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PROMOTING FAIRNESS IN SHEFFIELD

Abstract:

In the light of growing inequalities, several urban areas in the UK established Fairness Commissions between 2010 and 2013. In one of these areas, Sheffield, there was an attempt to do something different and innovative. Sheffield on average was, and remains one of the least deprived major cities in England, but also one of the most unequal. Following the publication of the Commission's report which included an analysis of evidence and 90 recommendations, Sheffield responded by pursuing a number of city-wide initiatives involving different stakeholders. These included monitoring progress towards a fairer city, action on the living wage, a city-wide campaign to promote Sheffield as the fairest city, and 'Sheffield Money' to provide support for those households facing financial exclusion. The continuation of austerity measures still creates severe challenges to the ambitions and work of the Sheffield Fairness Commission, but experiences have shown how leadership-through-example and the co-production of an active campaign can give articulation to a shared desire to address injustices in the city.

Fairness Commissions Urban Inequalities Sheffield Justice Local Innovation

“Radio presenter: I wonder if Sheffield is becoming a divided city: when people talk about ‘Sheffield’, they often mean the bit they know rather than the whole. It sometimes seems like people who do the talking in Sheffield come from particular areas.

College student: It seems as if there are estates in the city that no-one seems to care about. And sometimes that there is not much of a community left, both city-wide and locally. People will say that they are proud to be from Sheffield, but they aren’t always connected with areas other than the bit they are from.

Foodbank worker: Overall, Sheffield feels like a city of contrast, with a danger that a greater sense of inequality could lead to some parts of the city being alienated from each other.”

(Citizens voices, State of Sheffield 2014)¹

The Sheffield Fairness Commission

This paper provides an account and reflections by practitioners and academics involved in the activities of the Sheffield Fairness Commission.² By reflecting on these

¹ Sheffield First Partnership: State of Sheffield. www.sheffieldfirst.com/key-documents/state-of-sheffield.html

experiences we seek to address the potential for change in the city of Sheffield offered by the Commission, and to critically assess the scope for doing something different and innovative.

Some twenty-three local authorities established Fairness Commissions after 2010 (NEF 2015). The wider context that explains the timing of these events was the national responses being made to the 2007/2008 financial crisis. This stimulated a number of critical studies about social justice (see for example Dorling 2010), but most significantly, in 2010 the newly elected U.K. national coalition government began a programme of 'austerity' in order to cut public spending. This national Government programme of cuts was the most radical in the post-war era, with the biggest single cut being made to the grants paid to local government, including social care. Between 2008 and 2016, these reductions were planned to amount to some £31 billion, estimated to be a reduction of over 65% in local government funding. The neo-liberal coalition Government made claims that all of these cuts were to be made 'fairly', but in practice they had the opposite effect with tax changes, cuts in welfare and housing benefits all affecting the poorest and most vulnerable the hardest (see for example Duffy 2013).

² Gordon Dabinett, University of Sheffield, was co-author of the *State of Sheffield*; Matthew Borland was Sheffield City Council policy officer for fairness; Sharon Squires was Director of Sheffield First Partnership; and Alan Walker, University of Sheffield, was Chair of the Sheffield Fairness Commission.

The first Commission was set up by the London Borough of Islington, partially in response to a widely debated publication on inequalities and health by Richard Wilkinson and Katie Pickett (Wilkinson & Pickett 2009). Indeed, local government was to take over responsibility for public health services from clinical health bodies at this time. Although each Fairness Commission reflected specific contexts, they also shared a number of common features. All were established at arms-length from the local councils, which were predominantly Labour controlled. They all adopted objectives to develop a clearer understanding of what equality gaps existed in their areas and proposed tangible ways to reduce local inequalities (Sillett & O'Donnell 2013). Responses to such periods of economic crisis by local government were not new, since during the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s local government had also made responses to poverty through a number of initiatives (Geddes & Erskine 1994).

Sheffield had undergone a significant transformation in the 15 years preceding the publication of the Sheffield Fairness Commission findings in 2013³. Despite facing a legacy of declining heavy industry, the city saw the creation of new employment opportunities and businesses, the two Universities significantly increase student numbers and capital investment, the renewal of neighbourhoods, and the radical

³ Sheffield Fairness Commission: Making Sheffield Fairer. www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/policy--performance/fairness-commission.html

reshaping of city's image with a series of high profile regeneration projects (Power, Ploger & Winkler 2010). Like most other medium sized cities in Europe and the UK, Sheffield had also experienced recent population growth, reflecting the outcome of migration to the city and a growing student population, and increases in the living age and birth rates. The community profile of the city had also changed: in 2011 there were 109,500 people from ethnic minorities, more than double the 55,200 in 2001, as the city became culturally more diverse. Traditionally a Labour city, in 2007 Sheffield entered a period of no overall political control, followed in 2008 by a Liberal-Democrat administration. Labour regained control of the Council in 2010, and remained leading through a period of Conservative and Liberal-Democrat Coalition National Government between 2010 and 2015.

The Fairness Commission was established by Sheffield City Council in February 2012, when many parts of the UK were beginning to directly experience the outcomes of the cuts in local government funding, changes to welfare provision and a decline in many working people's living standards. Sheffield took a lead from the work of other Fairness Commissions established elsewhere, but the realisation of the potential impacts of the 'austerity cuts' alongside a change in political leadership in the city clearly explained the timing of this initiative. The terms of reference and membership of the Fairness Commission were agreed in a meeting between the then Chair-elect

Professor Alan Walker (University of Sheffield), [a long term advocate of health equality in the city,](#) and the [new](#) Leader of Sheffield City Council, Councillor Julie Dore. Previous fairness commissions had taken various forms (Bunyan & Diamond 2014) and it was decided to avoid the model whereby a small group of the local 'great and good' deliberated in private, and instead a broad range of 23 stakeholders were invited to form the membership of the Commission. This included the leaders of the then three main political parties on the City Council (at the time Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green).

On advice from Richard Wilkinson, who had been involved with [both](#) the Islington and York Commissions, the editor of the local newspaper was invited to join the Commission. He had a significant impact on many of the Commission's discussions and proved vital in shaping the favourable press response to the launch of the report. A second key element agreed at this early stage was the necessity for an annual review, which meant not only that the Commission's report could not easily be 'shelved' but it also recognised the long term nature of the task ahead. The decision by the City Council to establish a Fairness Commission might be seen as a bold step, and even more so in light of the agreement to undertake both an open process of evidence gathering and deliberation and an annual review. This was undoubtedly a measure of

the commitment to the fairness agenda and recognition that the city had been starkly divided for too long.

The Commission's remit was to report to the City Council by making "a non-partisan strategic assessment of the nature, causes, extent and impact of inequalities in the city and to make recommendations for tackling them" (Sheffield Fairness Commission 2013, p.2). The Commission was asked to report within a short period, and consequently had to meet frequently and decided to focus on eight key themes:

- Health and Well-being
- Jobs and Pay
- Benefits and Credit
- Aspiration and Opportunity
- Housing and the environment
- Safety
- Transport
- Citizen Participation

The Commission began its work with a call for evidence: between March and July 2012 there were six public meetings where witnesses were invited to give evidence; and a range of 'satellite meetings' were also held to gather views from particular groups and

communities. The results of the Commission's call for evidence were stark. It revealed significant inequalities in Sheffield. Geographical inequalities were well known (see Thomas et al 2009), with areas in the south and west of the city in the least deprived 20% of the country, whilst nearly a third of Sheffield's population lived in areas that fell within the 20% most deprived in the country, largely located in the north and east of the city. As a result, Sheffield on average was, and remains one of the least deprived major cities in England, but also one of the most unequal. The evidence also showed that certain groups of people and neighbourhoods were disproportionately more affected than other areas or groups of people by particular causes of disadvantage in respect to health and well-being, education, economic opportunity and daily living conditions. Nevertheless, inequality affected everyone in the city, by potentially preventing the city as a whole from achieving its full potential.

Following the evidence gathering, the Commission began to think about the issues that lay at the heart of unfairness and inequality in the city. Emerging conclusions were presented at a public event in September 2012, with a pragmatic meaning of justice adopted where: "Fairness is a complex concept and we have not wasted time on philosophical discussions about it. Instead we have based our inquiry upon a simple practical definition that focusses attention on the most important priority of the city: reducing the big differences in income and life chances between different parts of the

city” (Sheffield Fairness Commission 2012 p5). In the subsequent publication of the Commission’s report (Sheffield Fairness Commission 2013 p33) this core objective was formalised in the following definition:

“A Fair Sheffield will be when the major inequalities have been substantially reduced, when there are no barriers to prevent people from participating as fully as possible in the social and economic life of the city, according to their abilities and preferences, and where a sense of fair play governs.”

The Commission set out a bold vision of a city that would eventually be free from damaging disparities in living conditions and life chances, and free from stigmatising discrimination and prejudice, a place in which every citizen and community knows and feels that they will be treated fairly – a self-declared aspiration to be the fairest city in the country.

The Commission also made a total of 90 recommendations across the eight major themes. These ranged from the introduction of the living wage by all employers, a voluntary fair employer code of practice, a new source of fair credit; to a reduction in air pollution from the M1 and a default 20mph speed limit on all residential roads. Unlike other fairness commissions the Sheffield one recommended a continuing

campaign for fairness in the city. The Commission was also strongly committed to a co-production approach to the further development of the fairness agenda that would engage all local communities in the city, including a network of fairness facilitators.

Finally the Commission's report proposed an overarching framework which was intended to be a lasting set of guidelines for policy makers and citizens on how to be fair. The Sheffield Fairness Framework takes the form of ten principles (Sheffield Fairness Commission 2013 pp 34-5):

1. Those in greatest need should take priority.
2. Those with the most resources should make the biggest contributions.
3. The commitment to fairness must be a long-term one.
4. The commitment to fairness must be city-wide.
5. Prevention is better than cure.
6. Be seen to act in a fair way as well as acting fairly.
7. Civic responsibility among all residents who contribute to the maximum of their abilities, and ensuring all citizens have a voice.
8. Open continuous campaign for fairness in the city.
9. Fairness must be a matter of balance between different groups, communities and generations in the city.

10. The city's commitment to fairness must be both demonstrated and monitored in an annual report.

Responding to the Fairness Commission

As the instigator of the Fairness Commission, the City Council subsequently responded very positively to the Commission's report, stating in its formal response that it "wants to do all it can to help achieve the ambitious vision set out by the Fairness Commission." The Council's overarching goal has been to make a tangible impact on unfairness in the city and to drive this through long term change to address the root causes of unfairness and inequalities. The Council looked to do this principally through its key strategies, and it already had a Tackling Poverty Strategy. In a strategic response to the Commission, 'Tackling Inequalities' became one of five priorities for the Council and the ten principles that the Fairness Commission set out in the Sheffield Fairness Framework were also embedded in the Council's Corporate Plan. The Council aligned its Equality Objectives (which are a statutory requirement) with the Fairness Commission work and introduced 'Equality Impacts Assessments'. (Pyper 2015) Whilst the Equality Impact Assessment approach is not new it has become an important aspect of how the Council ensures 'fairness' in its policies and decision making. Impact assessments are made available to all Council Members in advance of any decision

being taken at Cabinet or Full Council, including briefing all relevant Cabinet Members on impact assessments related to proposals in their area of responsibility.

It is important to set out the financial context in which the Council was operating at this point of time. It had to make £63million of savings in 2015-2016, on top of £240 million of savings already made over the previous 4 years. National policies such as welfare reform were adding to the financial pressures facing some communities and were widening existing inequalities. Overall the Council estimated that over £169m would be removed from the local economy as a result of these welfare reform changes. This equates to £460 per year per every working adult in the city, although this reduction would not spread evenly, with some people seeing a much larger reduction and others seeing a smaller (or zero) reduction. These changes would be likely to impact on specific groups who already experienced inequality, such as people on a low income, disabled people and women. For example households with dependent children across the city could experience an average loss of £1,690 per year, increasing for lone parents to an average of just over £2,000 per year. These substantial reductions in funding meant that responses to equality and fairness were as much focused on ensuring groups in the city did not slide backwards and lose ground in existing areas of inequality, but not necessarily meeting new demands.

However, that it not to say that progress cannot be made in respect to more specific proposals put forward by the Commission. One of the most tangible examples of what the Council did do in response to the Fairness Commission was its approach to the Living Wage. It has paid the living wage since January 2013 and was one of the first councils in the country to pay this wage to staff. By 2015, eighty per cent of the Council's contracted partners paid the living wage, including Amey, Kier, Norse cleaning services and school meals supplier Taylor Shaw. The Council was still seeking a commitment for all new contracts for taxi services, property and facilities management and school catering to also provide a living wage for employees, subject to affordability. There are other examples of progress on the Fairness Commission recommendations using existing funding. On fuel poverty the Council has undertaken four collective energy buying schemes - the Big Sheffield Switch. In the last round the average saving was £293 for households with online dual fuel contracts, with some saving over £1000 per year. The Council continues to implement the city wide 20mph strategy and approximately a third of residential streets in the city were covered by 2015.

Part of the Council's response to the Commission was to allocate one-off funding of £1million to support implementation of the Commission's recommendations. This funding was directly aligned to the Commission's principles and recommendations, but was used in different ways. Some funding was allocated to Council led activity, for example setting up of an Equality Hub Network to enable under-represented communities in the city to have a say on issues that affect them and influence the decisions that are made in the city. Some was allocated to support initiatives requiring a city wide approach involving a range of organisations and individuals, for example, the 'Our Fair City Campaign'⁴ and the development of 'Sheffield Money'⁵, both led by the Sheffield Executive Board (SEB).

The Sheffield Executive Board brings together leaders from across the private, academic, public and third sectors to focus on the socio-economic and environmental progress of the 'city' as well as their individual organisations. The role of the SEB was therefore twofold; promoting the adoption of the Fairness Commission recommendations within their own organisations and also across the whole city. This

⁴ Sheffield Fair City Campaign: Can you champion change? www.ourfaircity.co.uk

⁵ <http://www.sheffieldmoney.co.uk/>

involved some challenging conversations! A key debate was held around the issues of a living wage and zero hours contracts. Representatives from the private sector, but also the third sector, articulated that many small businesses and community organisations genuinely could not commit to paying the living wage and also needed to use zero hours contracts. However following conversations in SEB meetings, these representatives increasingly agreed to promote the message that businesses and organisations should aspire to paying the living wage, and some large organisations have been challenged. Both the Universities and the three NHS Foundation Trusts in the city were asked to review their positions, and the University of Sheffield recently adopted the living wage as did the Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Trust. The SEB has also worked together to implement other key recommendations, and 'Sheffield Money' is due to be launched in 2015 as a feasible local alternative to high cost credit, with the ambition of becoming a vehicle for investing in Sheffield, helping some of the poorest working households in the city and retaining money within the city.

Another flagship project led by SEB has been the commitment to developing the 'Our Fair City Campaign', with the aim that the people of Sheffield should not only be aware of the inequalities that exist in the city, but they should be encouraged to support and take action to reduce those inequalities. SEB established a cross organisational group which led on the development of the campaign and the related Sheffield Fairness

Charter, working with a local marketing company (Diva Creative). The group realised early on that there was no prototype or specific examples to learn from, being a ground breaking and innovative initiative. So the design phase was very important, and seven focus groups, each representing a specific group in society (for example young people, working people, and Black and Asian Minority ethnic communities) were established to advice on the nature and role of the campaign. A city wide questionnaire was also circulated and 450 responses were received from a wide and diverse range of residents.

The work of these focus groups and the results of the questionnaire surprised the Campaign Project Group. To summarise, the findings showed that people were very aware of inequalities but were generally uncomfortable with the constant use of statistics outlining how dreadful inequalities in Sheffield are! For those people living in poorer, more deprived areas, or members of black, Asian or minority ethnic, or poor white communities, there was a feeling expressed that statistics can be used to further stigmatise them, with some seeing the statistics as the result of their own personal failings or poor aspirations. For those living in more affluent areas, or members of higher achieving communities, the majority were aware of the statistics but felt powerless to do anything about them, and some articulated the view that it was not

their problem. So the advice was very strongly not to build a campaign around the use of inequality statistics!

A further key piece of advice was that the campaign needed to be designed in a way that accepted that **f**airness means different things to different people and that a 'top-down' definition should not be applied. Another key finding was that people did want to get involved and do something, but they lacked confidence, ideas and support. So the campaign needed to be built in a way that would provide support, build networks and confidence, and promote good ideas. Importantly the focus groups wanted to see what 'powerful' people in the city are doing before they would commit.

The early implementation of the Sheffield 'Our Fair City Campaign' took these findings into account. It was launched in January 2015, with speeches from a diverse range of local activists, including local political leadership; activist, writer and journalist Bee Campbell; Professor Alan Walker; representatives from both student unions; and Glynn Rhodes MBE, Sheffield Boxing Centre, who talked about using boxing to promote fairness. One of most inspiring speeches was from Delroy Galloway, South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service, who outlined his own experience of discrimination in recruitment practices, how he has been forced to change his name to get interviews, and his passionate commitment to working within his own organisation, but also across the city, to stop this happening to others.

From day one the campaign felt 'real' and authentic to those organising activities. It therefore gained credibility and traction. By the summer of 2015, the Sheffield campaign had 80 'Fairness Champions' and 92 'Fairness Pledges' and 295 Twitter followers. The Twitter account seeks to offer a forum for active, robust and challenging debates around fairness. A further set of planned activities were seeking to establish a community of Champions, work was underway to recruit and support local community champions, and local employers were working together to develop a Fair Employer Pledge for Sheffield. The Our Fair City Campaign has sought to become some form of social movement for fairness, and although it was still being nurtured and remains challenging, it has also proved to be an exciting and innovative follow-on to the work of the Commission.

Other sectors in the city also led in the development of key fairness initiatives. The Sheffield Advice Centres successfully led an extensive change programme which consolidated advice services across the city into one new organisation, providing sustainable high quality services for many of Sheffield's most vulnerable people. Other voluntary sector organisations led in establishing stronger community support services, from foodbanks through to time banking. South Yorkshire Housing Association led a Big Lottery funded whole city project to reduce social isolation and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive introduced subsidised travel for young

people. Sheffield Faith leadership group co-led the Tackling Poverty Strategy and supported the Sheffield Money initiative. Promoting Fairness and implementing the Fairness Commission recommendations begun to become a whole city objective.

Monitoring Fairness in Sheffield

As one of its ten principles giving the overall direction to achieving a fairer city, the Commission stated that annual monitoring should be undertaken to demonstrate the continuous commitment of the city to fairness. In practice this was to involve two elements – a demonstration of the implementation of the Commission’s work by reporting within the City Council; and a measurement of the extent to which the City is indeed becoming fairer. The latter inevitably raises a number of practical issues: what meaning of fairness and what indicators and measures should form the basis of monitoring; how to tackle well-recognised technical and data challenges; and who should lead and resource the reporting? The final report of the Sheffield Fairness Commission was one of the few documents of this sort that outlined how assessing progress should be undertaken. Unlike the York Commission which listed 46 specific indicators to monitor fairness, the Sheffield Commission recommended that fairness should be judged against a bundle of seventeen outcomes, reflecting the key themes and issues that had underpinned the Commission’s work more generally.

Whilst these outcomes suited the Fairness Commission well in giving popular articulation to discourses about inequalities in the city, they served less well the declared intention to measure fairness. Many lacked any rigorous or reliable underpinning sources of local data (for example pay differentials); others were unclear on the extent to which they could reliably address the causes of inequality rather than symptoms (for example crime and accident rates). The measurements – where they could be made, also raised significant questions concerning the relative importance of people versus place outcomes in what was an essentially city-wide project. For example how would ‘fairness’ be seen if the overall level of unemployment was decreasing but levels of female unemployment were increasing? Following discussions between members of the Commission and experts from the two Universities, it became apparent that a rigorous and meaningful monitoring exercise based on these outcomes would require substantial resources to support new and original research, and require the Commission to re-trace and hold further discussions about some of their fundamental conceptualisations of fairness itself. These steps were neither seen as desirable or possible, and instead it was felt that use could be made of current reporting of socio-economic change in the city. Although from one perspective this reluctance to find new funds for monitoring might be seen as further result of the

impacts of austerity policies in the city, it was in fact more an attempt to extend the 'ownership' and engagement with the fairness agenda in the city as a whole.

Sheffield, like other cities, has organisations that collect, analyse and use various data for a range of monitoring, evaluation and decision-supporting activities. Inequality already was a key element in some of these documents (for example public health reports) and datasets (for example City Council on-line ward profiles), but there was no common expression of fairness in these, nor a consistent attempt to promote awareness about it. At the instigation of the City Council and the Executive Board of Sheffield First Partnership, it was agreed to provide a more meaningful narrative of the state of the city. This narrative was constructed in relation to contemporary circumstances, to how things were changing and to how Sheffield compared to other similar places.

The subsequent State of Sheffield reports published each year between 2012 and 2015 by Sheffield First Partnership were co-authored by an academic from the University of Sheffield (Prof Gordon Dabinett) and an officer of the City Council, with reference to the key themes of living, working and wellbeing in the city. The new style of reporting sought to provide an integrative analysis using a wide variety of relevant publicly available data and published analyses. No new research was undertaken. A key feature of the reports was that they sought to go beyond simple description: instead they

asked more challenging questions about what the data meant for Sheffield. Ultimately, the intention was to help Sheffield's leaders, represented on the Executive Board of the Sheffield First Partnership, to address what the priorities for the future should be as the city seeks to fulfil ambitions set out ~~in~~ wider strategies. This ~~was by~~ providing a holistic understanding about the city, beyond the scope and knowledge of each leader's own individual institution, essentially a place based approach (Pugalis & Bentley 2014).

The reports dealt with fairness in a number of ways. Each State of Sheffield examined the geography of inequality by using city ward comparisons, and benchmarking against the performance of the UK and the Core Cities; presented temporal analysis, usually covering a period since the 2007 economic crisis, but also the decade of 2001 to 2011 when census data became available; and measured inequality by standard indicators in respect to unemployment, life expectancy, children in poverty etc. Importantly, each report was also able to develop perspectives on particular aspects of equality, the 2012 State of Sheffield reflected on the geography of deprivation in the city; the 2013 one focussed on educational attainment and poverty; in 2014 the report looked extensively at health and wellbeing, whilst the 2015 State of Sheffield presented some international comparisons and reported on financial vulnerability linked to changes in welfare.

It could be argued that as well as providing a basis for monitoring, the reports also served a useful purpose in raising the awareness about inequalities in the city and the efforts of the Fairness Commission to promote responses to these. The first launch of the report in 2012 attracted some twenty people, mainly from the City Council and related service providers. The launch of the State of Sheffield 2015 saw a presentation to some 140 people, representing a wide variety of private, public and community interests from the city. But what of the critical question: has Sheffield become fairer? The headlines around wider increases in inequalities would suggest not, but the detailed evidence points towards a greater complexity where realism can be mixed with some relative optimism. The likely continuation of national austerity policies following the outcome of the 2015 General Election will be a severe test of this optimism.

Final Reflections: A Fairer City?

“...the commitment of the city to aspire to become fairer through the aspirations of the

Fairness Commission is a great sign.” (Citizen’s voice, State of Sheffield 2014)

The Sheffield Fairness Commission set an ambitious challenge for Sheffield, a long term perspective and goal.

So far the Commission has proved to be an instrumental vehicle for advocating change because of a combination of factors: historical; political; the city's partnership arrangements; and the specific approach taken by the Chair and Commissioners. The Commission's report was to have wide ranging influence on debates in the city. Why is this? The report was unanimous, even though diversity characterised the Commission's members – spanning business, the press, church, health service, voluntary sector and political parties. A long tradition of mapping Sheffield's health inequalities meant the issue of fairness was also on most people's agenda before the Commission sat, and this partly at least, accounted for the shared commitment to do something, at long last, to stop things getting even worse. Also it was decided tactically not to start with philosophical debates about fairness but to let the evidence speak for itself. In the process of receiving expert testimonies from within the city and beyond, several of the initially sceptical Commissioners shifted their positions. As a result it was possible to later agree a quite radical definition, reflecting the thinking of both John Rawls and Amartya Sen (Mandle 2009; Sen 2010), and to advance some equally radical proposals. Of course there were some hot debates, not least over the Commission's stance on the necessity of the living wage.

The backing of the Council also ensured that the Commission had a fair wind behind it, but it was also vital that the report connected with the wider city, and this was to an

extent achieved by the involvement of the Sheffield Executive Board which represented partnership workings in the city. SEB took on the role of overseeing the implementation of the Commission's recommendations and monitoring their impact, and to subsequently take roles in projects such as 'Sheffield Money' and the proposed 'Fair Employer Pledge'. It was also acknowledged that the societal context had to be addressed. Unless a sizeable number of city residents or citizens can be brought on board the fairness agenda, top down recommendations will only ever have partial influence. This is a process that Sheffield is still experimenting with actively through the 'Our Fair City' campaign. Again there is no simple route map, but rather a set of shared values and a shared desire to address injustices.

Whether the goal articulated by the Fairness Commission can be realised still remains

to be seen. A review of the twenty-three Fairness Commissions concluded that achievements have been secured (NEF 2015). Indeed the Sheffield Fairness Commission has succeeded as with other Commissions in generating fresh initiatives and a renewed commitment to action among stakeholders through a participative process. Of course it cannot be argued that these programmes by themselves will end injustices, but they provide a voice to counter the prevailing neo-liberal discourses on inequalities and their causes.

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