



Wright, V. (2018) 'Tinkering at a local level': Unemployment, state intervention and community agency in Ferguslie Park, Paisley c. 1972-1977. *Scottish Labour History*, 53, pp. 192-211.

This is the author's final accepted version.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/174625/>

Deposited on: 04 December 2018

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow  
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

## **'Tinkering at a local level': Unemployment, state intervention and community agency in Ferguslie Park, Paisley c. 1972-1977**

Valerie Wright (University of Glasgow)

In 1971 Ferguslie Park in Paisley was designated a beneficiary of the Labour government's 1969 Community Development Project (CDP). This initiative, one of the first of many interventions in 'deprived' communities in the UK after the 'rediscovery' of poverty in the 1960s, was motivated by attempts to solve the apparently intractable problems of high unemployment, material want and poor housing conditions through an ethos of 'self-help'. The emphasis was on local solutions led by the residents. This article considers how residents attempted to overcome the 'marginalisation' of their community through the establishment of a co-operative workshop with the aim of addressing the high level of unemployment prevalent in Ferguslie Park. This local initiative highlights the main tension apparent in the CDP as a whole: the need for structural change at a national level, including a radical rethinking of policy objectives, especially in relation to the post-1945 state commitment to full employment, as opposed to 'tinkering at a local level' and making individuals and communities responsible for creating their own employment in small scale local projects.<sup>1</sup>

Ferguslie Park, like many areas of 'multiple deprivation' in Scotland and the UK, has been subjected to repeated cycles of policy intervention to achieve improvements in the quality of life for residents. Academic analysis of such external policy intervention has until recently focused on the Conservative government's 'New Life for Urban Scotland' 'partnership' programme established in 1988, overseen by Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland.<sup>2</sup> But this earlier intervention in Ferguslie Park in the 1970s was equally important given its timing. The 1970s in Scotland were a crucial period in the phased and managed process of deindustrialisation. This involved substantial movement from 'traditional' to 'new' industries encouraged by policy makers in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>3</sup> Housing developments were important too. The 'residualisation' of council housing, a process ideologically associated with Thatcher's Conservative government and the consequences of the 'Right to Buy' policy, had deep roots in England.<sup>4</sup> In his detailed analysis of local authority housing in Brighton Jones suggests that socio-spatial polarisation in council estates between comparatively affluent tenants and those deemed to be 'problem families' or 'unsatisfactory tenants' began in the interwar years.<sup>5</sup> A similar long-running process of residualisation was evident in Scotland too, as Damer shows in his work on interwar Glasgow, although council houses sales were not as aggressively pursued by local authorities there or anywhere else in Scotland.<sup>6</sup> Indeed one of the key features of comparative Scottish and English housing provision was the much higher proportion of local authority housing tenure in Scotland, lasting into the 1980s. The 1970s were nevertheless a key decade in changing aspirations among the working classes in Scotland to own their homes, even if only a small proportion were able to.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence council housing, and especially some types and areas, were seen as less desirable. The lack of maintenance of homes and material poverty in areas of council housing, Ferguslie Park being an important example, were accentuated by increasing unemployment and deindustrialisation. This consolidated the process of residualisation, meaning that areas which featured high proportions of council housing became less desirable places to live in the 1970s, were increasingly stigmatised in local and national media, and eventually seen as 'housing of last resort'.<sup>8</sup> By the 1990s the aspiration of the working classes became focused on owner occupation and housing policy actively promoted this, but in Scotland the roots were firmly planted in the 1970s.<sup>9</sup>

Policy decisions made at a local and national level were only part of the problem in failing to address what was described as the 'cycle of deprivation' in areas such as Ferguslie Park.<sup>10</sup> Policy-makers in London and Edinburgh were grappling with the significant problem of rising unemployment as a consequence of deindustrialisation, more significant in Scotland than other parts of the UK, and especially difficult in the West of Scotland as the 1970s progressed.<sup>11</sup> This was compounded in Ferguslie Park by the fact that the area was effectively by-passed by the restructuring phase of deindustrialisation in the 1960s, when new employment opportunities were being established elsewhere. The area had been dependent on the nearby thread mills in the town, a 'traditional' form of industry squeezed out of the economy in the 1950s as the companies merged and moved production abroad.<sup>12</sup> The 'new' industry which replaced it took the form of a car factory located near Ferguslie Park in Linwood, which became symbolic of the UK government's commitment to regional policy in Scotland. The car factory was strategically located in Renfrewshire to offset increasing unemployment in the area and also to relocate Glaswegian workers from the shipyards on the Clyde and the overcrowded tenements of the inner city. While some men and women in Ferguslie Park worked at Linwood, the factory did not compensate for the number of jobs lost in the thread mills. The incremental stigmatisation of the area ensured that men in Ferguslie Park were rarely considered for the skilled engineering jobs at Linwood. Indeed, while in the popular memory of Paisley it is remembered that 'half the town' worked in Linwood, the factory also had a broad catchment area with workers travelling from as far as the East End of Glasgow and Ayrshire.<sup>13</sup>

The historiography of deindustrialisation in Scotland to date underscores the centrality of the workplace to community identity. Phillips and Gibbs have shown how coalfield communities in Scotland were able to mobilise their occupational history as a political voice to ensure that the 'modernisation' of the Scottish economy provided them with alternative employment when pits were closed.<sup>14</sup> Yet as Wight's pioneering ethnographic study of miners' readjustment to life after the loss of employment shows, this political voice did not avert unemployment and its negative effects.<sup>15</sup> People living in Ferguslie Park lacked a comparable industrial community identity which could be used strategically to lobby for 'modern' employment opportunities. Irregular and low paid work was the norm for many of the men and women who lived in Ferguslie Park in the 1970s. These were not jobs that could be passed on generationally to sons and daughters. More significantly, very high levels of long-term and in some instances 'voluntary' unemployment came to characterise the economic profile of the area in the 1970s.

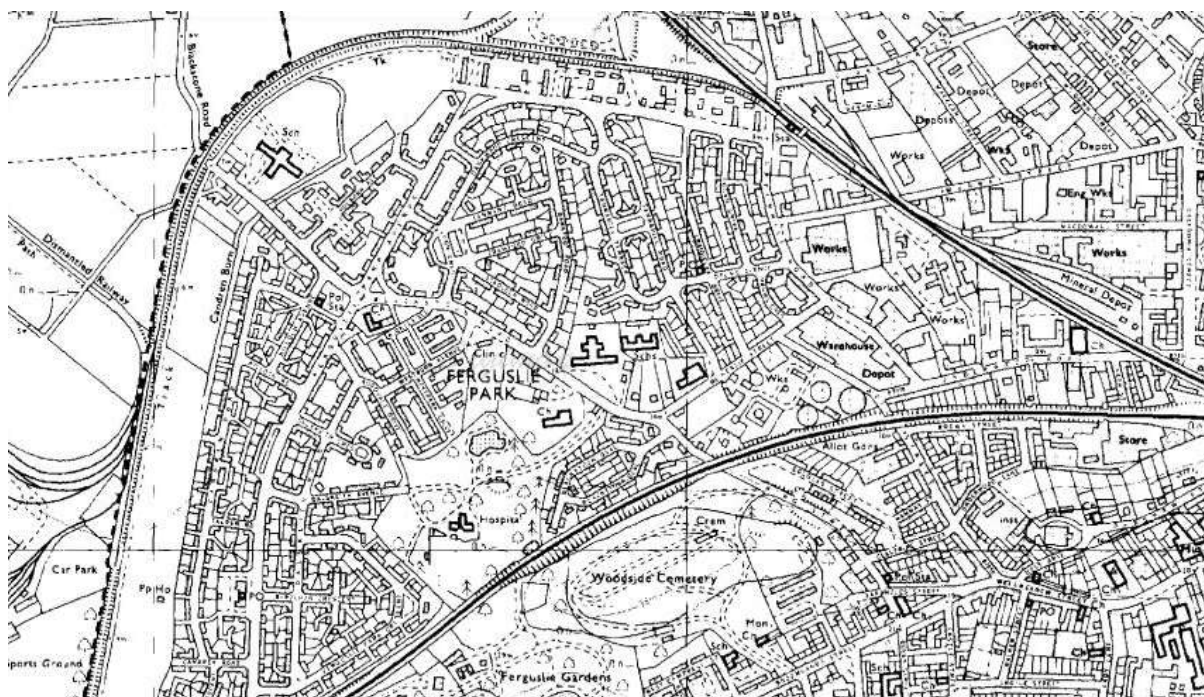


Figure 1: Ferguslie Park in the 1970s

There were other peripheral estates in Paisley but none were stigmatised more than Ferguslie Park. The area was built in stages between the 1920s and 1960s. It was and remains physically isolated from the rest of the town by a network of railway lines and disused railway embankments. In all there were about 3,500 houses and the population peaked at 13,500 in the 1960s, one-sixth of Paisley's total. The first stage of housing in Ferguslie Park, the four in a block cottage flats at Craigielea and Blackstoun Oval, were desirable and aimed at the respectable upper working classes given the comparatively high rents.<sup>16</sup> The strategy switched to 'rehousing' and 'slum clearance' in the 1930s with the construction of poorer quality tenements which were almost immediately stigmatised.<sup>17</sup> The third stage, after the Second World War, involved more tenements and deck access flats, with the same aim as the post-war peripheral schemes in Glasgow: rapid clearance of inner city slums. By the 1970s Ferguslie Park was described as 'the least popular housing scheme in Paisley'.<sup>18</sup> This was no accident, but very much the result of local council policy on 'problem families'. There was a particular focus on one area of the estate, Ardmore Oval, segregated from 1943 to 1971 for the 'supervision and training' of forty-five families. Once Ardmore Oval had been established in the popular consciousness of the town as a 'dumping ground', the reputation of the whole estate was negatively affected. The CDP research team would find out that this was further perpetuated by council house allocations policy in the 1970s.

This article analyses the response of the community to the CDP and the economic circumstances and employment opportunities of the 1970s in the surrounding area. The reports and findings of the research team investigating the success of the CDP in Ferguslie Park, located at the University of Glasgow's Department of Economic and Social Research, as well as those of the community based action team, form the basis of this analysis, which is organised in two parts. First, the article considers the establishment of the CDPs in the context of the Labour government's management of industrial restructuring and the continuing stigmatisation of Ferguslie Park. The community's agency and active citizenship are then examined through the case study of the

Ferguslie Park cooperative workshop. Communities in areas such as Ferguslie Park were not passive victims of discourses concerning 'problem families' and 'antisocial behaviour'. There is evidence of increasing militancy in community activism throughout Scotland as a response.<sup>19</sup> In the face of external discrimination and stigmatisation, the community's efforts, alongside the action team, to improve job prospects and the environment of the estate illustrate that the industrial workplace was not the only site where UK government policies were challenged in the 1970s by working class people in Scotland. This was especially true in Ferguslie Park, with the community having limited connections to formal trade union activism and industrial work-based communal identities. Yet, in spite of the way the individuals concerned in the cooperative workshop were able to use the CDP to their benefit, the overall outcomes as interpreted by the research team at the University of Glasgow drew attention to the community's marginalisation. This reflected the manner of deindustrialisation's management in west central Scotland in the 1970s, a process which has had profound long-term consequences for Ferguslie Park to the present day.

### **The Labour Government's Community Development Project and findings in Ferguslie Park**

Harold Wilson's Labour Government introduced the national CDP in 1969 through the Home Office. It was characterised as 'the largest and boldest initiative of its kind ever mounted in Britain', estimated to have cost £5 million, and explicitly designed to emulate the *War on Poverty* programme pursued in the USA by President Johnson between 1964 and 1968.<sup>20</sup> Ferguslie Park was one of twelve 'experimental local projects' established in economically-deprived areas across Britain. Significantly it was the only one in Scotland and the only one in a peripheral geographical location rather than in the inner city.<sup>21</sup> The aim was to consider how to deal with 'resistant pockets' of poverty in a generally 'affluent' society.<sup>22</sup> The government viewed poverty as a problem experienced by individuals and families; 'joined up services' would help them to help themselves out of poverty.<sup>23</sup> Here traditional 'respectable' working-class notions of 'self-help' were very much in evidence, as was perhaps a judgement against those who were perceived to be not helping themselves. The initiative was retained by Edward Heath's Conservative government elected in 1970, even although the attribution of poverty to individual failings became less tenable as deindustrialisation accelerated, increasing unemployment among all workers. The emphasis on self-help remained central to the project after Labour returned to power in 1974.

The CDP was in each of its twelve locations a partnership between local authorities, University researchers and community based 'action teams'. In Ferguslie Park it was clear that the objectives of the government and local authorities differed from those of the research and action teams. The latter wished to empower the community to counteract the stigma and discrimination its members faced. But this was difficult given the history of the estate and the continued judgements made about Ferguslie Park residents in the town as a whole. At a local level university researchers who worked with community action groups were well aware of the structural explanations for poverty and the same was true in Ferguslie Park. One of the key findings of the final reports of the National CDP was that the redistribution of industry and the population away from the declining inner city had adverse economic effects, as did deindustrialisation. Peripheral housing estates throughout the UK, such as Ferguslie Park, had obviously also been affected by the loss of jobs in 'traditional' industries.<sup>24</sup> It has been argued that the CDP in Ferguslie Park was not as radical as some

of the other teams in the UK,<sup>25</sup> but there were unusual political and economic circumstances to be found in this only Scottish CDP. Specific distinct elements in Paisley included local authority renting as more or less the only form of housing tenure, a higher level of 'deprivation' than elsewhere in the UK, the limits of industrial and regional policy and the consequences of deindustrialisation.<sup>26</sup> These were unusual and substantial obstacles to all involved in the Ferguslie Park CDP: the university researchers, the locally based action team and the residents themselves.

Ferguslie Park CDP ran for five years from 1972-77. The research team found that the community was marginalised and stigmatised by the local authority and employers in the town. John English, leading the research, suggested that 'Ferguslie Park emerges as a severely deprived area even by the standards of the most deprived conurbation in Britain and in comparison with a range of areas selected for special intervention', namely the other eleven CDAs in Britain.<sup>27</sup> He suggested that the tenements built under the 1930 and 1938 Acts housed 'disadvantaged large families with low incomes and irregular employment'.<sup>28</sup> English argued that the deprivation experienced in Ferguslie Park was 'the almost inevitable result of a local housing policy which has accepted segregation and a highly stratified housing stock'. This was further compounded by treating the symptoms, including vandalism and empty houses, rather than the structural causes of poverty.

While emphasising the particular difficulties in Ferguslie Park, both the research and action teams accepted their remit under the Labour government's framework for CPDs, to focus on the ways in which social services could enable community residents to improve their own position. But unemployment was constantly considered the crucial issue in generating poverty. Joblessness was obviously a central preoccupation in the 1970s and given the continued primacy of the 'male breadwinner' model, despite increasing female labour participation, the focus of public policy academics and policy-makers was almost wholly on male unemployment. Discussions of 'manpower' and unemployment relating to male workers had been among the main concerns of the earlier Toothill Report of 1961 and were prominent in the West Central Scotland Plan of 1974.<sup>29</sup> Consequently there was a great deal of research completed on the causes and experience of unemployment and in particular the development of what was described as 'voluntary' unemployment. Marsden argued that from 1971 there was a 'sudden and alarming rise of the number of able-bodied men who had been out of work for over two months'.<sup>30</sup> Further, and despite policies of investment and incentives in promoting regional development, 'the overall pattern of unemployment was discouragingly reminiscent of the 1930s, with the same towns and areas reappearing as unemployment blackspots in the 1970s'. The North of England had twice and Scotland three times the unemployment rate of London. Marsden suggested that 'there were mixed feelings about how far the unemployed were failing in their duty to society; how far they should be held responsible for their own situation'.<sup>31</sup> There were questions, in other words, about whether such men really were trying to find jobs. More importantly, it was thought that there were possibly able bodied men choosing to 'draw benefits' rather than work, and perhaps even 'fiddling by doing a job on the side'.

Gail Armstrong, working as an associate to the University of Glasgow research team, reported on the effects of long-term unemployment on family relationships, taking a similar approach to Marsden. She interviewed 21 families with dependent children where the head of household had been unemployed for more than 18 months. Armstrong found the 'scale of unemployment ... both puzzling and alarming'.<sup>32</sup> In 1971 22 per cent of economically active men

were unemployed in Ferguslie Park. The rest of the Department of Employment district had an overall rate of only 3 per cent in the same year. In May 1973 the rate for Paisley district was 1.8 per cent, excluding Ferguslie Park. The rate in Ferguslie Park was again 22 per cent. In addition a substantial number of men unemployed in Ferguslie Park had been out of work for more than a year.<sup>33</sup>

Paisley, like many large towns and cities in Scotland, had experienced a 'progressive decline' in manufacturing industry, to be replaced by the administrative service sector and new industries locating in the area such as warehousing and distribution, providing low-skill, low-paid jobs, with the traditional survivor, clothing manufacture, employing mostly women.<sup>34</sup> The proportion of people employed in manufacturing had fallen from 42 per cent in 1965 to 28 per cent in 1975. Between 1972 and 1975 female employment in the town had increased by 18 per cent. Thus, while the number of jobs may not have changed significantly, the jobs available in the mid-1970s were 'less desirable', especially for men. The concern over the 'feminisation' of the labour force was notable. Paisley had 'continued to shed manufacturing jobs' in spite of its favourable infrastructure, 'a fairly good industrial relations record' and crucially the regional incentive schemes in operation in the area which had been 'weighted in favour of manufacturing industry'.<sup>35</sup> These measures had perhaps stabilised overall employment in Paisley, but were scantily felt in Ferguslie Park.<sup>36</sup>

Armstrong's reflections on her interviews with residents of Ferguslie Park illuminate the effects of unemployment and poverty in the area. It was her impression that for men and their families in Ferguslie Park being unemployed long-term was an isolating experience which 'mapped the boundaries and determined the type of interaction possible "in the world outside" and was clearly the cause of a great deal of stress'.<sup>37</sup> In her opinion most of the men she interviewed continued to actively look for work. A high proportion of men interviewed by Armstrong had also applied for jobs at the car factory in Linwood, some two or three times in the preceding six months, but few with any luck. This was not only evidence of a failure of regional policy to absorb above-average unemployment in the region, but the comparatively low-skill levels of men living in Ferguslie Park was also a factor, and contributed further to the stigmatisation experienced by residents. In Paisley twelve per cent of all male workers were unskilled, but in Ferguslie Park the figure was 25 per cent. Some of the men interviewed by Armstrong suggested that the very fact that they lived in Ferguslie Park made them undesirable to employers of skilled or better paid labour, given the scheme's reputation<sup>38</sup>:

Mr U has been unemployed for 4 years ... he continues to seek work. Recently he applied to ... for nightshift work, and to ... [name deleted] He says lack of success is due to residence in the area, and his age ... He told of ... himself and a few other local men being 'tipped off' that men were being started at ... they were all 'knocked back' ... because the jobs were 'already filled', they then found that men were still being taken on.<sup>39</sup>

Armstrong suggested that only a small minority of claimants had effectively given up searching for work in the belief that it was not possible to bring home a wage higher than supplementary benefit. These men were consciously choosing to remain unemployed rather than work in low paid work. She explains that 'a man with a sizable family could enjoy the same standard of living of poverty whether working or not'.<sup>40</sup>

This view was shared by others involved in the CDP. Martin, working with the action team, argued that there was 'some evidence of the attitude that 'work doesn't pay' among people in Ferguslie Park', with this being especially true of men with large families of three children or more. Martin further suggested that 'even with Family Income Supplement their take-home pay would not compensate for the additional expenditure associated with work'.<sup>41</sup> Armstrong also maintained that workers in Ferguslie Park, especially unskilled workers, were isolated from the informal 'word of mouth' system of securing better paid jobs. Manpower studies undertaken in the 1970s and early 1980s in the context of redundancy stressed the importance of such avenues for finding employment.<sup>42</sup> Age also played a role, especially among those working in heavy manual labour such as construction. Some of the men she interviewed, in their late thirties, were told they were 'too old'. Some in their forties had medical conditions which made it even more difficult to find work. Long periods of unemployment also damaged prospects. Employers were able to be more selective where jobs were scarce. As had been the case in the 1930s these 'forgotten men' (men in their forties and especially over the age of 55 who could not find work following redundancy) along with youth unemployment were a serious concern.<sup>43</sup> As a result of what Martin described as the 'emotional impact on the public', youth unemployment had become a particular focus of government policy. Indeed evidence would suggest that younger workers in Ferguslie Park were 'disproportionately affected by unemployment since at least 1973'.<sup>44</sup>

The research team's findings in relation to housing were equally bleak and they were particularly scathing about the allocations system in the town.<sup>45</sup> It was argued that attitudes towards residents in Ferguslie Park accentuated the stigmatisation and marginalisation of the area. Those seeking council accommodation in the town were always offered Ferguslie Park first as it was the least popular and thus had the most vacancies, especially the tenements of the 1930s. Only 'those in urgent housing need', such as large families, single mothers and the long-term unemployed were forced to take what was offered as they could not endure the substantially longer waiting times required for housing elsewhere in Paisley.<sup>46</sup> Yet the concentration of 'those in the greatest need' no doubt exacerbated stigma and negatively affected the quality of life in the area. As English argued in relation to allocations policy, 'the tangible personal and social costs of the present system are undeniable'.<sup>47</sup> He acknowledged that prejudice in the town ensured that 'many residents of other schemes would not welcome the prospect of having people from Ferguslie Park as neighbours' if residents in the area were to be dispersed throughout the town. On the other hand 'a strategy of making Ferguslie Park more acceptable through investment in physical improvements could encounter opposition to expenditure on the supposedly "undeserving"'.<sup>48</sup>

It was clear that the high rates of unemployment and the poor quality of housing in the area were linked in the overall stigmatisation of Ferguslie Park. Alan McGregor, a labour economist working alongside the research team at the University of Glasgow, found that 'the relative disadvantage of the unskilled within Ferguslie Park [...] was greater than within the rest of Paisley'. He suggested that 'unless action is taken simultaneously on housing the relative position of Ferguslie Park and similar areas may show little visible improvement'.<sup>49</sup> He found that lack of access to 'information flows' was not a particularly important barrier to employment but rather that 'the Ferguslie Park job seeker is the victim of statistical discrimination practised by local employers' where residence in Ferguslie Park was used by employers as 'a screening device'.<sup>50</sup> The long term legacy of the segregation of 'anti-social' tenants in the immediate post-Second World War decades and the contemporary allocations policy in the town were clear in the stigmatisation of the area. The



knock-on effects in terms of unemployment were obvious. In order to address unemployment rates in the area, housing and the environment would have to be improved also.

### **Community Agency and Active Citizenship**

Such improvements were hampered by entrenched discrimination against residents in Ferguslie Park, evident to both the action and research teams in their contacts with local authorities and official bodies. The research team, in their analysis of the role of the CDP Management team, found that in meetings 'negative attitudes about CDP and about the residents of Ferguslie Park were frequently aired'.<sup>51</sup> Such scepticism from local councillors and representatives from the Health Board, Strathclyde Regional Council, Social Work Department, Renfrew District Council and the Scottish Office, not to mention erratic attendance, suggested a basic lack of official and political commitment to the success of the CDP. As a result the action team were 'reluctant to encourage local people to come' as they did not want to subject residents to such attitudes. It was found that 'ill-considered comments about local people also stifle their will to speak' in meetings. Given this context, it was not surprising that the CDP in Ferguslie Park was an objective 'failure' in policy terms, but also underlines the difficulty in local people making their voices heard at such official committee meetings. As noted there was no industrial community identity that could be drawn upon politically in Ferguslie Park. The communal identity shared by residents focused rather on the 'less respectable' material circumstances residents found themselves in. Poverty and 'getting by' were shared identities in Ferguslie Park and had been for generations.<sup>52</sup> People in Ferguslie Park were perhaps easier to ignore as a result of not conforming to traditional skilled working-class notions of respectability. Meetings with the CDP Management Team were not an open forum, but rather there was defensiveness from officials and the local authority and a conservative attitude within established practices and attitudes relating to Ferguslie Park, even when it was clear that these were not working in terms of improving the quality of life in the area. Essentially, the residents were blamed for their own circumstances.

This was not simplistic class bias or judgement by career civil servants or professionals, who were likely to be middle class. The discriminatory attitudes of regional and district councillors representing the Labour Party provides evidence for continuing class stratification within the working classes in the West of Scotland. This was arguably a hangover from the development of the Labour movement in the late nineteenth century. Labour's leaders were traditionally drawn from the 'respectable' manual elites, skilled workers and those that avoided unemployment. Along with such values went thrift and avoidance of debt. Workers sharing and exhibiting these values were deserving of decent housing. In contrast the residents of Ferguslie Park were perceived as the modern day 'residuum': undeserving, unemployed, unskilled and unprepared to work hard enough to secure and retain employment.<sup>53</sup> In such attitudes there was limited acknowledgement of structural inequalities which ensured that some individuals were able to acquire skill and better jobs, afforded opportunities that other people were not, or able to overcome difficulties or entrance barriers which enabled them to 'get on' or 'do well' in life. Unemployment remained a stigma among the working classes, even at a time when this was increasing among all workers at all grades. Yet unskilled workers remained the hardest hit and more likely to experience long-term employment. Discrimination continued to be experienced by those unskilled unemployed workers geographically

concentrated in areas such as Ferguslie Park with individuals being blamed for their own predicament. This was politically easier for Labour leaders than facing the very real prospect that unemployment could affect all workers and that everyone was at risk. Even in the mass unemployment that would follow in the 1980s this sentiment remained a strong feature of working-class culture.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, some residents did work with the CDP, chiefly through the action team, to try and make a change to their quality of life by tackling the persistent lack of employment opportunities. The first step taken by the action team to stimulate community interest was to set up an Information and Action Centre. The emphasis was on empowering the community and putting 'some strength into their hands'.<sup>55</sup> Unsurprisingly it was found that 'the roots of problems did not lie in poor local services but in unequal opportunities, low incomes, the operation of the employment market and limited housing options'.<sup>56</sup> But as would become clear in relation to local efforts to create a co-operative workshop, the levels of discrimination against residents in Ferguslie Park, and 'the unemployed' in particular, ensured that the odds were against them.

The action team's aim was to support the community to provide a local solution. Martin suggested that 'with the abandonment of full employment as a national priority, the position of the unskilled is particularly difficult'. This was the main contradiction present in the work of the action team, in that its members believed that only radical change in government policy would improve the quality of life for residents in Ferguslie Park, but their task was to work with and encourage the community in the discourse of 'self-help' as prescribed by the government ethos that led the whole CDP project. Martin in particular was obviously sceptical as to the value of what he described as 'tinkering at a local level' but suggested that such initiatives might affect 'more widespread change', further qualified by his assertion that 'no national policy is going to be adopted and implemented overnight'.<sup>57</sup> Central to local action, he emphasised, was the empowerment of local people, not to 'help themselves' but to demand change. In Ferguslie Park this work took the form of establishing a small workers' cooperative. Martin hoped that 'lessons might emerge' from the experiment in Ferguslie.<sup>58</sup> While very critical of the government's existing Job Creation Programme, which he deemed to be of 'very limited value', he suggested that local authorities could 'make the best possible use of them'. This could be done by supporting initiatives such as the Ferguslie cooperative workshop. At least a few local men were willing to participate and were enthusiastic about creating jobs for themselves and having independence and control of their work.

The Ferguslie Community Workshop was established in 1975, initially financed by the CDP and the Job Creation Programme, although it later evolved into an independently run Workers' Co-operative. After external funding was withdrawn in the summer of 1977, the workshop was forced to close. Lack of support from trade unions and the local authority proved to be among the key stumbling blocks to the workshop's earlier objectives to secure contracts for maintenance work in the area from the council. This was aimed at improving the physical environment of Ferguslie Park in the mid 1970s, with properties adversely affected by lack of maintenance and vandalism, with broken and boarded up windows, gap sites and unkempt gardens. These outward signs reinforced the stigma experienced by residents in the area. External painting of buildings, in particular in the areas of 1930s tenements, was several years behind schedule.<sup>59</sup> The members of the workshop suggested that undertaking this work 'would make a quick impression on the people of the area'. However, this idea met with trade union opposition, especially from Shop Stewards representing

workers in the Council's Direct Works Department. The workshop changed focus to suggesting that its members could landscape some of the neglected and overgrown communal back courts, with a view to extending this work throughout the estate. Again, trade union representatives of local authority employees 'would not tolerate such a project being repeated by the Co-op Group throughout Ferguslie Park', and the Local Authority could not commit to maintaining the work in the future. The workshop was also unsuccessful in obtaining a contract to board up houses falling empty within the area.

The trade union opposition was strongly resented by members of the workshop. One of their main objectives was to challenge the notion that unemployment in the scheme was voluntary and that as unemployed workers they had chosen their status. These worker-activists were challenging prejudice by actively attempting to create jobs for themselves and trade union opposition was seen as 'an obstruction to their aim of proving themselves able to work'. Moreover the trade union was accused of 'over-protecting their members'.<sup>60</sup> From the very beginning of the project the group had set out to gain the support of the trade union movement in the Paisley area, meeting with local trade union officials, the local Trades Council and the representatives of workers in the Direct Labour Department of the Council. Understandably the latter had 'conflicting loyalties', and opposed the Job Creation Scheme which initially funded the workshop as 'being merely a palliative measure by government in the face of massive unemployment'. Their opposition to the Ferguslie Workshop doing maintenance work which would threaten the expansion of the Direct Labour force was understandable. When the members of the workshop later abandoned the maintenance strategy, the Direct Labour Department Shop Stewards gave their 'moral support to the group's aims'. The idea of a workers' cooperative providing long-term work was endorsed, although there was no practical help offered.

Martin found that the trade union movement as a whole was 'ambivalent' to the idea of workers' co-operatives. Some trade union representatives supported them as a step towards 'making workers' control of industry more realisable', while others viewed them as 'diversionary to the fundamental aim of securing the objective of the overthrow of capitalism, which would be achieved by taking private enterprise into public ownership'.<sup>61</sup> In these circumstances Martin suggested that such trade unionists maintained that workers' control of industry could only be achieved by 'the system of free collective bargaining'. Implicit in Martin's analysis here was an image of trade union representatives defensively looking after their own interests rather than seeking creative solutions to the problems facing unemployed workers at a local level. The trade union movement at a national level was also criticised for its contradictory attitude to unemployment. Leaders warned 'that workers who experience long term unemployment might be a permanent loss to industry', while at the same time proving 'remarkably tolerant' of the 'apparent incompatibilities – massive unemployment and excessive overtime'.<sup>62</sup>

The CDP's overall Management Team was critical of the 'coordination' of the workshop and encouraged 'the improvement of service delivery' rather than 'public involvement'.<sup>63</sup> It preferred the creation of a manufacturing business rather than maintenance work. This is significant and highlights the continued importance of industrial employment in providing respectability and elevated moral status for working-class men even at a point when this sector of the Scottish and local economy was contracting.<sup>64</sup> It was hoped that such manufacturing jobs would also improve morale in the area, as had been the objective with environmental improvements. However, the problematic lack of

resources soon took its toll. The Co-operative Workshop employed four to five men for the two years of its existence. The members found it difficult to access funds, information and advice to maintain and develop the workshop. They found it difficult to budget and plan without any support, which was particularly difficult given the short term nature of the funding provided.

As a result the limited positive impact of the Co-operative was unsurprising. Perhaps even with a more supportive attitude from the local authority and the trade union movement the workshop would still have been unsustainable. What was required was a radical response in terms of national policy, but high levels of unemployment were increasingly accepted as a means to overcome the problem of inflation. By the late 1970s unemployment was at its highest level since the 1930s. In this context piecemeal local 'self-help' measures were unlikely to make a positive impact. Nevertheless such strategies continued to predominate through the long decades of deindustrialisation that followed. Discourses around 'enterprise' and 'entrepreneurship' continued to be in abundance when encouraging local people to start their own businesses, both under successive Conservative and Labour UK governments. This agenda was also supported by the Scottish Office, then Executive and now Government.<sup>65</sup> It would seem that it remains easier to 'tinker at a local level' than address the failings of national policy.

What was most regrettable about the Co-operative Workshop was that it was unable to make an impact in terms of addressing the stigma of Ferguslie Park: perhaps this was the real lost opportunity. The men involved in the workshop wanted to show their 'willingness to work' to highlight that they could again be workers, hence the need to gain the support of the trade union movement. They wanted acceptance. Simply put they could not access the moral support and benefits associated with being 'a worker' if they were not working. These men wanted to tackle the prejudice against them through their actions to create jobs for themselves and improve the environment of the area in which they lived. That they were unable to do so highlights the very real bias against residents of Ferguslie Park, even within networks of potential working class solidarity such as the trade union movement in the town and the Labour led local authority.

## **Conclusion**

The long-term consequences of deindustrialisation in the West of Scotland have been wide ranging and profound. Nowhere is this clearer than in communities such as Ferguslie Park. Yet this is not the traditional narrative of industrial closure and the consequences as outlined in much of labour history, although it might be read as a variation on a theme. The threat of unemployment was the central problem for those who had worked in 'traditional industries' such as mining, shipbuilding and heavy engineering. Joblessness was more likely to be an actual experience than a potential danger in Ferguslie Park, with stigmatisation and discrimination experienced in the labour market affecting residents and their chances of obtaining employment. Industrial communities associated with the 'traditional industries' were often able to mobilise a shared occupational identity to lobby for alternative employment. The management of deindustrialisation arguably took account for this with policy makers attempting to replace old industries with new employment in such areas. This was not the case in Ferguslie Park, which was effectively bypassed by the management of deindustrialisation. While some men were able to secure jobs in the nearby Linwood car factory, the wide catchment

area of the plant ensured they were competing for work with skilled men willing to travel long distances to work.

The impact and legacy of the scheme of segregation introduced in the 1940s where 'problem families' were supervised in a designated area of the estate also continued to have a negative impact on the lives of residents, even long after it was abandoned. As a result the whole estate gained a reputation and housing allocations policy simply perpetuated this. The poor quality 'rehousing' tenements of the 1930s were almost instantly deemed to be undesirable, were neglected by the council and used to house individuals and families who did not have the points to be housed elsewhere in the town. Implicit here was a distinction between deserving 'respectable' tenants and the 'undeserving' who would be offered Ferguslie Park. As a result there was a higher concentration of unskilled workers in Ferguslie Park than elsewhere in Paisley. In turn there was a comparatively much higher level of unemployment. Housing quality and job prospects were intimately connected in Ferguslie Park and were mutually reinforcing in determining material levels of poverty in the area. Increased local and national unemployment, a consequence of deindustrialisation, was disastrous for areas such as Ferguslie Park, which had no protection in terms of occupationally-derived communal political identities.

Rather than studying working class agency in the large unionised workplace or traditional industrial community, this article has examined a 'marginalised' and 'deprived' area without traditional associations with the labour movement. The focus was on the attempts made by the community to challenge the stigmatising attitudes which resulted from the estate's negative reputation, a reputation that was the consequence of and perpetuated by the concentrated nature of unemployment in the area. People in Ferguslie Park faced significant barriers to success as very little local support was given to the community initiative in pursuit of greater employment, namely the co-operative workshop. The members of the workshop wanted the support of the local trade union movement, to gain acceptance that they too could be and were 'workers' and to be part of a network of solidarity. That the members of the workshop remained marginalised from organised labour was perhaps evidence of the fragmented nature of the working classes and the judgemental attitudes unemployed men were subjected to, especially when they lived in Ferguslie Park.

Nevertheless, and despite the overwhelming nature of discrimination in the town, people in Ferguslie Park were challenging the stigma through their actions. There was evidence of working-class agency and not just passive, fatalistic acceptance of policy. Protest and resistance can take forms other than marches and strike action. Through their attempts to create long-term jobs for themselves the five members of the co-operative workshop were trying to improve their own lives, prove themselves as 'workers' and challenge attitudes towards the unemployed in Ferguslie Park. Unfortunately, the ambiguous overall outcomes of the CDP tended to reinforce the marginalisation of the scheme. As Crow et al argue 'Five years is a very short time frame in which to confront and begin to reverse profound structural disadvantage'.<sup>66</sup> Continued deindustrialisation and residualisation of council housing in west central Scotland would ensure that the unemployed remained stigmatised. The roots of these negative attitudes within internal working-class divisions are clear to see. To challenge them labour historians need to look at all aspects of working-class history, the workplace and community and crucially also include the history of areas such as Ferguslie Park.

<sup>1</sup> Mike Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment and a Local Initiative* (Paisley: Paisley Community Development Project, 1977), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Matthews, *Meanings of policy and place: understandings of regeneration in Scotland 1988 – 2009*, University of Glasgow PhD, (2010); Peter Matthews, 'From Area-Based Initiatives to Strategic Partnerships: Have We Lost the Meaning of Regeneration?' *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 30:1 (2012), pp. 147-61; Chik Collins, 'Discourse in Cultural-Historical Perspective: Critical discourse analysis, CHAT and the study of social change', in Van Oers, B., Elbers, E. and Wardekker, W. & Van Der Veer, R., eds., *The Transformation of Learning: Advances in cultural-historical activity theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 242-72; Chik Collins, *Language, ideology and social consciousness: developing a sociohistorical approach* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). Recently the Paisley CDP has gained attention: Graham Crow, Sue Rawcliffe, Bernard Harris, 'Not "radical"', but not "kailyard" either: The Paisley Community Development Project reconsidered', *Community Development Journal*, January 2018 (<https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsx059>).

<sup>3</sup> Jim Phillips, *The Industrial Politics of Devolution: Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Jim Tomlinson, 'De-industrialization not decline: a new meta-narrative for post-war British history', *Twentieth-Century British History*, 27:1 (2016), pp. 76-99.

<sup>4</sup> Ray Forrest and Alan Murie, 'Residualisation and council housing: aspects of the changing social relations of housing tenure', *Journal of Social Policy*, 12:4 (1983), pp. 453-68.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Jones, 'Slum Clearance, Privatization and Residualization: the Practices and Politics of Council Housing in Mid-twentieth-century England' *Twentieth Century British History*, 21:4 (2010), pp. 510-39. See also Ben Jones, *The working class in mid-twentieth-century England: Community, identity and social memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 77-119.

<sup>6</sup> Sean Damer, *Scheming: A Social History of Glasgow Council Housing, 1919-1956* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming, October 2018).

<sup>7</sup> There is very little in-depth historical analysis of the roots of 'Right to Buy' in Scotland. See Valerie Wright, 'How Thatcherite was the Right to Buy? Scottish home ownership and working-class aspiration from the 1970s', Scottish Critical Heritage, <https://scottishcriticalheritage.wordpress.com/2018/03/01/how-thatcherite-was-the-right-to-buy-scottish-home-ownership-and-working-class-aspiration-from-the-1970s/>. There were also earlier cases of local authorities attempting to sell council housing to sitting tenants, most notably in comparatively high quality housing estates built in the 1920s. See Ned Donaldson, and Les Forster, *Sell and be Damned: The Glasgow Merrylee Housing Scandal of 1951* (Glasgow: self published, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Alison Ravetz, *Council housing and culture: the history of a social experiment* (London: Routledge, 2001) and John Broughton, *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (London: Verso, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Benwell Community Project, *Private Housing and the Working Class* (Newcastle: Benwell CDP, 1978); also see National Community Development Project, *Whatever happened to council housing?* (London: CDP, 1976) esp. pp. 79-84 on Ferguslie Park.

<sup>10</sup> The title of Keith Joseph's famous 1972 speech. For further discussion see John Welshman, 'From the Cycle of Deprivation to Social Exclusion: Five Continues', *The Political Quarterly*, 77:4 (2006), pp. 475-84.

<sup>11</sup> Phillips, *Industrial Politics of Devolution*; Tomlinson, 'De-industrialization not decline'; Jim Tomlinson and Ewan Gibbs, 'Planning the new industrial nation: Scotland 1931-1979', *Contemporary British History*, 30:4 (2016), pp. 584-60.

<sup>12</sup> See Project team, *Six cord thread: the story of Coats and Clarks Paisley threadmills* (Paisley: Project Team, 1995) and Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*.

<sup>13</sup> National Records of Scotland, SEP 4/3996, N. J. Shanks, Scottish Office, Chrysler. Secretary of State for Scotland's meeting with representatives of Strathclyde Regional Council and Renfrew District Council, 3 December 1975.

<sup>14</sup> Jim Phillips, 'Economic Direction and Generational Change in Twentieth Century Britain: The Case of the Scottish Coalfields', *English Historical Review*, 132 (2017), pp. 885-911; Jim Phillips, *Collieries, Communities and the Miners' Strike in Scotland, 1984-85* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012). Ewan Gibbs, 'The Moral Economy of the Scottish Coalfields: Managing Deindustrialization under Nationalization c.1947-1983' *Enterprise & Society*, 19:1 (2018), pp. 124-52.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Wight, *Workers not Masters: Masculine Respectability, Consumption and Employment in Central Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).

- <sup>16</sup> Sean Damer, *Glasgow: Going for a song* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 161-2.
- <sup>17</sup> Sean Damer, *From Moorepark to Wine Alley: the rise and fall of a Glasgow housing scheme* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, c. 1989); Sean Damer, *Last Exit to Blackhill: the stigmatization of a Glasgow housing scheme* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, Centre for Housing Research, c. 1992).
- <sup>18</sup> John English, *A Profile of Ferguslie Park* (Paisley: Paisley CDP, 1977), p. 3.
- <sup>19</sup> Bill Jordan, *Paupers: The making of the new claiming class* (London: Routledge, 1973). There were active Claimants Unions in Castlemilk and throughout Glasgow. See the Spirit of Revolt archive held at the Mitchell Library Ref: T/SOR, CCU – available online <http://spiritofrevolt.info/john-cooper-finding-collection/>
- <sup>20</sup> Sarah Banks and Mick Carpenter, 'Researching the local politics and practices of radical Community Development Projects in 1970s Britain', *Community Development Journal*, 52:2 (2017), pp. 226-46; Peter Shapely, *Deprivation, State Interventions and Urban Communities in Britain, 1968-79* (London: Routledge, 2017).
- <sup>21</sup> See Crow et al 'Not "radical", but not "kailyard" either', p. 13, for the significance of the CDP Ferguslie Park in predating the shift in policy interventions from an emphasis on the inner city redevelopment and the rehabilitation of private rented accommodation to the predominantly council managed outer estate.
- <sup>22</sup> Banks and Carpenter, 'Researching the local politics ...' p. 230.
- <sup>23</sup> Banks and Carpenter, 'Researching the local politics ...' p. 230.
- <sup>24</sup> National CDP, *The Costs of Industrial Change: Industry, the State and the Older Urban Areas* (London: CDP Information and Intelligence Unit, 1977); National CDP, *Gilding the Ghetto: The State and the Poverty Experiments* (London: CDP Inter-project Editorial Team, 1977).
- <sup>25</sup> Robert Kraushaar, 'Structural problems and local responses: the final reports of the local Community Development Projects, Review Article', *Community Development Journal*, 17:1 (1982), pp. 68-72 as quoted in Banks and Carpenter, 'Researching the local politics ...', p. 230. For a more recent reassessment of the Paisley CDP in a national context see Crow et al, 'Not "radical", but not "kailyard" either'.
- <sup>26</sup> Phillips, *The Industrial Politics of Devolution*.
- <sup>27</sup> English, *A Profile of Ferguslie Park*, p. 1 and 18.
- <sup>28</sup> English, *A Profile of Ferguslie Park*, p. 3.
- <sup>29</sup> Scottish Council (Development & Industry), *Inquiry in to the Scottish economy, 1960-1961: Report of a Committee appointed by the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) under the chairmanship of J.N. Toothill* (Edinburgh: Scottish Council (Development & Industry), 1961); West Central Scotland Plan Team, *West Central Scotland: A programme of action* (Glasgow: The Team, 1974). For the UK context see, Jim Tomlinson, *Managing the Economy, Managing the People: Narratives of Economic Life in Britain from Beveridge to Brexit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 137-60.
- <sup>30</sup> Dennis Marsden, *Workless: An exploration of the social contract between society and the worker* (London: Penguin, 1975), p. 24.
- <sup>31</sup> Marsden, *Workless*, p. 24.
- <sup>32</sup> Gail Armstrong, *Long Term Unemployment in a Deprived Scottish Housing Scheme* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1975), p. 1.
- <sup>33</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 7.
- <sup>34</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 4.
- <sup>35</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 4.
- <sup>36</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 7.
- <sup>37</sup> Armstrong, *Long Term Unemployment*, p. 15.
- <sup>38</sup> See also Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment and a Local Initiative*, p. 9 and Crow et al 'Not "radical", but not "kailyard" either' p. 11.
- <sup>39</sup> Armstrong, *Long Term Unemployment*, p. 23.
- <sup>40</sup> Armstrong, *Long Term Unemployment*, p. 3.
- <sup>41</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 12.
- <sup>42</sup> Frank Herron, 'Redundancy and redeployment from UCS 1969-71', *Scottish Journal of Political Economy* (1972), pp. 231-51, Douglas Payne, *Closure at Linwood: a follow-up survey of redundant worker* (Edinburgh: Office for Scotland, Manpower Services Commission, 1984).
- <sup>43</sup> Herron, 'Redundancy and redeployment'; Payne, *Closure at Linwood*; Marsden, *Workless*, pp. 20-21.
- <sup>44</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 8.
- <sup>45</sup> John English, *Housing Allocations and social segregation* (Paisley: Paisley CDP, 1978), p. 1.
- <sup>46</sup> Armstrong, *Long Term Unemployment*, p. 20.
- <sup>47</sup> English, *Housing Allocations*, p. 15.

---

<sup>48</sup> English, *Housing Allocations*, p. 16.

<sup>49</sup> Alan McGregor, 'Intra-Urban Variations in Unemployment Duration: A Case Study', *Urban Studies*, 14:3 (1977), pp. 303-13.

<sup>50</sup> McGregor, 'Intra-Urban Variations in Unemployment Duration', p. 311.

<sup>51</sup> Barbara Jackson, *The CDP Management Committee, an analysis of its role* (Paisley: Paisley CDP, 1977), pp. 1-4.

<sup>52</sup> See Lisa McKenzie, *Getting by: estates, class and culture in austerity Britain* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), pp. 19-46.

<sup>53</sup> John Welshman, *Underclass: A history of the excluded since 1880* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), chapter 1. Crow et al also discuss 'intra-class segregation' in Paisley, 'Not "radical", but not "kailyard" either', p.13.

<sup>54</sup> See Wight, *Workers not Wasters*, pp. 104-6.

<sup>55</sup> Barbara Jackson and Pam Davidson, *The Information and Action Centre* (Paisley: Paisley CDP, 1977), p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Jackson and Davidson, *The Information and Action Centre*, p. 5

<sup>57</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 19.

<sup>58</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 26.

<sup>59</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 32.

<sup>60</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 34.

<sup>61</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 20.

<sup>63</sup> Jackson, *The CDP Management Committee*, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> Tomlinson and Gibbs, 'Planning the new industrial nation', Martin, *Concentrated Unemployment*, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> For advice for local businesses in the Renfrewshire area see <https://www.bgateway.com/local-offices/renfrewshire>. See also Scottish Enterprise, *Local Heroes: Scotland's New Entrepreneurs* (Scottish Enterprise, 1999).

<sup>66</sup> Crow et al, 'Not "radical", but not "kailyard" either', p. 4.