jeannette, *A Relevant War on Poverty: A Study of Community
      Action Programs and Observable Social Change* (New York, 1969)

Coates, Ken and Silburn, Richard, *Beyond the Bulldozer* (Nottingham, 1980)
      — *Poverty: The Forgotten Englishman* (London, 1983), Third Edition

Coates, Ken and Silburn, Richard, *St Ann's: Poverty, Deprivation and Morale in a
      Nottingham Community* (Nottingham 1967)

Cockburn, Cynthia, *The Local State: Management of Cities and People* (London, 1977)

Coleman, Alice, *Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing* (London, 1985)

Community Development Project, *Gilding the Ghetto: the State and the Poverty
      Experiments* (London, 1977)

Community Housing Working Party, *Gradual Renewal in Leeds* (Leeds, 1976)

Cook, Matt, '"Gay Times" Locality, Identity, Memory in the Brixton Squats in 1970s
      London, *Twentieth Century British History,* 23:2 (2012): 84-109

Cowley, John, et al., *Community or Class Struggle?* (London, 1977)

Cox, Andrew and McKay, David, *The Politics of Urban Change* (London, 1979)

Craddock, Julia, *Tenants' Paticipation in Housing Management: A Study of the Schemes in
      Lambeth, Southwark, Wandsworth and with the Greater London Council* (London,
      1975)

Craig, Barbara and Herrmann, Tony, *Fuel: Information Kit* (Leeds, 1977)

Craig, Gary, Derricourt, Nick, and Loney, Martin, ed., *Community Work and the State: Towards a Radical Practice* (London, 1982)

Craig, Gary, Mayo, Marjorie and Sherman, Nick, ed., *Jobs and Community Action* (London, 1979)

Cranwell, Keith, 'Adventure Playgrounds and the Community in London, 1948-1970: an appreciation of the ideas and actions that shaped the spirit on the 1960s play movement' in Russell, Wendy and Handscombe, Bridget, eds., *Playwork Voices: in Celebration of Bob Hughes and Gordon Sturrock* (London, 2007), 62-73

— 'Towards a History of Adventure Playgrounds,' in Nils, Norman, Keith Cranwell and Paul Claydon, *An Architecture of Play: A Survey of London's Adventure Playgrounds* (London, 2003)

Crowe, Brenda, *The Playgroup Movement* (London, 1983)

Crowson, Nick, 'Re-visiting the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act: Westminster, Whitehall and the Homelessness Lobby,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 24:3 (2013): 424-447

Crowson, Nick, Hilton, Matthew and McKay, James, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-state Actors in Society and Politics Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2009)

Cummin, David, ed., *York 2000: People in Protest* (York, 1974)

Curno, Paul, *Political Issues and Community Work* (London, 1978)

Curtin, Helene and Mimi Sanderson, *The Unsung Sixties: Memoirs of Social Innovation* (London, 2004)

Daddow, Oliver, 'New Labour: A Witness History,' *Contemporary British History*, 29:1 (2015): 106-36

Daunton, Matthew and Hilton, Martin, ed., *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America* (Oxford, 2001)

David Rooney, 'The Political Economy of Congestion: Road Pricing and the Neoliberal Project, 1952-2003,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 25:5 (2014): 628-650

Davis, John, ''Simple Solutions to Complex Problems': the Greater London Council and the Greater London Development Plan, 1965-1973,' in Jose Harris, ed, *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities and Institutions* (Oxford, 2003): 249-274

— 'Community and the Labour Left in 1970s London,' in Chris Williams and Andrew Edwards, eds, *The Art of the Possible: Politics and governance in modern British history, 1985-1997: Essays in memory of Duncan Tanner* (Manchester, 2015): 207-223

Davis, John, and Warring, Anette, 'Living Utopia: Communal Living in Denmark and Britain,' *Cultural and Social History*, 8:4 (2011): 511-28

Davis, Madeleine 'Arguing Affluence: New Left Contributions to Socialist Debate, 1957-63,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 23:4 (2012): 496-528

Deakin, Nicholas, 'The perils of partnership: The voluntary sector and the state, 1945-1992,' in Davis Smith, Justin and Hedley, Rodney and C. Rochester, Colin, ed., *An Introduction to the Voluntary Sector* (London, 1995)

Delago, Gary, *Organizing the Movement: The Roots and Growth of ACORN* (Philadelphia, 1986)

Dennis, Norman, *People and Planning: the sociology of housing in Sunderland* (London, 1970)

— *Public Participation and Planners' Blight* (London, 1972)

Des Wilson, ed., *Citizen Action: Taking action in your community* (Harlow, 1986): 3

Dunleavy, Patrick, *The Politics of Mass Housing in Britain, 1945-1975: A Study of Corporate Power and Professional Influence in the Welfare State* (Oxford, 1981)

English, John, Madigan, Ruth and Norman, Peter, *Slum Clearance: the Social and Administrative Context in England and Wales* (London, 1976)

Esher, Lionel, *A Broken Wave: the Rebuilding of England, 1940-1980* (Middlesex, 1983)

Evans, T., 'Stopping the Poor Getting Poorer: The Establishment and Professionalisation of Poverty NGOs,' in Hilton, Matthew, Crowson, Nick and James McKay, ed., *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Politics and Society Since 1945* (2009)

Farrar, Max, 'Racism, education and black self-organisation,' *Critical Social Policy*, 12:53 (1993)

— *The Struggle for Community in a British multi-ethnic inner city area: paradise in the making* (New York, 2002)

Feldman, David and Lawrence, John, ed., *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 2011)

Ferris, John, *Participation in Urban Planning: The Barnsbury Case* (London, 1972)

Fisher, Robert and Romanofsky, Peter, *Community organizing for urban social change: An Historical Perspective* (Westport, Connecticut, 1981)

Fisher, Robert, *Let the people decide: Neighbourhood Organising in America* (Boston, 1984)

Flint, Anthony, *Wrestling with Moses; How Jane Jacobs took on New York's master builder and transformed the American city* (New York, 2009)

Flynne, Pam, et al., *You're Learning All The Time: Women, Education and Community Work* (Nottingham, 1986)

Fountain, Nigel *Underground: The London Alternative Press,* 1966-1974 (London, 1988)

Fraser, Derek, ed., *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980)

Frederickson, H George, *Neighbourhood Control in the 1970s: Politics, Administration and Citizen Participation* (New York, 1973)

Frost, Jennifer, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organising and the New Left,* (2001)

Gibson, Michael and Langstaff, Michael, *An Introduction to Urban Renewal* (London, 1982)

Gibson, Tony, *People Power: Community and Work Groups in Action* (Middlesex, 1979)

Gildea, Robert, Mark, James and Warring, Anette, ed., *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (Oxford, 2013)

Gorrie, Donald, *Tenants' Co-operatives* (Manchester, 1977)

Gosling, Ray, *Saint Ann's* (Nottingham, 1967)

Grant, John, *The Politics of Urban Transport Planning: An analysis of transportation policy formulation in three UK County Boroughs between 1947 and 1974* (London, 1977)

Gunn, Simon, 'People and the car: the expansion of automobility in urban Britain, c.1955-1970,' *Social History*, 38:2 (2013): 220-237

— 'The Buchanan Report, environment and the problem of traffic in 1960s Britain,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 22:4 (2011): 521-542

Gunn, Simon, 'The Rise and Fall of British Urban Modernism: Planning Bradford, circa 1945-1970,' *The Journal of British Studies,* 49:4 (2010): 849-869

Hain, Peter, ed., *Community Politics* (London, 1976)

— *Radical Regeneration: Protest Direct Action and Community Politics* (London, 1975)

Hall, Peter *London 2000* (London, 1963)

Hamer, Mick, *Wheels Within Wheels: A Study of the Road Lobby* (London, 1987)

Hamilton, Scott, *The Crisis of Theory: EP Thompson, the New Left and Postwar British Politics* (Manchester, 2011)

Hancock, Barbara, 'Changed Lives: the Power of Community Work and Second Chance Education', in Flynn, Pam, ed., *You're Learning All The Time: Women, Education and Community Work* (Nottingham, 1986), 80-98

Hands, John, *Housing Co-operatives,* Society for Co-operative Dwellings (London, 1975)

Hanna, Erika, 'Dublin's North Inner City, Preservationism and Irish Modernity in the 1960s', *The Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), 1015-1035

— *Modern Dublin: Urban Change and the Irish Past, 1957-1973* (Oxford, 2013)

Harcup, Tony *A Northern Star: Leeds Other Paper and the Alternative Press* (London and Pontefract, 1994)

Harcup, Tony, *Alternative Journalism, Alternative Voices* (London, 2013)

Hartman, Chester, *Between Eminence and Notoriety: Four Decades of Radical Urban Planning* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2002)

Hartman, Chester, et al, *Displacement: How to Fight It* (Berkeley, 1982)

Hartman, Chester, *Yerba Buena: Land Grab and Community Resistance in San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1974)

Henderson, Ann, *Insights from the playgroup movement: equality and autonomy* (London, 2011)

Hess, Karl and Morris, David, *Neighbourhood Power: the New Localism* (Boston, 1975)

Hilton, Matthew and McKay, James, *Ages of Voluntarism – How we got to the Big Society* (Oxford, 2011)

Hilton, Matthew, et al., *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain: Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector* (Basingstoke, 2012)

Hilton, Matthew, et al., *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2013)

Hilton, Matthew, 'Politics is Ordinary: Non-governmental organisations and political participation in contemporary Britain,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 22: 2 (2011): 230-268

— 'The Birmingham Consumer's Group and Affluent Britain, in Black, Lawrence and Pemberton, Hugh, ed., *An Affluent Society? Britain's Golden Age Re-visited* (Aldershot, 2004): 167-184

— *Prosperity for all: Consumer Activity in an Age of Globalisation* (Cornell, 2009)

Hoggart, Richard, *A Local Habitation: Life and Times, Volume I: 1918-1940* (Oxford, 1989)

— *The Uses of Literacy* (London, 1957)

Holman, Bob, *Power for the Powerless: The Role of Community Action* (London, 1972)

Holmes, Chris, *The Other Notting Hill* (London, 2005)

Horwitt, Sanford, *Let them Call Me A Rebel: Saul Alinksy – His Life and Legacy* (New York, 1989)

Hughes, Celia, 'Young Socialist Men in 1960s Britain: Subjectivity and Sociability,' *History Workshop Journal,* 73:1 (2012): 170-192

Jackson, Ben and Saunders, Robert, ed., *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge, 2012)

Jackson, Ben, 'An Ideology of Class: Neo-Liberalism and the Trade Unions, 1930-79,' in Griffiths, Clare, Knott, James and Whyte, William, *Classes, Culture and Politics: Essays on British History for Ross McKibbin* (Oxford, 2011): 261-281

Jackson, Ben, 'At the Origins of Neo-Liberalism: the Free Economy and the Strong State, 1930-1947,' *Historical Journal,* 53:1 (2010): 129-151

Jackson, Cedric, *Lambeth Interface: Housing, Planning and Community Action in an Inner London Borough* (London, 1975)

Jacobs, Jane, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, 1961)

James, Edward, *America Against Poverty* (London, 1970)

Johnson, Michael, ed., *Leeds: A Great City in Pictures,* u.d.

Jones, David and Mayo, Marjorie, ed., *Community Work* (London, 1974)
— *Community Work Two* (London, 1975)

Jones, David and Smith, Leo, ed., *Deprivation, Participation and Community Action* (London, 1981)

Jones, Tudor, *The Revival of British Liberalism from Grimmond to Clegg* (Basingstoke, 2011)

Kimber, Richard and Richadson, Jeremy, *Pressure groups in Britain: a reader* (London, 1974)

Klemek, Christopher, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (London, 2011)

Klimke, Martin and Scharloth, Joachim, ed., *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest* and *Activism, 1956–1977* (Basingstoke, 2008)

Koolen, Saskia 'Power in the Housing Market: A Study of Leeds (Rijsksuniversiteit Utrecht and Middlesex University, 1992-3)

Kowalsky, Meaghan, *Disability and British Social Policy Since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke, 2003)

Kozlovsky, Roy, 'Adventure Playgrounds and Post-war Reconstruction,' in Gutman, Marta and de Counck-Smith, Ning, *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space and the Material Culture of Children* (New Brunswick, N.J., 2008)

Lansley, Stewart, Goss, Sue and Woolmar, Christian *Councils in Conflict, the Rise and Fall of the Municipal Left* (London, 1989)

Lapping, Anne, ed., *Community action* (London, 1970)

Laybourn, Keith, *Marxism in Britain: Dissent, Decline and Re-emergence, 1945- c . 2000* (Oxford, 2006)

Leeds Chamber of Commerce and Leeds City Council, *A Guide to the City of Leeds* (London, 1963)

Leeds Chamber of Commerce and Leeds City Council, *Project Leeds* (Cheltenham, 1969, 1971)

Lees, Ray and Smith, George, ed., *Action Research in Community Development* (London, 1975)

Lent, Adam, *British Social Movements since 1945: Sex, Colour, Peace and Power* (Basingstoke, 2001)

Leonard, Peter, *Sociology of Community Action* (Keele, 1975)

Lowe, Stuart, 'Local Politics and Community Groups in Sheffield' (Department of Political Theory and Institutions, University of Sheffield, 1978)

— *Urban Social Movements: The City After Castells* (New York, 1986)

Malpass, Peter, *Housing and the Welfare State: the Development of Housing Policy in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2005)

Malpass, Peter, *Housing Associations and Housing Policy: A Historical Perspective* (London, 2000)

Marwick, Arthur, *The Sixties: Cultural and Social Transformation in Britain, France, Italy and the United States* (Oxford, 1998)

Mayo, Marjorie, ed., *Women in the Community* (London, 1977)

McGowan, Jack, ''Dispute,' 'Battle,' 'Siege,' 'Farce' – Grunwick 30 Years On,' *Contemporary British History,* 22:3 (2008): 383-406

McKay, George, ed., *DIY Culture: Party and protest in Nineties Britain* (London, 1998)

McKay, James and Mouhot, Jean Francois, 'DANGO: Database of Archives of UK Non-Governmental Organisations since 1945,' *Contemporary British History* 21:4 (2007)

McKay, James, 'Voluntary Politics: the Sector's Political Function from Beveridge to Deakin,' in Melanie Oppenheimer and Nicholas Deakin, *Beveridge and Voluntary Action* (Manchester, 2011)

McKie, Robert, 'Gradual Renewal', *Architect's Journal,* 5th February 1975

Meadows Association of Tenants and Residents, *The Meadows is Our Home: We Want the New Houses* (1974)

Mold, Alex and Berridge, Virginia, *Voluntary Action and Illegal Drugs: Health and Society in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2010)

Mold, Alex, '"The Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society?" The work of the Drug Voluntary Organisation Release, 1967-78,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 17:1 (2006): 50-73

— 'Making the Patient Consumers in Margaret Thatcher's Britain,' *Historical Journal,* 54:2 (2011): 509-528

Moores, Christopher, 'The Progressive Professionals: the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Politics of Activism in 1960s Britain,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 20:4 (2009): 538-560

Moran, Joe, *On Roads: A Hidden History* (London, 2009)

Morgan, Kevin, Cohen, Gidon, and Flinn, Andrew, *Communists in British Society 1920-1991* (London, 2007)

Muchnick, David, *Urban Renewal in Liverpool: A Study of the Politics of Redevelopment* (London, 1970)

Mundey, Jack, *Green Bans and Beyond* (London, 1981)

National Playing Fields Association, *What is an Adventure Playground?* (London, 1977)

Navickas, Katrina, 'Protest History or the History of Protest?' *History Workshop Journal,* 73:1 (2012): 302-307

Neil Betten and Michael Austin, *The Roots of Community Organising, 1917-1939* (Philadelphia, 1990)

Nick Crowson, 'Introduction: the Voluntary Sector in 1980s Britain,' *Contemporary British History*, 26:1 (2012): 491-498

North Islington Housing Rights Project, *North Islington Housing Rights Project*, 1977-1980 (1980)

 — *Street by Street: Improvement and Tenant Control in Islington* (London, 1976)

 — *Tomorrow in Upper Holloway: A Plan for Area Improvement* (London, 1973)

Nottingham Housing Action Group, *This is the Housing Policy That Jack Built* (1977)

O'Malley, Jan, *The Politics of Community Action* (London, 1977)

Offer, Avner, 'British Manual Workers: From Producers to Consumers, C. 1950-2000', *Contemporary British History*, 22 (2008), 537-571

Parker, Tony, *The People of Providence: A housing estate and some of its inhabitants* (London, 1992), Second Edition

Payling, Daisy, ''Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire': Grassroots Activism and Left-wing solidarity in 1980s Sheffield,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 25:4 (2014), 602-627

Pendlebury, John, *Conservation in the Age of Consensus* (Oxford, 2009)

Phillips, Jim, 'The 1972 Miners Strike: Popular Agency and Industrial Politics in Britain,' *Contemporary British History,* 20:2 (2006): 187-207

— 'Workplace Conflict and the Origins of the 1984-5 Miners' Strike in Scotland,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 20:2 (2009): 152-172

Pitchford, Mark, *The Conservative Party and the Extreme Right, 1945-75* (Manchester, 2011)

Pitt, James, *Community Organising – You've Never Really Tried It: the Challenge to Britain from the USA* (Birmimgham, 1984)

— *Gentrification in Islington: the Return of the Middle Classes to an Inner London Borough and the Subsequent Effects on Housing* (London, 1977)

Plowden, Stephen, *Towns against Traffic* (London, 1972)

Powell, Ken, *Leeds: Must Old Still Mean Bad?* Save Britain's Heritage, 1981

Power, Anne, *Holloway Tenants' Co-operative: Five Years On* (London, 1977)

— *David and Goliath: Barnsbury* (London, 1973)

— *Facts and Figures about the Holloway Tenant Co-operative: a survey of all rehoused members* (London, 1978)

— *Holloway Tenants' Co-operative: Five Years on* (1977)

— *Hovels to High Rise: State Housing in Europe Since 1850* (London, 1993)

Prochaska, Frank, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London, 1988)

Pugh, Martin, *Speak for Britain!: A New History of the Labour Party* (London, 2011)

Ramsden, Stefan, 'Re-making Working-Class Community: Sociability, Belonging and 'Affluence' in a Small Town, 1930-1980, *Contemporary British History,* 29:1 (2015): 1-26

Ravetz, Alison, *Council Housing and Culture: The History of a Social Experiment* (London, 2001)

— *Model Estate: Planned Housing at Quarry Hill, Leeds* (London, 1974)

— 'Participation in Design – a study of new build housing' (Leeds Polytechnic, 1989)

— *Remaking Cities: contradictions of the Recent Urban Environment* (London, 1980)

— *The Government of Space: Town Planning in Modern Society* (London, 1986)

Redfern, Neil, 'No Friends to the Left: The British Community party's Surveillance of the Far Left, c.1932-1980,' *Contemporary British History,* 28:3 (2014): *341-360*

Rees, Jeska, ''Are you a Lesbian?' Challenges in Recording and Analysing the Women's Liberation Movement in England,' *History Workshop Journal,* 69:1 (2010): 177-187

Reid, Alistair, 'The dialectics of liberation: the Old Left, the New Left and the counter-culture,' in Feldman, David and Lawrence, John, ed., *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 2011)

Robert McKie, Robert, 'Cellular Renewal', *Town Planning Review,* Vol 45, 1974, 274-90

Robinson, Lucy, 'Three Revolutionary Years: the Impact of the Counter-Culture on the Development of the Gay Liberation Movement in Britain, *Cultural and Social History*, 3 (2006): 445-471

Rootes, Christopher, 'Environmental NGOs and the Environmental Movement in Britain,' in Crowson, Nick, et al., *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-state Actors in Society and Politics Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2009)

Rowbotham, Sheila, *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties* (London, 2000)

Shapely, Peter, *The Politics of Housing: Power, Consumers and Urban Culture* (Manchester, 2007)

Sandbrook, Dominic, *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974-1979* (London, 2013)

Sandbrook, Dominic, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties, 1964-1970* (2009)

Sandford, Jeremy, *Cathy Come Home* (London, 1967)

Save Britain's Heritage, *Leeds: A Lost Opportunity* (London, 1986)

Seabrook, Jeremy, *The Idea of Neighbourhood: What local politics should be about* (London, 1984)

Services to Community Action and Tenants and NUPE, *Up Against a Brickwall: The dead-end in housing policy* (London, 1979)

Services to Community Action and Tenants, *Campaigning Against Dampness: A Set of 10 Papers*, u.d.

— *Public Inquiries: Action Guide* (London, u.d.)

— *The great sales robbery: sale of council housing* (London, 1980)

Setch, Eve, 'The Face of Metropolitan Feminism: the London Women's Liberation Workshop, 1969-79,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 13:2 (2002): 171-190

Shapely, Peter, ''Tenants arise': Consumerism, tenants and the challenge to council authority in Manchester,' *Social History,* 31:1 (2006), 60-78

Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project, *Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project, July 1969-June 1972* (London, 1972)

Simpson, Alan, *Stacking the Decks: A study of race, inequality and council housing in Nottingham* (Nottingham, 1981)

Slayton, Robert, *Back of the Yards: The Making of a Local Democracy* (Chicago, 1986)

Smith, Darren, 'An Alternative Approach to the Development of Hunslet Green,' (BA (Hons) Leeds Polytechnic, 1992)

Smith, Evan and Worley, Matthew, *Against the Grain: The British Far Left from 1956* (Manchester, 2014)

Smith, Leo, 'Public participation in Islington – a case study,' in Jones, David and Smith, Leo, ed., *Deprivation, Participation and Community Action* (London, 1981), 37-96

Starkie, David, *The Motorway Age: Road and Traffic Policies in Post-war Britain* (Oxford, 1982)

Stoker, Gerry, *The Politics of Local Government* (Basingstoke, 1991)

Tenant Participation Advisory Service, *Tenant management Co-operatives: A Guide for Landlords and Tenants* (Glasgow, 1981)

Thane, Pat, 'The 'Big State' versus the 'Big Society' in twentieth-century Britain,' in Chris Williams and Andrew Edwards (eds.) *The Art of the Possible: Politics and governance in modern British history, 1985-1997: Essays in memory of Duncan Tanner* (Manchester, 2015): 32-44

Thomas, David, *The Making of Community Work* (London, 1983)

Thomas, Nick, 'Challenging the Myths of the 1960s: the Case of Student Protest,' *Twentieth Century British History,* 13:3 (2002): 277-297

Thomas, Nick, 'Protests Against the Vietnam War in 1960s Britain: the Relationship between Protesters and the Press,' *Contemporary British History,* 22:3 (2008): 335-354

Thompson, Brian, *Portrait of Leeds* (London, 1971)

Thompson, Noel, 'Hollowing out the State: Public Choice Theory and the Critique of Keynesian Social Democracy,' *Contemporary British History,* 22:3 (2008): 355-382

Thomson, Michael, *Motorways in London* (London, 1969)

Thorpe, Andrew, *Parties at War: Political Organisation in the Second World War* (Oxford, 2009)

Toms, Pat, *SCAR: Sheepscar-City Access Routes: Inner City Highway Design: the Local Impact of Sheepscar Intersection* (Leeds, 1986)

— 'Promoting Private Traffic: Pedestrians and Cyclists,' *Journal of the Institute of Highways and Transportation,* April 1987, No. 4, Vol. 34, 12

Towers, Graham, *Building Democracy: Community architecture in the inner cities* (London, 1995)

Trowell, F., 'Speculative Housing Development in the Suburb of Headingley, Leeds, 1838-1914, *Publications of the Thoresby Society* LIX (1985)

Turner, Alwyn, *Crisis? What Crisis?: Britain in the 1970s* (London, 2013)

Tyme, John, *Motorway versus Democracy: Public inquiries into road proposals and their political significance* (London, 1978)

Wainwright, Hilary, *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties* (London, 1987)

Waites, Matthew, 'Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual NGOs in Britain: Past Present and Future,' in Crowson, Nick, et al., *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-state Actors in Society and Politics Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2009)

Wall, Derek, *Earth First! and the Anti-Roads Movement: Radical environmentalism and comparative social movements* (London, 1999)

Ward, Colin, ed., *A Decade of Anarchy, 1961-1970* (London, 1987)
— *The Child in the City* (London, 1978)

Wates, Nick, *The Battle for Tolmers Square* (London, 1976)

Wetherell, Sam, 'Painting the Crisis: Community Arts and the Search for the 'Ordinary' in 1970s and '80s London,' *History Workshop Journal,* 76:1 (2013): 235-249

White, Peter, *Planning for Public Transport* (London, 1976)

Wiener, Ron, 'The Engineering Industry in Leeds,' May 1976
— *The Economic Base of Leeds* (Leeds, 1977)
— *The Need to Change the Way We Live: The Social Base of Leeds* (Leeds, 1977)

Wolinkski, Alan, *Osmondthorpe: The Area That Time Forgot,* Barnado Practice Working Paper (Essex, 1984)

Woolmar, Christian and Wates, Nick, *Squatting: the Real Story* (London, 1980)

Wright, Patrick, *A Journey Through Ruins: The Last Days of London* (Oxford, 2009), Third Edition

6. Online resources

Around 1968: Activism, Networks, Trajectories, Faculty of History, University of Oxford, https://around1968.modhist.ox.ac.uk, accessed 14 June 2012,

Database of Archives of Non-Governmental Organisations (DANGO), University of Birmingham, http://www.dango.bham.ac.uk/, accessed 11 June 2012

Digimap, University of Edinburgh, digimap.edina.ac.uk, accessed 1 September 2015

Leodis: a photographic archive of Leeds, Leeds Library and Information Services, www.leodis.net, accessed 10 September 2015

The Guardian website, www.guardian.co.uk, accessed, 20 September 2015

Yorkshire Evening Post website, www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk, accessed 21 September
2015