

## Impact and Knowledge Exchange Event

### EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES AND MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

held at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, London  
Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016



## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	2
ATTENDEES.....	3
PROGRAMME.....	4
MORNING SESSION – presentations, discussions and questions.....	6
AFTERNOON SESSION - discussions and feedback.....	7
SUMMARY – what we can take away from today’s discussions.....	9
COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK AFTER THE EVENT.....	10
FOLLOW UP.....	10

Annex A – one page briefs (Imagine Project research)

## INTRODUCTION

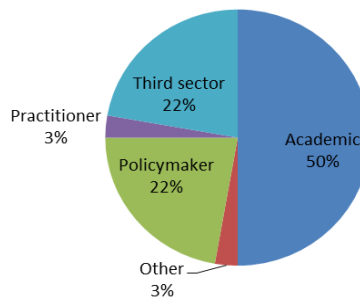
The *Imagine: Connecting Communities through Research* project is a five-year programme of research involving a wide range of universities and community organisations. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) under the Connected Communities programme and started in January 2013. It is now in its fourth year. The aim is to look at the way people engage with their communities and with wider society through taking an active role in civic life. There are four work packages, each with a different focus: social, historical, cultural and democratic.

The aim of this event was to share the emerging findings from the project and to stimulate thinking, particularly around policy implications and impact. What important insights from particular places and communities could help shape policy approaches to community policy at a national and local level?

Approximately 80 people involved in policy-making in the field from government and third sector organisations were invited, of which 36 attended. The event was specially designed to allow dialogue between policymakers, community partners, and academic organisations and for policymakers to meet with people and connect with community development research.

36 guests attended

Academic	18
Other	1
Policymaker	8
Practitioner	1
Third sector	8



The event offered the opportunity to:

- **Take part in small-scale conversations with people who matter** – people in communities who have been doing the research but don't often get to explain what they know. This allowed them to inform policy and engage in lively debate.
- **Get up to date briefings on the Imagine project findings** - The event was designed to help policymakers understand how co-production as a way of working with communities, is generating practical, useful findings that are relevant to policymaking.

Themes centred around:

- **Mental health** - can a 'Communities of Practice' approach help support community-university research into resilient communities?
- **Community development and regeneration schemes** - can the history of community development and regeneration schemes teach us how local residents and community organisations can play a constructive role in creating better futures, particularly in the current context of austerity?
- **Developing community assets** - why do cultures, histories and identities matter in supporting civic engagement in communities and how can arts-based practice draw on and develop community assets?
- **Community cohesion** - can a co-produced approach to history enhance community cohesion?

## ATTENDEES

Last Name	First Name	Organisation
Armstrong	Andrea	University of Durham
Banks	Sarah	University of Durham
Bonner	Anne	Riverside Community Health Project, Newcastle
Brown	Milton	Kirklees Local TV
Cameron	Josh	University of Brighton
Cole	Tim	University of Bristol
Connell	John	DCLG
Curtis	Andy	NCVO Research
Elliott	Eva	University of Cardiff
Eryigit-Madzwamuse	Suna	University of Brighton
Facer	Keri	University of Bristol
Hart	Angie	University of Brighton
Hayden Harman	Patrick	University of Durham
Helen	Walker	Department of Health
Henderson	Sarah	Newport Mind
Johnston	Luke	Phoenix Detached Youth Project
Laidlaw	Maggie	University of Edinburgh
Nunan	Kevin	ARVAC/Voluntary Action Camden
O'Bierne	Maria	DCLG
Pahl	Kate	University of Sheffield
Patmore	Louise	Sussex Partnership NHS FoundationTrust
Poole	Steve	Artist
Rasool	Zanib	Rotherham United Community Sports Trust
Rathbone	Anne	BoingBoing
Rutherford	Robert	DCLG
Salt	Karen	University of Aberdeen
Scott	Matthew	London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC)
Shah	Mariam	Who is Your Neighbour
Streets	Kim	Museums Sheffield
Vanderhoven	Dave	University of Sheffield
Vine	Jeni	Sheffield Cohesion Advisory Group
Ward	Paul	University of Huddersfield
Warren	Angela	University of Sheffield
West	Matthew	DCLG

## PROGRAMME

A policy seminar organised by the *Imagine* research project with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), supported by the ESRC.

11am onwards	<b>Coffee, registration &amp; display of posters and flyers</b>
11.15	<b>Introductions and welcome from Kate Pahl and the team, introduction to the Imagine project and the Imagine approach to co-production</b>
11.30-12.15	<p><b>Imagining different communities and making them happen</b></p> <p>'Rapid fire' presentations from Imagine work packages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Co-producing resilient communities in diverse settings: insights from the <i>Imagine–Social</i> project</b> – Josh Cameron (University of Brighton/BoingBoing); Sarah Henderson (Newport Mind, Wales); Louise Patmore (Sussex Recovery College); Suna Eryigit-Madzwamuse, Angie Hart, Anne Rathbone, (University of Brighton/BoingBoing).</li> <li>2. <b>Imagining Benwell and N. Shields: from the National Community Development Projects (1970s) to 'Our Place' and beyond</b> – Sarah Banks &amp; Andrea Armstrong (Durham University); Anne Bonner (Riverside Community Health Project, Benwell, Newcastle); Luke Johnston (Phoenix Detached Youth Project, North Shields); Patrick Harman (Hayden Harman Foundation, North Carolina, USA).</li> <li>3. <b>Identities, histories and cultures in contested communities: the value of arts, humanities and culture to community-led regeneration</b> – Paul Ward (University of Huddersfield), Milton Brown (Kirklees Local TV); Maggie Laidlaw (University of Edinburgh); Kate Pahl (University of Sheffield); Kim Streets (Museums Sheffield); Zanib Rasool MBE (Partnership and Development Manager for Rotherham United Community Sports Trust with expertise in community cohesion); Mariam Shah (Historian and Community Partner, Rotherham).</li> </ol>
12.15-12.30	<b>Questions and Discussion</b>
12.30-13.15	<b>LUNCH</b>

13.15-14.15	<p><b>Round table discussions, world café style [three changeovers]</b></p> <p><b>1. Communities in control or left in the lurch?</b>  <i>Facilitator: Andrea Armstrong &amp; Anne Bonner</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As central and local government reduce/withdraw funding for both individuals (welfare benefits) and groups (e.g. community centres, youth provision, libraries) what are people’s experiences at local level?</li> <li>• What strategies are communities using to manage assets/liabilities and how are they working collaboratively to make this happen?</li> <li>• What financial, technical and community development support is needed to enable local groups to take control and what is and should be the role of local and central government in this?</li> <li>• What new forms of community governance and representation could be explored and implemented at a local level?</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Beyond sink or swim: what are the challenges and potentials of co-production to build resilience from childhood to adulthood and to empower marginalised groups?</b>  <i>Facilitator: Angie Hart and Suna Eryigit-Madzwamuse</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can lived-experience, practitioner and academic knowledge be effectively combined to develop resilience building projects and empower communities?</li> <li>• What are the challenges and successes involved in engaging different stakeholders (‘inside’ and ‘outside’ communities)?</li> <li>• In the context of reduced funding for many statutory and voluntary services is resilience-building about leaving individuals and communities to ‘do it by themselves’?</li> <li>• In what ways could co-productive approaches extend beyond specific projects to deepen democracy and enrich civic engagement of marginalised groups?</li> </ul> <p><b>3. How can we use culture and history critically and creatively to inform future imaginings and development of communities?</b>  <i>Facilitator: Paul Ward</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What enduring and practical lessons can we learn from past attempts to develop communities and neighbourhoods?</li> <li>• How can a process of reclaiming the past strengthen and empower ‘marginalised’ communities?</li> <li>• How can government, local authorities and universities learn to listen?</li> <li>• What value does the arts and culture have in informing communities that might be working on regeneration?</li> <li>• How can the arts and culture support and sustain enthusiasm for change, particularly in contested communities?</li> </ul>
14.15-15.00	Rapid feedback from roundtables (world café style), discussion and concluding remarks
15.00	<b>TEA AND DEPART</b>

## MORNING SESSION:

### Welcome and introduction

Kate Pahl, Principal Investigator of the Imagine project (University of Sheffield) introduced Imagine and Co-Investigators Angie Hart (University of Brighton), Sarah Banks (University of Durham) and Paul Ward (University of Huddersfield). She welcomed everyone and was delighted that both policymakers from DCLG and Department of Health, and community partners from as far as Scotland to the South of England had made the effort to attend.

### Presentations from *Imagine* project work packages:

Three presentations covered the emerging findings of the Imagine project so far. One page briefs were also circulated in delegate packs (see attached annex A).

Presentations included:

- Social – community co-produced research on resilience.
- Historical – communities researching the Community Development projects in North Tyneside and Coventry and the implications for community regeneration.
- Cultural – culture and heritage with a particular focus on contested communities in Rotherham.
- Democratic – including how the co-production of history can lead to new understandings of British identities.

### Discussion and questions:

- What model is it that we are using with Community Development projects? Consensus versus conflict was questioned and whether we need to re-think the models.
- It's about creating a different experience and making knowledge visible. It is where our sense of responsibility lies and how this relates to structures, powers and decision making.
- It is often about relationships and different possibilities in different contexts.
- History is repeating. Can we learn just once from the experience?
- The benefit of being able to hold a discussion like today is a real achievement. In some parts of the world it would be impossible to convene a similar group.
- The competing level of power and complexity creates a lot of social issues that are persistent. It is clear that dialogue needs to be continuous and everyone has a part to play, looking back at historical insights and re-thinking models of history.
- Community partners find the project is engaging and a place where they feel they can have a voice, where previously they didn't feel they could be heard and it was challenging. Helping people to help themselves and find solutions, to enable them to undertake a range of activities and make change is important.
- Finding local solutions is much better. Parish councils provide opportunities where projects can start that journey.
- Infrastructure is needed if community partners are to run themselves.
- Strong sense that community development has disappeared, what was there in the 70s no longer exists.
- Conflict versus consensus and tackling inequality is a priority.
- Closures of community services means constant fire-fighting.

## AFTERNOON SESSION:

### World-café style discussion

A world-café style discussion with four tables and three change overs was chaired by Sarah Banks, in response to the questions:

1. **Communities in control or left in the lurch?** Two tables covered this topic, one facilitated by Andrea Armstrong and Anne Bonner and the other facilitated by Kate Pahl.
2. **Beyond sink or swim? What are the challenges and potentials of co-production to build resilience from childhood to adulthood and to empower marginalised groups?** Facilitated by Angie Hart and Suna Erygit-Madzwamuse.
3. **How can we use culture and history critically and creatively to inform future imaginings and development of communities?** Facilitated by Paul Ward.

Delegates re-grouped after 20 minutes and members were asked to choose a different table to allow mixed discussions.

Sarah Banks led a rapid feedback session at the end, where facilitators at each of the four tables were asked to provide some key points:

### Discussion Feedback:

Communities in control or left in the lurch:

- 'My community' is not clear, it is 'our' community.
- Specific talk about young people, migrants, in relation to community cohesion and discussion around those issues, people feeling out of control.
- Conflict between groups, competition and way that funding is given.
- People need to move off single issue platforms and recognise there are other needs.
- Need to have an equalities framework in place when community activities are devolved, so there isn't an abuse in power to how community centres are run and used in relation to asset transfer, for example.
- Acknowledge professional knowledge of youth and community workers within those spaces and trained in ways that they are useful, eg DBS checks, health and safety training, respecting and valuing, supporting, etc.
- An incubator for good practice; to support the process to mobilise community. From a 4 pronged approach - funders, universities, policymakers, and community organisations.
- Funding and social enterprise structures.
- Dialogue, understanding procurement structures, recognising identities and engagement with government.
- Owning narrative in terms of arts.
- Lobbying – universities and charities need to be able to do this in relation to government policy.
- RELATIONAL structures are key.



## Beyond sink or swim:

- Relational also an issue – what policymakers understood and needed.
- The language of resilience and concept, whether internal to individuals or external, and what is the role of government.
- Resilience about beating the odds and changing the odds.
- In terms of policy and community organisers – should government be involved in recruiting people to get them involved in local community projects? Some think it is a good idea whilst others think it is simply getting people to do everything for themselves.
- Community pubs – communities organising themselves to buy local pubs. Holding a meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> April to talk about building relationships in Brighton, all welcome. Good success story.
- Imagine model - excellent model for good practice demonstrates how community based organisations can learn so much, leadership styles, project management, financial management, mutual expertise, entrepreneurialism.
- Opportunity to have 'good' disagreements, without falling out, so university provides an excellent safe space to learn.
- Reliance on individuals like people involved in projects such as Imagine but once this ends model needs to be resilient if we are to retain the structure.

## How can we use culture and history critically and creatively to inform future imaginings and development of communities:

- Museums are sites for different forms of knowledge to emerge.
- Representativeness – is it something we aim for or does it lead to a problem of cohesion? History is about conflict and division.
- British National stories – excludes Britishness, need to work out what the national stories and histories are.
- Little stories that emerge and how it changes the way we know about the past, but also changes ways we know about the future.

## SUMMARY

### What we can take away from today's discussion:

- Solid and stable foundation to enable support and administration is important.
- More opportunities like today where difficult conversations can be had to bridge the gap.
- Aspiration and inspiration – great to hear from policymakers about what is out there – MyCommunity.org.uk.
- Support and governance structures - how do we get our discussion today across to local authorities, should DCLG be talking to local authorities about what they expect, similarly about what comes out of Imagine? If nothing happens nothing changes locally, importance of change at a local level.
- Communications at local level.
- Need an anti-policy statement in relation to the new lobbying law. If it goes ahead it will mean these events will not be funded and activities such as this are at serious risk which means implications in terms of relationships between universities, local authorities, etc. If we think this is valuable we have to change the lobbying law.
- Working together more and finding common ground and language – boundary objects that might come out of today and outputs coming from Imagine are useful to DCLG and policymakers. DCLG want to spread the message to a wider group and have ambition to take forward working together with community university partnerships to look at what can be achieved.
- Co-production is essential and the need to get things co-produced, for policymakers to be prepared to involve communities at the table as a partner, help design and discuss how to deliver the work with the expertise available. Through involving everybody it galvanises as a partner with community groups and universities.
- Good outcome from Imagine and Productive Margins projects. Ways of doing things differently, try out new methods, co-production, different kind of research questions, different platforms, new partnerships – policymakers, community organisations, universities.
- Projects like this can address the gap in evidence base about co-produced models and the effectiveness of wider collaborations which can have a significant impact on empirical evidence.
- Need more than just case studies as evidence and co-production is a good method of doing this.
- People in this room are really well placed to deliver and add to this evidence.
- The Connected Communities programme reflects on these processes but this way of working doesn't have to defend itself against other modes of working, can tell robust stories about the contribution of the work which has been thoroughly evidenced. Comparative approach can also be problematic as co-production of research and co-production of services merge into each other.
- Important to carry on the conversation.

Kate thanked everyone for their contribution, especially members from the Imagine project and policymakers for attending. Sarah thanked Kate and her team for organising the event. All were asked to complete the hard copy of the evaluation form.

The meeting ended at 3.00pm

## SOME COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK AFTER THE EVENT

### Comments:

*“Useful to learn more on resilience and the failings of policy over 50 years.”* **Policymaker**

*“Open dialogue. Range of inputs (academic and community)”* **Policymaker**

*“I feel inspired by the policymakers.”* **Community partner of the Imagine project**

*“Always good to hear about great work and the barriers to be removed.”* **Policymaker**

*“Hearing from communities about policy played out in practice.”* **Policymaker/Politician**

*“Communicating listening and inspired.”* **Third Sector**

*“Listening to presentations and catching up with people about their work.”*

**Policymaker/Politician**

*“Doing things 'right' v doing things 'differently': Going by conversation on the day, it would appear that government policymakers continue to prefer evidence based co-production and empirical evidence, rather than case studies. We might ask what this says about assumptions of doing things 'right' or 'officially'? There seems to be some tension between government aspirations for communities to act as agents for change, while simultaneously not giving equal regard to their position in co-produced research”* **Postgraduate Student**

*“Sharing findings, and networking. Listening to community members' perspectives, and the ways in which other academics view their own work/methods.”* **Postgraduate Student**

*“I found out a totally new way of thinking about resilience. I'd been working with a very old fashioned, out-dated and frankly reactionary approach and didn't realise it. Very pleased to have come along and engaged with the Co-Investigators and team.”* **Policymaker/Professional practitioner**

*“Already deeply immersed. Good to add new perspectives”* **Professional practitioner/Postgraduate Student/Third Sector**

*“It allowed us to raise issues but won't impact how we work.”* **Third sector**

### Least useful aspects:

*“It could have been extended to cover two days, with the second day providing further workshop/round table discussion. I try to find usefulness in all event content, however, the least useful aspect was people going over their allocated time, (which was extremely condensed) leaving less time to network with people during the shortened lunch.”* **Postgraduate Student**

*“Would be good to have hand outs before event to be informed beforehand.”* **Policymaker**

## FOLLOW UP

A follow up email thanking attendees and requesting feedback was sent to 36 attendees. In addition, Kate Pahl emailed presentation slides to key contacts at DCLG and Department of Health and offered further options for engagement with the Imagine Project.

## ANNEXE A



### The Cultural and Democratic Contexts of Civic Engagement: Accessing community funds of knowledge

*I was so impressed with how much knowledge there is in our communities that often goes untapped and we lose a rich part of heritage and culture forever. Folklore medicine is fascinating a mixture of fable, myths, religious and cultural beliefs mixed with herbs and spices making a strong concoction that even today in modern Britain, many people still turn to old traditional ways of healing. Everybody holds the key to knowledge it can be found in every community and every house in the land, it is just we put different value on that knowledge, for a long time community knowledge is seen as being far down the ladder from academic knowledge held by scholars (Zanib Rasool, community development worker, and researcher on 'Imagine' November 2014).*

#### Background

The cultural and democratic context projects explore the place of arts, culture and democratisation of knowledge across the UK. The main centres of research are in South and West Yorkshire but research is also being undertaken in Scotland, on women's time, and Kent, on young people imagining the future. Much of our work, but not all, has been undertaken with Black and minority ethnic communities, including people of Pakistani and Roma heritage in Rotherham and African-Caribbean people in Huddersfield, in different forms of co-production of research. This process of imagining has involving combining the use of history, together with collaborative ethnography and arts practice along with the analysis of cultural products, in particular literary texts, as a methodological framework. The approach treats communal life as a site in which the possibility of creative agency can materialise, acknowledging the power of the arts to promote social resilience and renewal.

#### Key issues

People have limited resources and time – many people want to 'lend a hand' but it takes particular skills and personality to rally all the rest. It is often the people who don't get involved who are most marginalised.

Policy makers need to consider how their work can reposition marginalised communities and their knowledge so they are not just passive recipients but agents for change. It is important to think about ways of engaging people – arts-based methods, including poetry, art and film. Poetry produces a different data than from interviews – using both together provides a means to generate new kinds of knowledge. The arts in have a role in place-making/identity and galleries and museums can be safe spaces where contested histories/futures can be explored in the public realm, validating new funds of knowledge and enabling them to become part of the local and national narrative: *'The artefacts, photos and religious scriptures around my house tell a story of my heritage which I share with my young nephews but no one in school will ever ask them about their history'* (Zanib Rasool).

#### Findings

Emerging findings include:

- Avoiding the deficit model: ask what people know rather than what they don't know.
- The knowledge in the community (oral, intergenerational, historical, located in practice and often multilingual) needs to be recognised and valued.
- Civic participation and activism need not be in existing structures, but needs to be nurtured from where women are, from the bottom up. Local, small initiatives work best for women.
- History and culture matter – the history of the Pakistani heritage community, for example, is being lost and can be captured by them through arts and humanities methodologies including oral history and visual methods.

#### Further information

Email: [imagine@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:imagine@sheffield.ac.uk) Website: [www.imaginecommunity.org.uk](http://www.imaginecommunity.org.uk)

## The Social Context of Civic Engagement: Building resilience knowledge and practice by mobilising lived experience, practitioner, academic and community expertise.

*Be conscious of the value of assets that [community partners] bring to the table. These may be in the form of contacts, reputation and expertise, among other things.* (Martikke, Church and Hart 2015)

### Background

These projects build on the insights gained from the stage 1 study (quoted above). They involve individuals (e.g., practitioners, parents, children/young people, people facing mental health problems, policy-makers, academics) and organisations (e.g., local government, universities, schools, charities or social enterprises) concerned with the life opportunities of marginalised and/or vulnerable people. The projects are developing new resilience-based research and practice through community-university partnerships. In England, Scotland, Wales, Germany, Greece, Turkey and Malaysia 15 projects are using a 'community of practice' approach. They have been grouped into four clusters: child and family resilience; practitioner/teacher and school resilience; young adult/adult resilience; and, resilience models for practice and research. For example:

- 1) In Brighton, young people are working collectively to create tools to support their resilience and improve their futures. A partnership with the University of Brighton, School of Design led to a project called Co-designing Resilience. Through active interventions by young people and community partners, the Resilience Framework was re-imagined in various digital and creative media.
- 2) In South Wales, Newport Mind is hosting a project that supports the development of family resilience. The project started with facilitation of 'encounters' between the young people, their families, and professionals (mental health and youth workers, teachers, police, fire service, academics) who work with them. Their work on family resilience has expanded to a training programme for parents/carers and a collaborative work at primary schools to support children and young people with adversity at home settings, including domestic abuse.
- 3) Peer Trainers with lived experience of mental health problems have collaborated with mental health practitioners and academics to co-design and deliver an 8 week Building Resilience for Well-being and Recovery programme – offered as a Sussex Recovery College course.
- 4) The Imagine project is also re-imagining assessment tools used in resilience research and practice. In collaboration with community partners and across countries a novel assessment tool of the Resilience Framework is being developed. This tool will help target resources accurately to improve the effectiveness of collaborative practices.
- 5) School-based projects in Greece and Germany have created more resilient school climates especially for those who are experiencing challenges in the schools. In a radical departure from traditional approaches in these contexts, acknowledgement of lived experience expertise has led to the projects being enriched by active parent involvement.

### Key insights and emerging findings

- 1) Across the projects a 'communities of practice' approach is enabling successful partnerships in these culturally and contextually diverse settings.
- 2) Specifically individuals and organisations have found ways to work together and overcome some of the barriers that arise with perceived and actual power and other social inequalities.
- 3) Ensuring lived experience expertise is central to these projects from inception has been a pre-requisite for their success. This demands resources, time and thought that can be justified by enhanced impacts and enduring legacies.
- 4) Projects which consider both immediate concerns *and* how to build better futures enhance trust, engagement and sustainability.
- 5) Finally, the partnerships have developed specific approaches (drawing on the Resilience Framework) that communities and individuals have used to promote their resilience and capacity to respond to adversity (including challenging it).

### Further information

Email: [imagine@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:imagine@sheffield.ac.uk) Website: [www.imaginecommunity.org.uk](http://www.imaginecommunity.org.uk)

## The Historical Context of Civic Engagement: From the National Community Development Project to the Big Society and Beyond

*If we are thinking about improving places, we need to ask why areas are as they are. We need to divest ourselves of the idea that local people have made them as they are. Citizens have a right to get knowledge back. The role of social sciences is to say how things can change. People know their area best.* (Recommendation from roundtable on co-production, *Imagining Benwell* Workshop, Jan. 2016)

### Background, key issues and approaches

The starting point for the historical research projects was the national Community Development Project (CDP), a Home Office-funded experimental, anti-poverty initiative of the 1970s, located in 12 areas in the UK. Three CDP areas are the focus of our study: Benwell (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), North Shields and Hillfields (Coventry).

While starting with the past, this research looks at the process of change over the past 40 years, including issues facing communities today in a climate of economic austerity and welfare cuts. A programme of research and related activities was undertaken by researchers from Durham and Warwick Universities, with 15 community partner organisations. Over 100 interviews were conducted during 2014-15 with former and current residents, community activists/workers, politicians and policy makers, seeking their views on the CDP, community participation and changes over time. Information on regeneration and community engagement following the CDP was collected, along with census data showing social, economic and demographic change, 1971-2011. A range of projects was undertaken by community-based partner organisations, from inter-generational graffiti art in North Shields to community history and arts projects such as 'Never Felt So Good' (a series of colourful pictures of Benwell made in felt) and a Hillfields photography project culminating in exhibitions at The Herbert Museum and Art Gallery (November 2014) and Fargo Village (August 2015) in Coventry.

### Emerging findings

- **Legacies of the CDPs** included: organisational structures (e.g. Coventry and Newcastle Law Centres developed from Coventry Income and Legal Rights Service and Benwell Community Law Project); networks of people who moved into local/national politics, academia, community work and activism; new ways of thinking about poverty (challenging the 'blame the victim' orthodoxy of the time); a body of research-based literature still influential today in community/social work education.
- **The radical analysis of the CDPs** in the 1970s that community-based solutions to poverty can have limited effect in a context of structural economic and social change is borne out in the subsequent 40 years of area-based regeneration in these neighbourhoods, which are still some of the relatively deprived areas of their respective cities according to national indicators.
- **The importance of improvements in living conditions** – nevertheless, living conditions (especially housing) have significantly improved. If we look behind the 'bigger picture' analysis by asking local organisations about the details of people's everyday lives, then for some there is a big difference in terms of improved public spaces and neighbourhood safety, for example. Neighbourhood management schemes in particular were regarded favourably.
- **Impact of austerity** – some community organisations struggle to survive in a context of economic austerity and increasing needs, while others have risen to the challenge and expanded their remit (for example, food banks). Many are keen to play a role in designing and delivering services, but this requires support from local and central government. Many community organisations feel 'left in the lurch' – given tokenistic funding to take over liabilities of dilapidated buildings (under the guise of 'asset' transfer) and create plans for services with no resources to implement them (e.g. the 'Our Place' initiative).
- **Reclaiming the past** - the CDPs understood the value of historical research and importance of documenting 'hidden histories' of local working people to counter histories of the powerful. In Benwell, North Shields and Coventry today groups of local people are keen to write their own histories to challenge stigma associated with the areas, thus strengthening and empowering these community groups. For example, a facebook page dedicated to the history and memories of 'The Ridges' an estate in North Shields (now known as Meadowell, and 'famous' for riots in 1991) gained thousands of followers in a short space of time, while the Hillfields photography project, which generated a book (*Imagine Hillfields*) and 2000 visitors to an exhibition, created a physical and visual statement of the value to people of community knowledge.

### Further information

**Blogs:** [www.imagenortheast.org/](http://www.imagenortheast.org/) [www.kyneswood.com/Imagine\\_Coventry](http://www.kyneswood.com/Imagine_Coventry)

**Website:** [www.dur.ac.uk/beacon/socialjustice/imagine/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/beacon/socialjustice/imagine/)