1   **Building infrastructures for inclusive regeneration**

2   Jason Slade, Andy Inch, Lee Crookes

3   *Department of Urban Studies and Planning, University of Sheffield*

4

5   Abstract

6   This paper explores the foundational role of physical infrastructure in making inclusive,

7   community-led regeneration possible. It does this through documenting three years of

8   engaged research on participatory planning, conducted in Westfield, a community in

9   Sheffield, UK, which experiences 'multiple deprivation'. The research looked to support

10   community-led planning efforts taking place under the auspices of the Big Local

11   regeneration programme, and afforded significant insight into the combined impacts of

12   austerity and ideologically driven community development initiatives for people trying to

13   make positive change in their communities. Our principal contributions are twofold: firstly, a

14   theoretical contribution, on the role of physical infrastructure and how it is understood in

15   making certain kinds of community development possible and impossible; secondly, the

16   application of this theoretical insight to a concrete case, Westfield's pub-turned-community-

17   centre *Com.unity.* We conclude by arguing for the critical importance of 'the publicness of

18   public things', and the need for a fundamental reimagining of the roles and responsibilities

19   of both the state and communities, in valuing and investing in the infrastructures that make

20   inclusive urban regeneration possible, if such efforts are to have any hope of success.

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1. Introduction

1.1

Since the 2007-8 financial crisis, some of the UK's most marginalised and deprived places

have faced considerable hardship. Westfield, a planned housing estate on the south eastern

edge of Sheffield is such a place (see *Figure 1)*; a pocket of considerable deprivation in a

post-industrial region that already had some of the lowest wages in the UK (Taylor, 2006).

During the period of harsh fiscal austerity that was instituted by governments from 2010

onwards, resources were consistently sucked out of Westfield: the local authority, Sheffield

City Council, saw its budget halved (National Audit Office, 2018); benefit cuts had huge

impacts on households; the post office and pharmacy were closed; and the doctors' surgery

was constantly under threat of closure. Given that the City Council had already identified

Westfield as 'forgotten' and in need of regeneration (SCC, 2009), the outlook was bleak.

As long-standing infrastructures and publicly-funded resources disappeared from places like

Westfield, however, community development professionals were making the case for a new

approach; a variant of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), championed by

community development professionals working outside the state with first-hand experience

of the problems that come with top-down initiatives (e.g. Taylor et al, 2007). This centres on

the idea that the residents of places represent an asset, with the potential to come together

and regenerate their communities using their own ideas, talents and time. With the support

of National Lottery-funding, the Big Local programme was launched with a view to doing

just this. Big Local identified 150 communities around England and promised them each a

48   million pounds to spend over a ten year period on whatever residents identified as being

49   most important. A light touch supporting framework was created to help residents come

50   together, think through their challenges and plan for solutions. Westfield was designated a

51   Big Local area in the third wave of allocations, in 2013.

52   *1.2*

53   Even in the brief introduction above we can see a host of different intersecting

54   infrastructures - physical and social – and the changing political rationalities within which

55   their provision and use is situated. Together these infrastructures form a backdrop that

56   regeneration work seeks to strengthen, mobilise or rework in order to generate new

57   possibilities for places and the people living in them. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is

58   to critically explore how infrastructures create conditions of possibility for inclusive,

59   community-led regeneration. Working through the 'infrastructural turn' in urban studies,

60   our argument is that the socio-material interactions enabled by physical infrastructure play

61   a significant role in urban regeneration, underpinning the potential for meaningful

62   collaboration by influencing the forms of publicness that emerge in community settings.

63   The first contribution of the paper is theoretical. Drawing on political theorist Bonnie

64   Honig's (2017) work on the ways 'public things' bind people together and shape

65   attachments to particular forms of democratic politics, we argue it is important to

66   understand how physical infrastructures actively mediate patterns of inclusion and

67   exclusion, shaping the experience of community, horizons of aspiration and the politics of

68   recognition in community-led regeneration. As a result, we argue an infrastructural turn

69   helps to productively rework long-standing debates in urban planning, regeneration and

70   community development about the relative importance of investment in physical and/ or

71 social assets, opening up new ways of understanding the significance of what Klinenburg

72 (2018) calls 'social infrastructures' in underpinning community-led regeneration.

73 The paper's second contribution is to apply this theoretical lens to a concrete piece of social

74 infrastructure, a community centre in Westfield called *Com.unity.* Over time *Com.unity* has

75 been home to a range of formal and informal uses that have seen it valued and invested in

76 differently. Whilst it has played an important role in shaping day-to-day life on the estate, it

77 has also been a node in a series of ideologically situated projects for change that reveal

78 quite different understandings of community, urban regeneration and the respective roles

79 and responsibilities of the state, local citizens and other stakeholders in decision-making and

80 the life of the community. By exploring three distinct phases in the biography of this

81 building, we show how its sociality as a piece of physical infrastructure has been reworked

82 over time, with significant implications for community politics and the regenerated futures

83 being imagined for Westfield. We conclude by arguing for a fundamental reimagining of the

84 roles and responsibilities of both the state and communities in building and sustaining,

85 investing in and valuing the basic infrastructures upon which inclusive urban regeneration

86 might be built.

87 **2. Background**

88 In this section, we outline the historical background that led to Westfield being targeted by

89 a series of regeneration initiatives. These initiatives have placed differing emphases on the

90 physical and/or social dimensions of the area, depending on the prevailing priorities and

91 finances of various public and non-governmental agencies and the respective place-based

92 (physical) or people-based (social) urban policy approaches favoured by successive national

93 governments.

2.1 The Mosborough Masterplan

95   *The opportunity is offered to build an efficiently planned, properly structured layout,*

96   *creating an environment where a fuller life can be enjoyed and where successive*

97   *generations will be born, will live and develop in a setting designed for greater health*

98   *and happiness and more complete fulfilment.* (Sheffield Corporation, 1969, p. v)

99   This quotation conveys the great hopes that Sheffield City Council had for Westfield and the

100   other Mosborough 'townships', which it planned and constructed to its south east in the

101   late 1960s and early 1970s as, '*one of the most spectacular community concepts in this*

102   *country*' (Sheffield Corporation, undated). Underpinned by extensive survey research into

103   urban and population structure, the masterplanners plan comprehensively for housing,

104   employment, shopping, recreation, communication and utilities, education and social

105   facilities. If this illustrates the ambition of the proposals, it also points to a certain

106   paternalism. 'Townships' such as Westfield, comprising around 5000 people, would nourish

107   and enrich the people who moved to them, allowing them to lead healthier and fuller lives

108   than those they left behind in the inner city. We can read this as a promise to future

109   residents, that the infrastructure to support a full and enriching life would be made

110   available to them. Conscious of growing criticism of the physical determinism of post-war

111   planning, however, the planners argue that the 'good life' cannot be designed and needs to

112   flexibly consider social development: 'The Plan needs to be conceived as an infrastructure

113   which will provide the opportunity for all kinds of activities to establish themselves and

114   evolve with time' (p41).

115   To this end, community meeting rooms were provided and the notion of a hub for the

116   community was expanded further in a promotional document for prospective residents,

117   detailing the wide range of support available in 'Westfield Centre'. The complex would

118   include first and middle schools, alongside a health centre, the community rooms and pub.

119   It also, however, reiterates that all of this is simply an enabling foundation: 'The community

120   will flourish at its best by having an enthusiastic Community Association. Every

121   encouragement is on hand for people to develop the community along the lines they wish in

122   this way. Local community services, police, teachers, religious ministers, are all ready and

123   eager to help all they can' (Sheffield Corporation, undated).

124   *2.2 Industrial decline*

125   Testimonies of early Westfield residents describe the 'holiday feel' that accompanied

126   moving into a house that had hitherto unimaginable luxuries such as indoor plumbing. In

127   more reflective moments, however, they also convey the difficulties that arose as the

128   promised transport, shopping and social infrastructure was not yet in place to support

129   them. In response, however, we can see people beginning to play the roles the planners

130   imagined for them:

131   …a lot of us got together and met in the community rooms and decided [to] form a

132   committee. And that's what we did, we all put a pound in and we had our first disco.

133   From there it escalated, we thought we could have a disco regularly and we could

134   hire a bar in. Then we decided to have our first gala. A playgroup opened for kiddies,

135   a luncheon club. I used to do the luncheon club, cook for old ladies, but all of a

136   sudden you've got this community growing and coming together! (*interview with*

137   *resident*)

138   The world of full-employment and industrial prosperity that conceived Westfield was,

139   however, very different from the post-1973 one that delivered it. The new jobs promised in

140 the plan did not arrive as Sheffield experienced sharp post-industrial decline. The collapse of

141 the city's steel manufacturing industry saw unemployment rise from around 4% in 1978 to

142 15.5% in 1984 (Winkler, 2007). From the 1990s onwards residents report growing problems

143 with drugs and crime but Westfield found itself overlooked by targeted regeneration

144 programs made available in similar areas on account of being statistically masked by

145 relatively affluent adjacent areas.

146 *2.3 Regeneration and the birth of Com.unity*

147 In 2002 events came to a head, when a high-profile murder occurred outside the pub in

148 Westfield centre. The estate was belatedly deemed a priority for intervention, with official

149 data indicating that the central core of the estate was among the most deprived areas in the

150 country: the 10% most deprived for income levels, employment and health, and the 3%

151 most deprived for education, skills and training. (SCC, 2009).

152 The creation of the new community centre, *Com.unity* (see Figure 2), was at the heart of a

153 council-led plan for the regeneration of Westfield published in 2009, following a programme

154 of community consultation. Emblematically, it would be housed in the pub where the

155 murder had taken place. Having been characterised as a hot-spot for drug dealing and anti-

156 social behaviour, the pub had quickly been closed after the murder (BBC, 2010). Funding

157 would come from a Youth Capital Fund provided by national government, meaning that

158 *Com.unity*'s initial focus was to be youth work.

159 *2.4 Austerity and Big Local*

160 The aftermath of the 2007-8 financial crisis and the election nationally of a Conservative-led

161 coalition government committed to austerity in 2010 saw Westfield and *Com.unity* facing

162 another markedly changed context. National regeneration funding disappeared and the

163 resources and capacity of the local state were severely curtailed. Since 2010, Sheffield City

164 Council has been forced to make year-on-year budget cuts amounting to a total of £430m

165 and, by 2016, the Council had reportedly shed a quarter of its workforce as a result of these

166 cuts (BBC, 2016). Austerity has impacted upon the quality and quantity of a range of local

167 community and environmental services such as libraries, parks and highways maintenance

168 and local councillors have been forced to make difficult decisions that have resulted in

169 reduced levels of care for vulnerable groups and the cessation of certain non-statutory

170 services. A report on the differential impact of austerity on local government, conducted by

171 academics for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, found that the most deprived areas saw

172 budget reductions of £220 per head between 2010 and 2014, versus just £40 in the least

173 deprived (Hastings et al, 2015). In this context, as the Council's initial regeneration plan

174 faltered, the arrival of Big Local in Westfield in 2013 was opportune, representing the

175 prospect of ten years of support and £1million to be directed at locally identified priorities.[1]

176 *Com.unity*, the still relatively new community centre, was central to the work of the

177 residents who came together to form a Big Local partnership in Westfield, providing a

178 potential base for the activities and initiatives they looked to foster.

179 Whilst the Big Local programme had a self-conscious commitment not to substitute for

180 provision resourced by other organisations, however, this sat uncomfortably in the wider

181 context: savage cuts being driven through by a national government committed to 'The Big

182 Society', which sought to reduce the state's role and devolve responsibility for many local

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[1] For context, the impact of the £220 cut in local government spending amounts to just under £200,000 per year in Westfield, the Big Local investment amounts to £100,000 per year. Reductions to centrally administered benefits, significant for individuals in a community where unemployment was three times the Sheffield average (SCC, 2009), are not included in this figure. Moreover, as the JRF report also notes, it is important to recognise that as resource was diminishing demand for services was increasing.

183   services to local voluntary and community groups. Featherstone *et al* (2012) have described

184   this as 'austerity localism', with communities left seeking ways to fill the gaps left by a

185   rapidly shrinking local state. The process of 'asset transfer', through which infrastructure

186   such as libraries and leisure centres have been transferred from the public to the voluntary

187   sector, has become a defining feature of this austerity localism (Findlay-King et al, 2017).

188   Just one-year into Westfield Big Local (WBL), the newly formed, resident-led Partnership

189   confronted this tension in the starkest terms. Two local authority directors came to a

190   meeting to announce that the council would no longer be able to fund *Com.unity*. The

191   officers said that, as much as they disliked the term, this was a 'Big Society' moment; WBL

192   could run *Com.unity* for themselves, using the Big Local resource, or it would have to close.

193   WBL was not alone in facing this dilemma: as Gregory (2018) reports, many of the 150 Big

194   Local areas across England have found themselves involved in similar asset transfer

195   arrangements in their efforts to sustain vital elements of local social infrastructure.

196   The story of Westfield's development has been shaped by major economic and social

197   changes that have undermined many of the optimistic promises made by its planners.

198   Responses to these changes have also tracked wider political shifts in urban governance,

199   from state-led planning to regeneration and on to contested forms of community-led

200   development. Each of these regimes operates with different understandings of people,

201   place and the importance of various forms of infrastructure to their prospects. To explore

202   this further we go on to consider the idea of ABCD as a particular way of thinking about the

203   physical and social resources required for inclusive regeneration.

204   **3. Theory**

205   *3.1 Big Local and ABCD*

206   *The starting point for ABCD is what's strong, not what's wrong.* (Russell, 2020, p. 16)

207   Ideas of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) were developed and gained ground

208   in the United States from the early 1980s as an alternative to traditional 'needs' based

209   approaches to community work that start from the assumption that certain places are

210   deficient in key resources and therefore require external assistance (Kretzmann and

211   McKnight, 1993). Proponents argue that needs based approaches have reinforced territorial

212   stigma and, sometimes unwittingly, fostered top-down leadership based on denigrating

213   local people and interpellating them as passive recipients of external 'help' (Mathie and

214   Cunningham, 2003). Top down initiatives fail, Russell (2020) argues, because they rely on a

215   two-dimensional framework for understanding change in places, which consists of

216   institutional interventions and individual behaviour change. ABCD by contrast introduces

217   and privileges a third dimension, the environmental/social (p. 14). From here, he identifies

218   five categories into which the principles and practices of ABCD fall: 1, Citizen-led; 2,

219   Relationship-oriented; 3, Asset-based; 4, Place-based; 5, Inclusion-focused (2020, p. 15).

220   The relationship between map and territory runs through ABCD, both as metaphor and

221   practice. ABCD suggests that prevailing approaches to community development have missed

222   the fact that all places must be mapped afresh, based on a fine-grained understanding of

223   the territory. By 'mapping' both tangible (physical) and intangible (social) local assets, ABCD

224   seeks to start from recognition of the often underappreciated skills and resources that exist

225   within all communities, building on these to address local concerns with a particular focus

226   on the associational networks through which people can be organised. In this regard, ABCD

227   has strong affinities with community-led approaches to planning and regeneration that seek

228   to empower local people to take control of the development of their own communities

229   (Reardon, 2014).

230   The Big Local programme built on the roots of similar community-development experiments

231   in the UK, critical of the failure of large-scale, often physically orientated public

232   regeneration funding to generate lasting community capacity-during the 2000s (Taylor et al,

233   2007). By offering a relatively long-term, ten-year commitment and a flexible process, the

234   Big Local programme was designed to enable the patient development of community

235   capacity in areas previously overlooked by regeneration funding.

236   As noted above, however, such programmes and philosophies sit in an ambiguous political

237   relation to other political currents. As austerity localism was introduced, for example, Aiken

238   et al (2011, np) sounded warnings about the potential risks of communities taking over the

239   control of local buildings and land:

240   Without the right conditions in place, asset ownership/management can struggle to

241   achieve benefits. Community organisations need to be mindful of the risks and costs

242   involved in asset control, as assets can become liabilities that undermine community

243   aspirations. Community organisations need to strike a difficult balance between

244   achieving financial sustainability and delivering community benefit. The

245   opportunities for generating income vary among different organisations and

246   communities, and support is needed in developing the skills required to manage

247   assets effectively.

248   Thus, in the context of neoliberal retrenchment of welfare spending and programmes of

249   public austerity, there is a clear danger that calls for ABCD may intersect with varieties of

250   'self-help' or the promotion of entrepreneurial over activist orientations to community

251 action, legitimising the retreat of the state and regressive forms of localism (Featherstone et

252 al, 2012; MacLeod and Emejulu, 2014). As Wolf-Powers (2014) highlights it is therefore

253 important to critically analyse the political norms underpinning different conceptions of

254 community development and planning, examining their theories of change and

255 understandings of underlying socio-economic drivers.

256 *3.2 The Infrastructural Turn*

257 The use of the term 'assets' in ABCD is deliberately broad, encompassing both physical and

258 social resources for community development. In this regard there are important

259 intersections with the recent expansion of interest in 'infrastructure' in urban studies.

260 Indeed, recent years have seen a marked 'infrastructural turn', with a significant expansion

261 of scholarship on the relations between various forms of technical infrastructure, patterns

262 of urban social life and the politics of urban development (e.g. Amin, 2014; Lemanski, 2019).

263 Drawing on wider theoretical interest in vital materialism, scholars have drawn renewed

264 attention to the socio-technical underpinnings of urban life and how the provision and use

265 of urban infrastructures form part of the governing apparatus of contemporary societies

266 (Larkin, 2013). In doing so, they recentre long-standing debates in planning and community

267 development about the interrelations between the physical and the social in the

268 development of places.

269 Infrastructural studies re-examine the manifold ways in which the built environment can be

270 considered political (Wakefield, 2018) often by focusing on the "system of substrates" (Star,

271 1999, 380), such as the networks of pipes, cables and roads, that underpin the urban world.

272 Recent work has also, however, prompted a gradual broadening of the always fuzzy

273 definition of the term to encompass a wider range of both material and immaterial

274   infrastructures considered 'platforms providing for and reproducing life in the city' (Simone,

275   2004). In this wider theoretical sense, infrastructures are conceived theoretically as part of

276   the grounds on which social action unfolds, binding people and things together and enabling

277   various forms of 'transmission' from one state to another over time (Berlant, 2011).

278   In a related but more prosaic vein, Eric Klinenberg (2018, 16) defines 'social infrastructure'

279   broadly in terms that encompass both the physical and social to focus on "the physical

280   places and organisations that shape the way people interact" suggesting they are a crucial

281   'building block' of social life that "helps make us who we are and determines how we live"

282   (32/33). Clearly distinct from more technical forms of infrastructure like power or sanitation,

283   Klinenberg's work nonetheless illustrates how certain forms of social provision, schools,

284   libraries and the organisations that use them, provide a crucial 'platform' through which

285   interactions and mutual support between people can grow. Klinenberg's argument, that the

286   value of social infrastructures has been underestimated leading to long-term

287   underinvestment, resonates powerfully with the long-standing concerns of regeneration

288   and community-development practitioners working in marginalised places where the

289   physical and organisational fabric of associational life is frequently strained by

290   disinvestment. It also intersects in significant ways with scholarship on the effects of

291   austerity regimes on community facilities and marginalised communities in many global

292   northern states over recent years.

293   Pain (2018, 388), for example, discusses how long-term disinvestment in parts of north-east

294   England is akin to successive waves of 'slow violence' being visited upon particular urban

295   areas and she describes how it "appears to become encoded in the material, ecological and

296   social fabric of certain places" producing a "collective spatial trauma". Reflecting on the

297   most recent phase of retrenchment in England, Shaw (2019, 973) argues that austerity

298   "harms the social infrastructures of co-existence" by imposing a 'slow urbicide' on the

299   "buildings, streets and other built ecologies of everyday life". Robinson and Sheldon (2019,

300   112), meanwhile, highlight the difficulty of gaining recognition of the value of "'ordinary'

301   community buildings, such as libraries and day centres, [that] are pivotal yet under-

302   acknowledged participants in the maintenance of forms of life, which are both threatened

303   by austerity and offer modes of responding to it". Such studies not only re-affirm the

304   importance of social infrastructures but also highlight that, like other forms of

305   infrastructure, they often only become visible when they are threatened, break down or

306   cease to exist, producing an enforced reconfiguration of the social relations they have

307   hitherto enabled.

308   Studies of infrastructure failures amidst huge inequalities in access have been a particular

309   focus for urban scholarship in the global south. Abdul Maliq Simone (2004), for example,

310   argues that people themselves become infrastructures amidst the 'ruined' physical

311   infrastructure of Johannesburg, enabling the ongoing transmission of basic goods and

312   services and facilitating economic and social opportunity. Austerity-induced retrenchment

313   of social infrastructures, however, means that such insights increasingly resonate with the

314   lived experiences of marginalised people and places in the heartlands of neoliberal

315   capitalism. Potentially perverse intersections with austerity political projects like the Big

316   Society, for example, place asset-based community development programmes like Big Local

317   in danger of providing cover for the retrenchment of state support for social infrastructure;

318   legitimising a falling back on people as infrastructure to backfill lost services and resources

319   (see e.g. MacLeod and Emejulu, 2014; Tonkiss, 2013).

320   *3.3 'Public Things' and the dynamic political relations of social infrastructure*

321   Debates about disinvestment, the loss of social infrastructures and their disproportionately

322   negative consequences for already disadvantaged people and places clearly raise important

323   political and strategic questions for community development and regeneration practice.

324   However, if "[t]hinking infrastructurally… is important to consider the kinds and qualities of

325   facilities that allow social life to happen, the kind of sociality that is afforded by them, and

326   how this can be recognised as a kind of public life" (Latham and Layton, 2019, 4), it requires

327   more than a focus on key moments of loss or contestation of infrastructure provision.

328   Lemanski's (2019) concept of 'infrastructural citizenship' is useful here, pointing to the

329   ongoing forms of state-citizen relations enabled by engagement with, sometimes faltering,

330   public infrastructures. Her argument intersects too with political theorist Bonnie Honig's

331   (2017) concern for the political and democratic potential of what she terms 'public things'.

332   Drawing on the object relations of D.W. Winnicott and Hannah Arendt's concern for things,

333   Honig (2017, 5) argues that a wide range of objects, including infrastructures, can be

334   considered "part of the "holding environment" of democratic citizenship; they furnish the

335   world of democratic life. They do not take care of our *needs* only. They also constitute us,

336   complement us, limit us, thwart us, and interpellate us into democratic citizenship."

337   Honig argues that continuing attachments to 'public things' evidence alternative ways of

338   relating to and caring for the world, beyond the dominance of instrumental economic

339   rationalities. In this way Honig argues public things can help anchor ongoing attachments

340   that orientate the commitments of actors in important ways, binding them together as

341   (always potentially fractious) collectives around shared concerns that create the possibility

342   of political community. For Honig this does not necessarily mean an exclusive focus on the

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343   agency of things rather "…the human remains the focus, but things have agency enough to

344   thwart or support human plans or ambitions, and we do well to acknowledge their power

345   and, when appropriate to allow that power to work on us…"(28).

346   Social infrastructures like community buildings are both an ordinary and fairly obvious

347   example of a public thing. After all, as Mattson (1999, 13) contends, "Democracy requires

348   places where citizens can gather together to discuss the issues of the day and work on

349   solving problems". Honig's provocations, coupled with recognition of the ways that social

350   infrastructures shape citizenship relations, suggest the importance of paying close attention

351   to the social relations that are configured around them, however, and the forms of

352   collectivity they would 'interpellate' people to be part of. In particular it challenges scholars

353   to recognise and explore the complex ways public things interact with the political regimes

354   and projects in which they are situated, generating changing patterns of inclusion/

355   exclusion. Rather than assuming, for example, that shifts from public, to private or

356   community ownership or control imply clearly defined changes in these relations it instead

357   becomes important to empirically explore those patterns and the forms of publicness they

358   enable.

359   This argument has considerable significance for community-led regeneration efforts that

360   advocate community-ownership and control as a means of strengthening associational

361   networks. As we have suggested, the implications for a programme like Big Local, operating

362   in the shadow of a wider austerity agenda that seeks to offload and download responsibility

363   for the provision and maintenance of social infrastructures, are particularly stark (Peck,

364   2012; Pill and Guarneros-Meza, 2018). In the rest of the paper we therefore set out to

365   explore the community centre, *Com.unity*, as a 'public thing' in Westfield, exploring the

366   ways its publics have been made and remade over time and assessing what this means for

367   inclusive community-led regeneration.

368   **4. Methods** (500 words)

369   4.1

370   The paper draws on a range of data gathered through more than three years of engaged

371   action learning and action research work under the auspices of a community-university

372   partnership with WBL. Over the period of our engagement, a variety of participatory action

373   research (PAR) projects were undertaken. PAR involves a commitment to aiming for

374   democratic engagement with research participants (McIntyre, 2008; Reason and Bradbury,

375   2008). These projects were designed to inform WBL's plan for how to invest their resources

376   to realise long-lasting, positive change on the estate. Activities included background

377   research on existing data, asset-mapping exercises, story-telling workshops, visioning

378   exercises and plan-writing workshops. This work generated a community profile, vision and

379   ultimately contributed to a plan, approved by the funder in 2015 (Westfield Big Local, 2015).

380   For further consideration of the authors' experiences of community led planning through

381   the Big Local programme in Westfield see XXX (2020).

382   Our analysis here rests on our role as participant observers whilst engaged in this work. As

383   Flick (2006, 220) has it, participant observers 'dive headlong into the field', observing from a

384   member's perspective but also influencing on account of their participation. This was

385   combined with archival, documentary and interview research including 35 semi-structured,

386   qualitative interviews with participants and local service providers conducted between

387   August 2015 and February 2016.

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5. Results and Discussion (2000 words)

Above we laid out the wider economic, social and political contexts that led to Westfield

being targeted for regeneration and chosen as a Big Local area. We also introduced

Com.unity, as a significant piece of social infrastructure on an estate where

deindustrialisation and long-term disinvestment has seen many of the carefully justified

promises made in the Mosborough masterplan unravel. This section of the paper traces how

these broad changes have found expression in the changing configuration of the building

that housed *Com.unity*, drawing on the discussion above to consider the inclusions and

exclusions that the building's physical character and changing uses have engendered to

draw out their significance for inclusive regeneration.

5.1 The Public House

That the masterplan made provision for a pub in the centre of the new Westfield estate is a

testament to their perceived importance. Klinenberg (2018, 44) quotes approvingly from the

Mass Observation study of British industrial culture that the pub, "Of all the social

institutions that mould men's lives between home and work in an industrial town…holds

more people, takes more of their time and money, than church, cinema, dance-hall, and

political organizations put together." The pub is perhaps then an archetypal example of

social infrastructure. There is little record of the life of the 'Golden Keys' and the forms of

sociality this infrastructure supported, though long-standing residents recall it as a space

where residents who had arrived from all over Sheffield could meet and form bonds. In

410   keeping with other estate pubs, however, by the time it closed, it had developed a bad

411   reputation (see Whitney, 2017). A place apparently avoided by many for its hostile

412   atmosphere, which accommodated anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and other criminal

413   activities; a symbol of the issues that had seen the estate increasingly stigmatized as a

414   problem.

415   5.2 *From public house to public service, 2011-2014*

416   The local authority's decision to purchase the building was taken before the financial crisis

417   and formed part of a wider package of regeneration measures that recognised a

418   concentration of "extreme multiple disadvantage" located in the council housing in the

419   centre of the estate. Following a process of community engagement, the regeneration plan

420   identified a long list of 'issues' to be addressed. The £420,000 renovation of the former

421   Golden Keys was central to this and was seen as a way to address problems of anti-social

422   and criminal behaviour by creating a positive focus for young people (SCC, 2009). The

423   building was refurbished and decorated in consultation with local young people. An upstairs

424   area accommodated a youth club with café, gym and 'chill-out' areas, which provided IT

425   facilities. Redesigned basement rooms hosted public health and educational activities.

426   Having been closed and then put up for sale, the former pub site offered a relatively

427   inexpensive opportunity to create this new community space in Westfield. At the same

428   time, it also symbolised the incremental effects of long-term disinvestment and fragmented

429   decision-making by public bodies on social infrastructure in the area. The community rooms

430   provided in the original plan, where early residents had come together to form an

431   association, had been taken over by the local authority led multi-agency support team,

432   providing social care and welfare services. The only other remaining meeting space on the

433   estate was a small room housing the Tenants' and Residents' Association (TARA) which had

434   been disbanded and reformed several times in acrimonious circumstances.

435   Whilst this reveals the marked need for social infrastructure in Westfield, the opening of a

436   community centre, administered by the local state nonetheless marked a significant break in

437   the building's use and the forms of publicness it assembled. For some Westfield residents

438   whose sense of place had The Golden Keys at its heart the change was reported to be

439   alienating:

440   *We had an issue, when it was turned from a pub to a youth club, me and Angela*

441   *went round this estate six, seven weeks talking to people. Getting them to accept it.*

442   *Because they wouldn't. They didn't want their pub to go. Even though they never*

443   *went in it, it was their pub. (Big Local Member and Youth Worker)*

444   The 'Youth' focused refurbishment of the revamped facility arguably exacerbated this,

445   generating a sense that the centre was not intended for all residents on the estate. Activities

446   for young people were key part of the centre's early offer, with a well-attended youth club,

447   after-school homework clubs and holiday activities organised. Local authority appointed

448   community workers noted with pride that the building was one of the few community

449   centres in the city never to be 'tagged' or vandalised, suggesting a level of 'ownership'

450   amongst local young people. Although those involved admitted that it was often hard to

451   generate interest, a range of other community activities were made available through the

452   centre including adult learning classes, mother and baby mornings, exercise classes and, for

453   a while, a community café, .

454   During this period, *Com.unity* was owned and managed as a public facility, subject to a

455   particular regime of managerialised local authority control, ostensibly intended to

456   guarantee accountability to a wider public. But the policies (and sometimes corporate

457   contracts) of the local authority which governed access, use and maintenance of the

458   building sometimes worked against the very publicness that they sought to facilitate. Whilst

459   ostensibly a public asset available to citizens, access and use of the building was highly

460   controlled, symbolised by a CCTV-controlled door entry system, signing-in procedures and

461   'polite notices' on the walls reminding users of their responsibilities. Nor were citizens

462   invited to participate in the running of the centre. *Com.unity* belonged to the council rather

463   than the community, with access conditional on following the rules specified by the local

464   authority.

465   The 'supervised' and highly conditional form of publicness this created sometimes had

466   moralistic undertones, as when council representatives insisted the Big Local group only

467   offer healthy food choices to local residents at a 'family fun day' organised as part of the

468   launch of WBL. This may have kept some residents away from the centre. In Honig's terms,

469   *Com.unity* never became a 'public thing', anchoring the realisation of a political community

470   in Westfield. The services that were provided from the building certainly helped to meet

471   some of the day-to-day needs of local people but they were addressed primarily as

472   individual service users rather than as democratic citizens.

473   Alongside this regime, however, staff also used the centre to offer a range of informal care

474   and support for some of the most hard-pressed residents on the estate. This included the

475   operation of an unofficial food bank, support for those who struggled to access online job

476   centre and benefit payment systems and the frequent organisation of 'whip rounds' when

477   people found themselves short of money for bills, electricity or food. In this way, the

478   conditionality underpinning formal use of the building was countered by street level

479   community workers who knew and genuinely cared for the area.

480   Against the background of funding cuts and rising levels of local need, the local authority

481   then announced their intention to withdraw further funding or support for *Com.unity*. In the

482   minds of the members of the WBL partnership, the perceived success of WBL and the

483   broader regeneration of Westfield was now seen as being inextricably entwined with the

484   survival of *Com.unity*. The threatened closure of the building served to foreground its

485   importance as one of the few remaining examples of social infrastructure on the estate and

486   its transfer from the state to the community (in the form of the WBL Partnership)

487   potentially signified a transition from the council's top-down, deficit-based approach to

488   regeneration to a new era of community-led regeneration.

489   *5.3 From public service to community 'asset'*

490   As a council-owned youth-cum-community centre, *Com.unity* had come to fulfil a specific

491   kind of role, offering a base for a dwindling range of formal services and informal support

492   and advice. The most recent phase in *Com.unity*'s biography now involved WBL taking over

493   the lease of the building from the council, assuming responsibility for its day-to-day running

494   and, crucially, its financial sustainability. This new regime ushered in another significant shift

495   in the understanding and use of the building and generated significant tensions.

496   Negotiating the lease for *Com.unity* involved a small group of WBL partnership members

497   engaging in protracted meetings with the local authority, as part of which WBL was required

498   to produce an initial business plan to set out its plans for generating revenue to safeguard

499   the building's financial viability. The focus of WBL therefore quickly narrowed and much of

the discussion now veered toward matters of cost, income and the potential uses of the

building, rather than the broader regeneration of the estate.

This shift in focus coincided with the appointment of a new Locally Trusted Organisation

(LTO), the notionally arms-length organisation chosen by every Big Local partnership to

administer and account for the distribution of their funding. Where the previous LTO role

had been performed by an officer of the local high school, the new LTO comprised two

directors of a local social enterprise, both of whom were former senior managers with a

large supermarket chain and they brought a much more entrepreneurial mentality to the

Partnership's meetings. Their experience of managing community buildings to produce

financial returns appealed to those members of the WBL partnership involved in the

negotiations who were rightly concerned that the costs of running the building would

quickly deplete the group's resources, without leaving any lasting legacy.

The physical space of *Com.unity* presented constraints in this regard. Even if all available

space was rented out or used for revenue generating activities, projections suggested a

struggle to break even. Those who had invested energy into the asset transfer were

reluctant to concede this point, however. Instead they repeatedly pointed to the savings

that could be made on maintenance costs once they were freed from the expensive

contracts entered into by the local authority. Whenever people began to question the

wisdom of pursuing the asset transfer, the cost saving for changing light bulbs was repeated

as a symbol of the benefits that would flow from community control. Over time, the

Partnership's monthly meetings became increasingly dominated by the LTO's fixation with

securing financial returns, to the point where one discussion involved serious consideration

522 of the potential for charging residents and visiting public sector workers to use the centre's

523 toilets.

524 Whilst nominally focused on mundane issues of maintenance and accountancy, these

525 discussions also revealed much deeper tensions within the WBL partnership, most of whose

526 members were drawn from the wealthier, privately-owned housing on the edge of the

527 estate rather than the social housing in the centre, where households experienced multiple

528 forms of concentrated disadvantage. Few had used or been attached to the previous

529 incarnation of the building and they were quite content for WBL to move towards a more

530 commercial orientation, with financial imperatives trumping social concerns.

531 For others who had been involved with the centre previously, however, this was a worrying

532 change of direction:

533   I think, I think the partnership problem is, and what I'll say, I think they want to make

534   money… [T]hey don't seem to be looking at the outcomes, they're not looking outside

535   the box, it's as though the outcomes is money.

536 In the absence of any other social infrastructure on the estate, May, a local resident, felt it

537 was vital for *Com.unity* to play a much more central role in the life of the community:

538   For me, this would become a place where people can call it their hub and their

539   socialising spot because Westfield 'ant got anywhere else to socialise. They've got a

540   school but they've got no libraries, no church, they've no post office, and that might

541   sound silly, but that's where old people used to talk, y'know. If they've got somewhere

542   where they can socialise you can start building relationships... then you're going to

543   have a good estate.

544 May's vision for *Com.unity* articulated a strong commitment to realising the building's

545 potential as a more inclusively public thing: "we're low on education, we're low on jobs…

546 but we've got this place, we're taking over this place, you put the right things in, education,

547 youth clubs, things what people can develop in, what is not all about money". Standing in

548 stark contrast to the LTO's narrow, commercial concerns, May's comments envisaged a

549 social infrastructure that would provide a basis for a much more inclusive approach to

550 Westfield's regeneration, better aligned with the hopes, aspirations and resources of those

551 she saw as 'real' Westfield residents:

552 This is the core, to me, the people what need to be helped are the people what's

553 inside, in this block (of social housing) of the real people, as I call 'em. I don't mean

554 that as it sounds but, it's the people what are struggling.

555 The clash between these two different logics and their attendant conceptions of the

556 building and the publics it should serve became increasingly divisive, with the increasing

557 dominance of the commercial orientation symbolised by the LTO's attempts to restrict the

558 informal forms of support that some residents and new employees of WBL had sought to

559 continue:

560 [There is a notice now] saying: "Big Local don't take any responsibility for any advice

561 given." That's aimed at me. I'll tell you now, that is aimed at me. But I'm not giving

562 advice. I'm giving them support...What I'm doing is perfectly normal on an estate

563 that I care about. So to me [the notice] is an insult. (Big Local Member and Youth

564 Worker)

565 In this way, WBL arguably shifted away from Big Local's more progressive style of localism

566 and concern to develop the wider assets of the community to something that was much

567   more entrepreneurial in character, concerned with a single 'asset' and with the pressure to

568   make *Com.unity* financially sustainable, foreclosing many of the social aims and objectives it

569   had initially promised.

570   May summarised her fears about the direction being taken, her emotive language which

571   alludes to the previous murders in Westfield, demonstrating just how strongly she felt about

572   the future of Com.unity:

573   I am frightened of it, because, if they don't get it right there's gonna be uproar on this

574   estate. This estate, what you have to remember has been promised a lot, a lot of

575   times and it's always they've never had it. It's all right them taking *Com.unity* on, I

576   think it's brilliant, but they've gotta get it right what they put in here otherwise there's

577   gonna be murder.

578   **6. Conclusion**

579   Advocates of social infrastructure rightly highlight that it can, "capture an ethos of

580   democratic living…an ethos of citizens as equals in shared space" (Latham and Layton, 2019,

581   10) and has the potential to generate a social surplus, encouraging trust, civility, encounter

582   and common purpose (Amin, 2008). In this way, the concept and role of social

583   infrastructure, helps to bridge long-standing distinctions between tangible and intangible

584   assets, or physical and social planning, highlighting how the material and the social interact

585   to create the conditions of possibility for regeneration. The ways long-term disinvestment in

586   the physical infrastructures initially planned to support the development of community in

587   Westfield combined with the slow violence of austerity to constrain the options available to

588   WBL are , testament to the importance of infrastructural provision in underpinning

589   prospects for community-led development. Preventing ABCD approaches from perversely

590   legitimising a reliance on people as infrastructure under conditions of austerity requires an

591   active politicisation of the roles and responsibilities of both the state and communities in

592   building and sustaining, investing in and valuing the basic assets upon which inclusive urban

593   regeneration might be built.

594   However, as the experience of WBL and the biography of the building housing *Com.unity*

595   illustrate, community leadership is no guarantee of greater inclusivity. Following Honig

596   (2017), the building housing *Com.unity* has always been, in some sense, a 'public thing',

597   even from its very first incarnation as a public house. As Latham and Layton (2019, 9)

598   contend, however, "studying social infrastructures is also about studying how they get

599   practiced". The building's publicness and ability to advance, support or constrain certain

600   modes of sociality and 'infrastructural citizenship' has been an ongoing and contested stake

601   in the politics of regeneration in Westfield.

602   As one of the few remnants of the area's carefully planned social infrastructure this

603   mundane, unremarkable building has, over its life, been subject to the imprimatur of a

604   series of different and contested ideological understandings of community, citizens, service

605   users and customers. But those different stages of its life have also been constitutive of its

606   lived publicness insofar as those who have exercised control over the building have been

607   able to act literally and figuratively as 'gatekeepers', determining who should be admitted,

608   how they should be interpellated or addressed, whether as citizens or customers, and who

609   has the right to engage with and influence the constitution of this public thing. As pub

610   landlord, youth worker or WBL Partnership member, various gatekeepers control access to

611   the building and, by implication, effect who is included/excluded, define what constitutes

612   (un)acceptable forms of behaviour and determine who or what constitutes an 'asset'. Over

613   time, these everyday processes of incorporation and exclusion have worked to produce a

614   series of limited, contingent and value-laden constructions of community and this, in turn,

615   has excluded a wider public from getting involved in the area's regeneration and severely

616   delimited possibilities for change. By exploring three distinct phases in the biography of this

617   building, we have shown how its sociality as a piece of infrastructure has been reworked

618   over time, with significant implications for community politics and the regenerated futures

619   being imagined for Westfield. In doing so the paper points to the critical importance of

620   understanding and enlarging the publicness of public things.

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