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Assessing the potential and limits of community-based initiatives in urban regeneration: three decades of experience on Sheffield's Manor estate

Alistair Bruce[a] and David Clarson[b]

ABSTRACT
This paper charts the evolution, over three decades, of a group of community-based organizations in the Manor area of Sheffield, UK, which have sought to establish the basis for its economic and social regeneration. It identifies various factors as important in underpinning the organizations' collective contribution, but observes that this contribution is largely limited to the rebuilding of community capital, esteem and environment. Material and measurable improvements in social and economic indicators require, in addition, a stronger appreciation of the value of organizational knowledge and learning, and more purposeful network development. The increased role for community-based organizations in addressing the challenges of sustained economic austerity is noted.

INTRODUCTION

Almost 25 years ago, our paper in the Policy Review section of *Regional Studies* (Bruce & Clarson, 1993) described and provided an analysis of a community-based initiative by the Manor Training and Resource Centre (MaTReC) to develop relevant and accessible training to residents of the Manor Estate in Sheffield, UK, an area characterized by acute economic and social disadvantage, as a basis for local economic regeneration. A central message of the paper was the imperative of establishing a community-rooted and properly informed basis for the design of training provision, founded on a detailed understanding of the resources, capabilities, needs and aspirations of the community and its people, and of the factors, respectively, facilitating and inhibiting engagement with training. At the time, this basis for effective intervention represented something of a departure from the norm, whereby what support there was for regeneration invariably lacked

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an informed underpinning, often owing more to political gesturing than to carefully designed, intelligence-based policy.

In the intervening period, the incidence and diversity of neighbourhood-based urban regeneration projects has increased enormously and on an international scale. Such initiatives frequently reflect disenchantment with central and local government policy interventions which lack a sophisticated understanding of the particular needs of individual neighbourhoods. They also reflect a belief in the potential for bottom-up initiatives to harness the energy, imagination, commitment and specialist knowledge within communities in developing regeneration-focused activities. In the UK, this has found recent expression in the Department for Communities and Local Government (2016) initiative to make £140 million of loan funding available for locally led initiatives which 'will allow communities to lever in investment from the public and private sector to deliver ambitious projects that local people can be proud of'.

One aim of this contribution is to explore, at a micro-level, the legacy of MaTReC's intervention by demonstrating how it not only delivered a transformation in the availability and uptake of local training opportunities, but also provided a platform and a model for a much broader and sustained pattern of community engagement, evidenced by a range of community-based organizations that have emerged and flourished over the subsequent period.

The evaluation of the Manor experience provides an interesting case in its own right, though it is understood that it focuses on a community-based response to a particular set of circumstances and challenges over a particular timescale in one neighbourhood of one English city. This said, studies of this nature encourage us to reflect on the foundations and sustainability of regeneration initiatives more generally, and in particular on the potential for community-based approaches to lead regeneration in the presence of market failure and financially compromised public responses. Such themes across a wide range of international contexts have become a major focus for interest among academic and policy-making communities (e.g., Porter & Shaw, 2009). Despite the wide diversity in cultural, institutional and political contexts internationally, and even within national settings (e.g., Jones, Meegan, Kennett, & Croft, 2016) there are equally often observable similarities in the causes and indicators of urban disadvantage and in the range of possible policy responses. In the discussion that follows, we highlight the types of benefit that can accrue as a result of community-based activity, whilst recognizing also its limitations in terms of its ability to affect materially measurable economic and social fundamentals. Deakin (2009) acknowledges the challenge of effecting material, measurable change in a comparative study of disadvantaged urban areas in Scotland, Germany, France and Italy, pointing to the persistent, long-term, structural nature of area-based deprivation.

The paper is organized as follows. It begins by reviewing briefly in the next section the literature relating to community-based urban regeneration. This establishes the context for the study in terms of the evolution of attitudes and approaches to policy over the period under scrutiny. It then describes, in the third section, the situation on the Manor estate in the late 1980s, the origins and early experience of the community-based response, and the subsequent evolution and success of this intervention, both in terms of its achievements in the training arena per se and via the inspiration it provided for the development of a further set of community-based organizations. The fourth section explains the contribution of these organizations and identifies key principles underpinning their operation. The fifth section assesses the achievements and limitations of community-based regeneration in addressing the problems of the Manor estate, discusses the challenges facing the area's future development in an era of austerity, and reflects on the lessons which the Manor experience might offer to comparable areas of urban disadvantage. Conclusions then follow.

URBAN DEPRIVATION AND POLICY RESPONSES IN THE UK: CONTEXT AND LITERATURE

An important feature of the context for this paper is the changing role of community-based organizations in the UK, which has received significant attention in the academic literature in recent years. Foley and Martin (2000) chart the changing levels of national government backing for community-led initiatives in the final decades of the 20th century. This support was viewed as strong in the 1970s via the work of the community development projects, more cosmetic than authentic in the 1980s, with the urban programme embodying a heavy bureaucratic influence and compromised by a real-terms reduction in funding, and characterized in the 1990s by an initial emphasis on business-led partnerships which gave way to more of a challenge-based and outcome-focused approach. Lawless (1994) offers an interesting assessment of how the shifting emphases in approach to regeneration played out in the specific context of Sheffield, particularly in the 1980s, with an initially interventionist economic strategy by the city authorities shifting to a more facilitative, partnership-brokering role later in the decade. The incoming Labour government introduced a championing of community involvement after 1997, as evidenced by the revision of criteria for single regeneration budget (SRB) support. But, sounding a note of scepticism, a key factor in determining the *actual* involvement of the community in regeneration was identified (Foley & Martin, 2000, p. 488) as

> 'the degree to which national government is willing to trust communities and local service providers with policy space, resources and greater autonomy ….'.

Similarly, it has been observed that the lead agencies in partnership approaches have often tended to dominate decision-making under such arrangements (Foley & Martin, 2000; Hall & Nevin, 1999). Maginn (2007) refers to institutions' 'underlying caution' in relation to developing genuine partnership; Newman and Verpraet (1999) and Dargan (2009) observe the tendency for deliberate exclusion, lack of clarity around the mechanics of involvement and organizational representatives' limited capabilities or confidence in engaging in meaningful participation.

Since 2000, the greater policy emphasis on encouraging community involvement has been largely sustained, with a partnership approach between local groups and government agencies as the favoured model, latterly in the guise of local empowerment and as part of the 'Big Society' agenda. However, Lawson and Kearns (2014) continue to urge caution in assuming that the rhetoric of support for the community approach necessarily translates into effective community empowerment in practice, observing a 'vagueness regarding how it plays out in real terms' (p. 66). Issues here include the definition of community or neighbourhood used. A government agency or local authority, for example, may be inclined to define communities in terms of administrative boundaries which bear little relation to actual communities in terms of recognizable identity. Similarly, the level of disaggregation employed in labelling communities may be inappropriate (Taylor & Wilson, 2006). A further issue is the degree to which the aims of community-based organizations align with the aims of the wider community; do such organizations speak with a legitimate voice? (Taylor, 2007).

Peredo and Chrisman (2006) offer important insights into the role of community in economic regeneration by focusing on community-based enterprise (CBE) as a basis for sustainable economic development and examining a range of individual initiatives across a wide range of international locations. Significantly, in the context of the focus of this paper, they observe the importance of social and economic stress in triggering CBE, whereby (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006 p. 317):

a major impetus of CBEs appears to be a threat that either causes communities to perceive a major dise-quilibrium in their way of life or an equilibrium condition so far below the former equilibrium condition that a search for opportunities and new resource combinations with both economic and social value is undertaken.

The period we cover in charting the evolution of community-based policy is, therefore, one of significant turbulence, a time where it is clear that the issue of urban regeneration has remained high on the national policy agenda but where there have been competing and shifting approaches as to how best to foster effective policy and outcomes and competing perspectives on the role of community-based initiatives.

THE MANOR IN THE LATE 1980S: DIAGNOSIS, EARLY RESPONSE

The Manor estate in the late 1980s combined a physical infrastructure in a state of advanced decay with a set of strikingly negative economic and social indicators, all to a significant degree the legacy of the deindustrialization and recession of the early 1980s. The physical manifestations of disadvantage were reflected in a low-quality housing stock and an, at best, marginal infrastructure in terms of economic activity, with only isolated and fragmented pockets of retail provision. One of the consequences of this was that the vast majority of the limited disposable income generated on the estate necessarily translated into expenditure elsewhere, resulting in a very low local multiplier. Economic and social indicators, particularly in relation to employment and crime, identified the Manor as the most disadvantaged district within Sheffield and one of the most disadvantaged in the country. The local authority's approach to the problems of the Manor was compromised by both a lack of resource and an apparent absence of ideas. To some degree, a lack of purposeful response may have been compounded by the fact that while Sheffield, on average, is 'one of the least deprived major cities in England' at the same time 'nearly a third of Sheffield's population lived in areas which fell within the 20% most deprived in the country …' (Dabinett, Borland, Squires, & Walker, 2016, p. 481). In other words, there may have been an element of masking of the problems of acutely deprived areas by the aggregate profile.

Despite the general bleakness of the situation and of the apparent prospects for the Manor, there was at the time some evidence of community-based potential in terms of entrepreneurial capability and an appetite for exploring regeneration possibilities. An example of this was the Manor Employment Project (MEP), a collection of micro-businesses occupying some former council works department premises on the estate. The experience of MEP inspired the founding of the MaTReC, which aimed to support entrepreneurial ambition and to develop training opportunities for local people to develop their skills and employability. An essential early step in the design of MaTReC's provision was to assemble and interrogate a reliable set of data from the locality in relation to aspects such as the educational and skills profiles of residents, their appetite for employment and for training, areas of perceived training need and factors necessary to facilitate uptake of training opportunities. Accordingly, in 1990, MaTReC organized a survey of the estate (Bruce & Clarson, 1991, 1993), the first tailored, locality-focused exercise of its kind in the area. The survey was conducted by local residents, trained in survey techniques and data analysis at MaTReC, and this local dimension was regarded as crucial both in engendering a spirit of self-determination among Manor residents, and in securing a high level of response to the survey. The survey results confirmed the general picture of educational and economic dis-advantage, with only 24.2% of respondents in full-time employment and 76.5% leaving school without any educational qualifications. Importantly, the survey revealed a widespread appetite for training, with 56.4% declaring an active interest, and an awareness of its importance in enhancing employment prospects. Equally, it highlighted a number of key constraints on access to existing training opportunities in Sheffield and identified essential features that would support uptake of

training provision. Unsurprisingly, a central factor here was the requirement for local provision, avoiding the time and costs associated with accessing provision outwith the neighbourhood. Of those who expressed an interest in training, 59% indicated that their participation would be contingent on local provision.

It was also evident that the local community had a clear idea of the types of training that would encourage participation, of the need for sensitive timetabling of training provision and of the necessity to offer support services, most notably childcare provision, to support training uptake. The educational background revealed in the survey suggested that for many residents, experience of school had been, at least, unfulfilling and that MaTReC's training provision should be clearly differentiated in terms of institutional style and context. As such, training provision was packaged and offered as part of a wider set of community-centred resources, rather than as a stand-alone educational experience, with potentially negative associations for participants.

The results of the Manor survey were to become central to the design of MaTReC's demonstration of the potential for locality-based and community-driven training provision. A key theme in the training provision was continuous engagement with the community, via ongoing local consultation regarding training needs, deployment of a local employment policy in relation to staffing of the core project team and ancillary services and the development of a tutor training programme which encouraged local residents to build skills as part-time tutors. Conscious efforts were made to locate training opportunities at the heart of the community, either within the MaTReC building or in local schools, church halls and community centres, thereby both facilitating access and offering programmes within a more general and familiar setting, rather than via a bespoke learning/training facility. The provision of free on-site childcare to support training participation was established and the timing of sessions was informed by consultation with potential clients to facilitate access. Participation in all training programmes was free, with all necessary teaching and learning materials also freely provided. The importance of formal and independent recognition of MaTReC programmes was also important and resulted initially in accreditation by the South Yorkshire Open College Federation, with further recognition via participants gaining City and Guilds and Yorkshire and Humberside Adult Further and Higher Education learning certificates. Once the initial training provision was in place, attention turned to the active development of a suite of workshop units adjacent to MaTReC's premises, to encourage establishment of local enterprises under the auspices of the newly formed Manor Development Company Limited (MDC).

By 1993, therefore, a comprehensive and local training infrastructure had been established, informed by local aspirations and needs and, in a real sense 'owned' by the community. For its time, this represented an unusual and somewhat novel model, founded on what appeared to be sound operating principles, but essentially untried and untested. The principles and early achievements of the approach were disseminated via participation in academic and practitioner conferences, academic articles and by the hosting of a major conference by MaTReC in Sheffield, which drew delegates from across the UK. In a little over two decades, these early developments were to prove instrumental in preventing a further decline in Manor's economic fortunes, in re-establishing its potential as an economically sustainable community, and more importantly, in substantially removing the stigma which had previously blighted the identity and prospects of the estate and its people.

SUPPORTING A BASIS FOR SUSTAINABLE REGENERATION: THE EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF AN ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

This section charts aspects of the development of Manor since the early initiatives described above and demonstrates how this has been characterized by the emergence and development of

a series of community-based organizations which, together, offer the basis for sustainable social and economic regeneration.

An early legacy of MaTReC was a clear demonstration that a community-based initiative, drawing on detailed locally sourced information on training needs and enablers, could inform the design and provision of a resource which was highly regarded, valued and used by local residents. As such, it represented the antithesis of many contemporary local government initiatives which were ill-informed and ill-formulated and which failed either to address the particular requirements of specific communities or to deliver a return on public investment. Whilst MaTReC's early achievements were significant in building its own confidence and ambition as an organization, its demonstrable success was also important in inspiring the successful development of further community-based organizations over the following two decades. In large part, these represent, in an institutional sense, the foundations for the rebuilding of the community's economic and social fabric, so it is appropriate in this section to chart the origins, activities and contribution of five of the key organizations.

MaTReC

MaTReC's early success in establishing local adult training provision allowed it to develop a reputation as a learning and skills provider which has continued to grow over the last 20 years. Whilst the main focus of its activity remains training, support and career guidance for over 16s, it has developed a suite of ancillary activities and services, such as a work club, broader information and advice dissemination, and facilities hire. MaTReC is funded principally by the Skills Funding Agency (about 70%), with the remainder largely accounted for by the Education Funding Agency. By mid-2016 it employed 28 people and worked with over 400 clients per annum. Its location is in two buildings, including its original premises, at the heart of the estate. The success of the organization can be measured in various ways; in terms of its 29-year track record of training and learning delivery, the very substantial number of clients who have successfully acquired qualifications over that period and its securing of national awards, including numerous successes at Adult Learners' Week (2014). As an organization, MaTReC's long and impressive track record has established it as attractive to funding agencies. It is very strongly networked within the community and across the range of activity it demonstrates a continuing commitment to its mission of 'empowering the local community'. By late 2016, MaTReC had supported the training needs of over seventeen thousand individuals, with the vast majority of these gaining certificated qualifications.

MDC

MDC's establishment in 1992 aimed to build on the work of MaTReC by creating local opportunities for small business creation and related employment via the provision of small industrial units and office premises. The scale of activity has developed impressively in the last 20 years, with over 50 small businesses now operating from the Alison Business Centre, situated adjacent to MaTReC. The most recent addition to its facilities is Manor Works, a state-of-the-art building which has received national recognition. In addition to physical space for business operation, MDC offers a range of business advice services, including support for those considering self-employment. In addition, it provides space for community activity and as such the span of its work has extended beyond its original brief so that it is seen as central to the broader local community, rather than simply the local business community. MDC employs seven staff and five volunteers and generates an annual income of around £200,000. Its key contribution to the regeneration of the estate is its enabling of and ongoing support for demonstrable and diverse economic activity in the heart of the community.

Manor and Castle Development Trust (MCDT)

MCDT was established in 1997 as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, with a mission to 'support community action that brings about positive economic, social and environmental change through the development of enterprising solutions'. It embraces a range of activities, including the promotion of community development, health and social care, the running of a café, the provision of nursery education, delivery of youth activities, education and training, and development of employability skills. MCDT employs around 60 (largely local) people, with a further 50 volunteers supporting its work, and has an annual turnover of approximately £2 million. It also has two trading arms, Managing Locally Ltd and Parkway Business Centre Ltd, and owns a range of property, including retail outlets, the nursery and other buildings which support the delivery of its varied services. MCDT demonstrates how a strong community ethos and attention to the 'triple bottom line' of economic, social and environmental impact can be leveraged to deliver a diversity of welfare-enhancing activities.

Green Estate (GE)

GE was established with SRB funding in February 1999 before being incorporated as a social enterprise company, limited by guarantee, in 2003. Its core activity, which contributes the overwhelming majority of funding, is the provision of commercial landscape services, with a particular emphasis on specialist meadow solutions. This is supplemented by green waste processing and the running of the Manor Lodge Visitor and Environmental Centre, which incorporates a range of revenue-generating facilities, such as a discovery centre, café, living history centre and plant nursery. Surpluses generated support the Manor Lodge Centre, local park management and a range of local projects which promote well-being. More widely, GE participates in a wide range of local, regional and national projects which are consistent with the delivery of social value. It currently employs 35 full-time-equivalent staff and around 80 volunteers, is ambitious to expand its meadow business significantly in the medium-term, with associated employment opportunities, and to increase its local stewardship role as well as developing a stronger voice in national debates around community and neighbourhood asset development, in part by showcasing its range of successful demonstration projects.

Manor Community Childcare Centre (MCCC)

Established in 1998 as a limited company by guarantee, MCCC had its origins in the early 1980s, working under the auspices of MEP as, initially, a 12-child facility. This was to grow into the Manor Community Nursery, which by 1999 shared premises with MaTReC and catered for 30 children of Manor and Manor Park residents and MaTReC students.

The limited company status offered the opportunity of raising the funding required to establish a new childcare centre and with support from the European Regional Development Fund, Yorkshire Forward, the Single Regeneration Budget and the National Lottery, this facilitated the opening, in 2001, of a new facility, with capacity to offer childcare for 92 children in the 0–8-year age range, on a sessional or full daycare basis. There are currently approximately 150 children, representing a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and including some with special needs, registered with MCCC. An important element of MCCC's work is the crèche facility which supports the work of MaTReC in enabling students access to their courses.

By late 2016 MCCC employed 25 members of staff and in 2014 it achieved an 'Outstanding in all Areas' outcome from Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education), the UK government's evaluation agency for educational providers. Since 2013, it has operated independently of funding from Sheffield City Council, with financial sustainability underpinned by a combination of entitlement funding to support children of three and four years of age, fee paying parents, crèche provision, room rental, independent fund raising and support from various trusts.

This short summary of the emergence and activity of community-based organizations identifies some of the key organizational players in the regeneration effort to date. The fact that these organizations have had the confidence and capability to become established and successful stakeholders in the collective recovery of the community is in itself symptomatic of the increasing belief in community potential which the early developments were able to fuel. Their resilience and development as institutions, in a sector where many organizations enjoy only a short life, is important in underpinning their credentials as sustainable features of the community, and arguably particularly important in providing the institutional stability which substantial regeneration requires in a policy environment characterized by turbulence and change. We see, in these institutions, similarities with initiatives across many international settings, particularly in terms of the focus of activity around local social, economic and environmental needs such as training, employment, business incubation, housing, social care and management of leisure space and the wider physical environment.

Whilst there is much which identifies these organizations and their work as typical of community-based initiatives more widely, there are also more distinctive echoes of the principles that guided the early redevelopment of the Manor estate, and in particular those that underpinned the pioneering work of MaTReC. The importance of these principles became evident through detailed bilateral and multilateral discussions and collective reflection with representatives from a number of the key community organizations. These inputs invite a focus on three influential factors; the role of intelligence, based on acquisition and analysis of data, to inform interventions, the purposeful embedding of a community-based ethos, and the sharing and dissemination of experience and practice.

Intelligence-informed intervention

The importance of assembling and analysing data and using the analysis to inform the design of interventions, a factor noted by Foley and Martin (2000), appears to be widely understood across the range of organizations, though there are differing approaches between the organizations in the way that these functions are conducted. What is clear is that there is a shared understanding that monitoring and recording community needs and organizational activity enables a more planned, tailored and informed approach to the provision of services as well as informing the setting of targets and key performance indicators and allowing progress to be charted in relation to these. Data also serve as evidence to inform funding agencies of outcomes and to secure future funding streams. In fact, in the case of MaTReC, the majority of their data collection and analysis activity now relates to the need to demonstrate compliance with funding agency requirements. This contrasts with the organization's early development, where data collection was focused on informing the design and mode of service delivery. In most of the other cases, the nature of data collected is determined by focus of the organization and has been motivated largely by the urge to verify performance and refine provision.

Only one of the organizations described in the previous section, MaTReC, reported a dedicated data-collection and analysis capability; in the other cases these functions are carried out on a more ad-hoc basis by those with operational responsibility for service delivery and development. This suggests that the full benefits of developing and exploiting an informational resource have yet to be realized. One organization, GE, has supplemented in-house analysis with the use of external consultants.

A common observation is that the collation and analysis of data at an organizational level also facilitates valuable critical self-reflection in relation to organizational design, scope of activity and performance, which can in turn build esteem and confidence, as well as facilitating dissemination of achievements and learning. Pinch and Sunley (2016) point to the positive spillover benefits and mutual learning which are generated by knowledge exchange.

Community focus

The notion of community in the work of the organizations investigated is central, but interesting in the level at which it operates. Undoubtedly, each organization, individually, has a deep and strong commitment to, and pride in the community focus of its work, as well as a sense that other local organizations share that ethos. There is, equally, a high level of communication between each organization and its constituent community and demonstrably strong participation by community members in agenda setting, so that the organizations can legitimately claim to be authentic representatives of community issues. This may be a factor in explaining the longevity of the organizations. There are much more mixed messages, however, in terms of the idea of a coherent or close network or family of community-based organizations, and there appears to be a limited appreciation of what Maginn (2007) terms 'network power', based on consensus building and collaborative working. The exception here is MCDT, where there is a clear sense that this family exists, founded on a common history and origins shared by organizations in the community. Indeed, part of the induction process for new starters with MCDT is a tour of the locality and an introduction to its organizations and their origins, so this idea is strongly culturally embedded and continually reinforced. Other organizations are able to cite examples of collaborative working, a degree of interlock at board level and bilateral communication between organizations, though the emphasis here is often around responding to particular initiatives, where for example a funding call requires a collaborative bid. There is a sense that the different operational foci of each organization may be a barrier to a more fundamental understanding of the set of organizations as a community. Of course, any barrier to a sense of shared community may be reinforced by a degree of competition which exists between the community-based organizations, both in terms of access to funding and, to a lesser extent, in the provision of particular services. An apparently uneven and underdeveloped appreciation of the potential benefits which can flow from communities of similar organizations is consistent with Pinch and Sunley's (2016) assessment of agglomeration benefits among urban social enterprises, which suggests a patchy awareness of and realization of cluster-related positive externalities. Foley and Martin (2000) observe that effective partnerships depend on a combination of trust, skills, time and resources and that a negative feature of partnerships can be dominance by one party, a factor which may explain the apparent reticence to develop stronger networks in this particular case.

Disseminating experience

In terms of the sharing of experience and dissemination of knowledge *beyond* the immediate community, there is a universal sense of the importance of these types of activity but, again, an individuality of approach. Dissemination requires, facilitates and reinforces the need for analysis and the development of narrative. For GE, the scope of dissemination is particularly broad and a variety of media are employed. These include representation and presentation at national conferences, offering GE as the subject of case studies for practitioner audiences and in the wider media, organizing visits and to and hosting conferences at GE, attendance at trade shows, development of a significant web and growing social media presence. It is clear that the outward-looking style of GE stimulates significant interest in its work and operating model. The commercial aspects of GE are supported by public relations and marketing consultancy support, which brings spillover benefits to the wider work of the organization. For the other organizations, the focus for dissemination activity tends to be more local in nature, less articulated and dependant on a narrower range of media, with an emphasis on web-based content and city-based and regional networks and conferences. The reasons cited for developing a conscious dissemination effort are various. Building profile and demonstrating track-record are important in a competitive funding environment, sharing experience of achievements reinforces collective esteem, establishes contacts

with similarly motivated organizations and opens up opportunities for organizational learning and networking.

ANALYSIS: ACHIEVEMENTS, LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

The work of the organizations described here provides an illustration of the potential of community-based bodies in general, and the particular benefits which can flow form organizations and groups of organizations which are able to achieve a degree of permanence and a track record of successful operation. Aggregating the individual contributions of the organizations represents an understatement of their collective impact, however. Each area of achievement by each organization contributes to an impact beyond its immediate and direct value in that it serves additionally to challenge and erode the stigma which applied stubbornly to the Manor Estate 30 years ago. Equally, each individual recorded benefit or impact appears to build confidence, belief and motivation across the range of organizations seeking to address social and economic deprivation. Even in the absence of a formal network binding the organizations together, awareness of the co-existence of established and successful community ventures appears to contribute to a reservoir of energy on which each organization is able to draw. In effect, the private benefits which accrue to individual organizations and those who use their services are supplemented by positive externalities at the community level.

In many positive respects, the Manor Estate today provides a stark contrast to the conditions which prevailed there 30 years ago. The physical infrastructure has been substantially overhauled, with the replacement of a significant proportion of poor housing stock by refurbished and newly built homes. There has also been a very substantial recovery in the retail infrastructure, with clear evidence of renewed retail hubs at various points on the estate. The soft landscape of the estate has also been subjected to a dramatic overhaul. The work of GE is evident across the neighbourhood, with managed open and leisure spaces featuring attractive planting and wildlife habitats. The demographic characteristics of the estate have also changed, with a more diverse population in terms of age and ethnic composition, and there is a discernible change in mood, in terms of a renewed sense of confidence and optimism in the viability of the neighbourhood as a place to live and transact economic activity, a recognition that there has been a significant investment in collective social capital, which is epitomized by the robustness of the organizations described above. All these aspects testify to the importance of community-driven initiatives in enhancing community welfare, identity and esteem. Whilst such benefits should not be underestimated, it is important to recognize that they elude easy measurement or quantification (Deakin, 2012) and appear to be limited in terms of their ability to affect key welfare metrics.

The fact is that, in terms of social and economic indicators and measures of relative deprivation, the Manor remains one of the most impoverished neighbourhoods in Sheffield and indeed nationally. The 2015 index of multiple deprivation indicated that two-thirds of Manor's residents lived in the most deprived 5% of locations in England. Within the context of Sheffield, median household income was just £19,048 per annum, more than £5000 below the city-wide figure. The proportion of the working-age population claiming benefit in the Manor and Castle ward stood at 28.8%, compared with the city figure of 15.9%. What these figures do not capture, of course, is the fact that individual achievement invariably triggers outward migration and there are many documented examples of this among the cohorts of students who accessed MaTReC's services. It remains evident, however, that establishing an organizational architecture which has the capacity to mobilize local energies, talent and appetite for change offers only a first step towards demonstrable and sustainable regeneration. This acknowledgement of what community-based action can and cannot achieve reflects the fact that the starting point for this account, and for accounts of similarly problematic neighbourhoods, is a diagnosis of sustained and profound social and economic disadvantage. In such circumstances, tangible economic and social recovery demands

real injections of resources as well as the recovery in neighbourhood spirit, esteem and physical environment outlined above.

In addressing this challenge, the Manor experience to date suggests a number of priorities which would appear to have broader resonance in terms of the role which community-based organizations can play in effecting material improvement in economic and social indicators. First, there needs to be recognition that the establishment of community-based initiatives, whilst arguably of significant value, is certainly not a sufficient condition, for authentic economic regeneration. The mobilization of community resources and energy and the establishment of social capital cannot, on their own, deliver material improvement in 'hard' measures of economic welfare. This, in turn, suggests that a key requirement is the ability of community organizations to build partnerships with agencies or organizations, private or public, which are in the position to commit resources to regeneration (Pugalis et al., 2014). Newman and Verpraet (1999) emphasize here the importance of national political and cultural factors in determining which forms of partnership might be valuable, in a comparison of France, the United States and the UK.

A second observation is that partnership building is likely to be more attractive to potential partners where the community-based organizations can legitimately claim to be broadly representative of community interests, rather than merely reflecting particular, narrowly defined agendas. This suggests the need for a more purposeful, managed and articulated process of network development across and between community groups, an understanding that coordinated and collective action can deliver more than the sum of isolated initiatives. Pinch and Sunley (2016) point to the network benefits of knowledge exchange, spillovers and mutual learning and support. Stronger networks also mitigate inter-group competition and duplication of effort, a risk identified by Gripaios (2002). Galaskiewicz, Bielefeld, and Dowell (2006) highlight both the material benefits of broader and more formal inter-organizational cooperation in terms of access to funding and other resources, as well as the signal of social status which network membership afford, where the importance of status in leveraging injections of resource is stressed.

Thirdly, partnership development is more likely to be successful where community organizations, acting together, understand and are able to articulate the particular assets which they can bring to any alliance. These include their ability to harness local support, energy and commitment in contributing to partnership objectives and to provide access to the reservoir of knowledge, experience and insight into the roots of local disadvantage which forms the basis for effective design and deployment of regeneration initiatives. This rich local resource becomes more powerful where it can be translated from tacit insight into a more explicit, codified and shareable form of knowledge through a commitment to monitoring and evidencing progress, critically reflective self-analysis and organizational learning (Easterby-Smith, Burgoyne, & Araujo, 1999). Garrido and Camarero (2010, p. 228), in a three-country study of cultural organizations, observe that 'an orientation towards organizational learning … proves essential for the institution's competitiveness and ability to achieve its social goals'. Lawson and Kearns (2014) see a combination of knowledge and information, understanding and critical awareness as key to community organizations' ability to translate cosmetic into real empowerment. Rashman, Withers, and Hartley (2009, p. 464) observe 'it is striking that there is little research on learning an knowledge transfer in the non-profit sectors' whilst noting that the value of organizational learning and knowledge is generally less well-understood and consequently underdeveloped outwit the commercial sector.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge a feature of the contemporary regeneration landscape which is significant in, but certainly not exclusive to, the UK; namely the austerity which has overshadowed, if not defined, the economic policy agenda on an international scale over the past decade. It seems inevitable that this will place a greater reliance on community-based organizations in addressing deprivation in the future and in stimulating recovery, given that central and local governments' ability to support economic and social improvement is increasingly compromised by budgetary stringency. Similar constraints chill the interest of private sector providers in contracting

for regeneration work. And so society looks to the third sector, via a cocktail of social enterprise, community businesses and charitable organizations, or hybrids of these variants, to plug the gap where market and state have failed to address manifest need. At the same time, of course, financial stringency impacts also on these types of organization (Jones et al., 2016) and on their ability to offer adequate provision. As Pugalis et al. (2014, p. 189) observe, 'there is a paucity of help and resources for more deprived areas to keep pace and develop their own locally authored regeneration initiatives … in spite of rhetorical commitment to localism, resources are increasingly scarce'. In increasingly straitened times, this only amplifies the message that third sector providers should recognize more formally the benefits that they deliver collectively and which go beyond their individual contributions. Collective resilience and sustainability through becomes even more important in an era of prolonged austerity, where organizations' independent pursuit of individual agendas is likely to render them increasingly vulnerable. This theme is currently being pursued actively by the organizations described above and financial support is being sought under the UK National Lottery's Power to Change fund to develop stronger communication between community-based organizations and an authentic and fully functioning network.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has charted the origins, development and contribution of community-based organizations in pursuing the regeneration of what was, in the late 1980s a profoundly economically and socially disadvantaged neighbourhood in Sheffield. On the positive side, this is an account of how community-based initiatives have arrested decline, stabilized the neighbourhood, rebuilt social capital, and invested new belief and confidence in it, whilst providing elements of the organizational basis for genuine economic and social regeneration, even in an era of profound and sustained austerity. There are clear recurrent themes in the account: the benefits that accrue when the design of interventions is informed by the assembly, analysis and interpretation of relevant data, the importance of the authentic community orientation of organizations in securing commitment and trust and the importance of sharing experience and good practice, and in the organizational learning and interaction which this facilitates. It is clear, though that community-based organizations operating in isolation cannot effect material change in social and economic indicators.

It would be unusual if the factors that invite attention in analysing the experience of this particular locality over the last three decades did not have a broader resonance, given the international reach of urban disadvantage, of the economic crisis and of the period of austerity which has followed. There are clear commonalities in the causes and symptoms of urban disadvantage across different international settings and, equally, opportunities for sharing of experience and strategies to address deprivation. Couch, Sykes, and Borstinghaus (2011), in a comparative study of Britain, Germany and France, point to 'the great benefit of international comparison as an approach to policy analysis' (p. 4) which offers the opportunity to step outside institutional and socio-economic contexts and to access a new perspective. Hall and Hickman (2002) contrast the similarity of challenges faced by urban policy-makers in France and the UK, with the diversity of policy traditions and ideologies across the two countries. So in sharing, here, an account and analysis of a particular place, time and set of circumstances, it is important to reflect on how aspects of that experience might inform the work of similar communities across a range of international contexts.

The threat of increasing incidence of social and economic deprivation, especially in already disadvantaged urban settings, is probably greater today than at any period within the last three decades. The indicators of deprivation appear likely to worsen, whilst at the same time the ability of government and the incentive for the private sector to address increasing need are severely compromised. A key question is whether community-based organizations which have plugged some of the gaps in social and economic provision over recent years and which are important

repositories of social and community capital, can adapt and contribute to the delivery of these benefits in future. Playing such a role may require more conscious coordination of effort and sharing of intelligence and resources than is currently evident, in order to build collective resolve and resilience. The development of a more formal and robust network of organizations which gives purpose and voice to community energy offers an institutional architecture to support the *effective* injection of real resources, in terms of materially improved social and economic indicators.

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