



# Resistance & Re:creation



**55 years**

of youth  
and community work  
in Glasgow

This paper was commissioned to celebrate the survival and success of Crossroads Youth and Community Association in reaching the age of 50 in 2018.

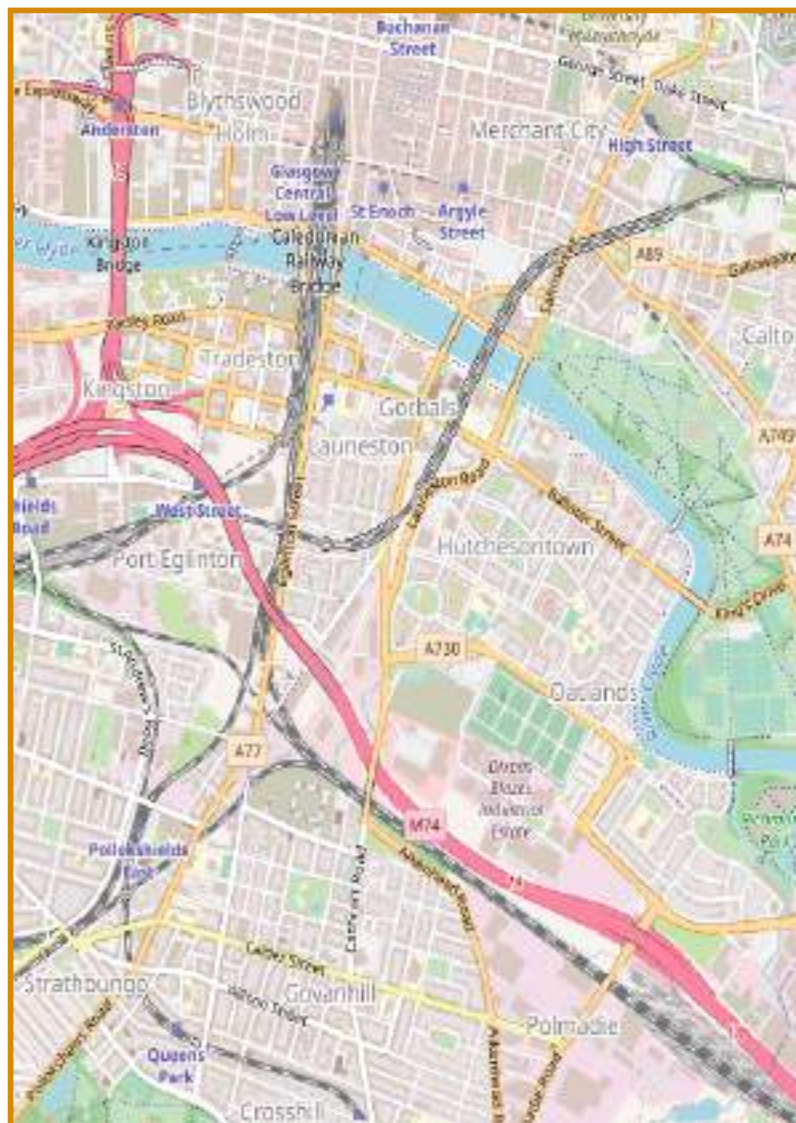
We are hugely grateful to the large number of current and former staff, board members and friends who have contributed so much to the organisation, its values and its actions and shared their recollections and insights with us in preparing the paper. We thank the David Kean Memorial Fund for meeting the design and printing costs: David was Chair of Crossroads in the 1970s and an inspiring advocate for the positions taken by Crossroads from that time until the present day and we hope, beyond.

The paper has been compiled by Stuart Hashagen who was a staff member in the 1980s and is currently on the Board. He takes full responsibility for any omissions or errors.

We hope you will find this a useful and stimulating read.

Dani Waddell  
Charity Manager  
Crossroads Youth & Community Association  
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This paper explores the history and development of Crossroads Youth and Community Association, a locally managed organisation that has been active in the Gorbals and Govanhill neighbourhoods of Glasgow for over 50 years. Recording the changing character and emphases in its work over such a long period is inevitably complex. It is compounded both by the fact that the neighbourhoods, though adjacent (see map below), have distinctly different characteristics that have each changed substantially over time. Gorbals is to the south of the Glasgow city centre on the opposite bank of the river Clyde. Govanhill is the next neighbourhood to the south. An extension of the M74 motorway now divides the two neighbourhoods.



Despite a number of more affluent households moving to Gorbals in recent years, both areas have remained amongst the poorest in Scotland: indeed, both are now designated as ‘Thriving Places’ by the City Council <sup>(1)</sup> – which means the deep-rooted problems in both areas should be urgently tackled. These problems include isolation, persistent poverty, racist crime and harassment, discrimination, inadequate housing, asylum status, human trafficking, domestic violence, destitution, literacy, numeracy and language barriers. Homelessness, suicide and poor mental health are currently of great concern.

1. <https://www.glasgowcpp.org.uk/thrivingplaces>



## GORBALS

Gorbals was one of the few areas in Glasgow to be almost entirely redeveloped in the 1960s & 1970s with the deteriorated 19th century tenemental housing replaced with system-built deck-access or multi-storey developments, almost all under the management of the city council.

At this time there was much civic pride in the demolition of the old, overcrowded and unhealthy tenements and their replacement through the Comprehensive Development Area programme. One of the new high-rise developments was designed by Basil Spence, a prominent architect at the time, and opened by the Queen<sup>(2)</sup> in 1961. It had a commemorative plaque attached to the wall. From the 1980s onward many of the new developments were themselves demolished, often after a number of years functioning as a last resort for homeless and other vulnerable people in acute housing need.

Recent studies<sup>(3)</sup> suggest that in Gorbals the indices of deprivation have improved in recent years, and may indeed have improved to such an extent that it may lose its status as sufficiently disadvantaged to qualify for additional public funds or regeneration programmes. With the demolition of much of the poorer multi-storey housing stock it is likely to be the case that the deprivation has simply been shifted elsewhere, resulting in an even wider local inequality gap between the incoming 'haves' and the remaining 'have-nots'. The displacement of the former residents of the social housing can be seen as a form of social cleansing: indeed there is some evidence that the largest proportion of homeless young people in the city originate from the Gorbals.

The process of gentrification linked to the regeneration of Gorbals has affected the most disadvantaged in the community. In a short space of time three community cafes were closed as, more expensive, new chain restaurants and coffee shops were opening in a nearby regenerated business park. A local community men's shed group, occupying the old railway tunnels, was closed by the housing association. Local young people have little prospect of affording a house, even the mid-rent options, in their own area with the loss of vital community networks. The re-designing, rebuilding and repopulating of the area continues to marginalise the remaining local community and channels the debate over the future of the Gorbals through structures dominated by powerful financial and political interests with token local participation.

2. <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1052248>

3. <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/viewSelectedDocument.asp?>



All this does raise important questions about the process and politics of regeneration, and in particular who it is for. In turn this raises questions about the role of community work in such circumstances. Without doubt the quality of the environment and housing stock has improved immeasurably since the 1980s, and shopping, public buildings and general amenity is also better. Demographically, Gorbals has transformed from an area under uniform local authority control, housing working and poorer households, to an area of mixed housing tenure and mixed socio-economic status. Parts of the area are now relatively affluent while others continue to have high levels of deprivation, poor health and exclusion. So it is less a socially mixed community than adjacent neighbourhoods that have very different experiences and expectations.

## GOVANHILL

At the time that Crossroads was established Govanhill was an inner-city neighbourhood with a grid pattern of streets with 4-storey tenemental housing across most of the area, with an area of local authority tenements from the 1920s to the east. Cathcart Road and Victoria Road, both busy main roads, ran from the south to the city centre to the north. Both these streets and others continue to have a large number of local shops and businesses. Unlike Gorbals, which became demographically more white and less mobile following the redevelopment



of the 1960s and 1970s, Govanhill continued to function as a first location for migrants. From the mid-1970s a growing number of people from India and Pakistan moved into Govanhill, repeating a familiar pattern of settlement. Drawn by the cheap housing, successive incomers from the Scottish Highlands, Ireland, central and eastern Europe and Asia have settled and established community connections.



From 2004 onwards between 3000 and 4000 people - mostly of Roma origin – from the EU accession states of Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Romania moved in to Govanhill, attracted by the availability of low-cost housing. They added to an already diverse demographic that also included refugees and asylum-seekers with over 50 languages of origin spoken in the area and in local schools.

In the 1950s Govanhill had been in the city's plans for large-scale redevelopment on the Gorbals model but before this took place a movement across the city, led by young architects, established that the tenemental buildings were essentially sound, and that they could be remodelled and improved within the existing physical structures. Several community-based housing associations were set up in the 1970s to undertake this work and to be the local housing agency. One of these was Govanhill Housing Association, which remains as one of the well-known community-led housing associations in the city. Other housing in the area remains privately rented, often in poor condition and overcrowded.

As the tenements were improved the physical character of the area changed very little, but as the migrant population grew many of the shops and small businesses in the area evolved to meet the needs of a large Asian community. More recently coffee shops, organic greengrocers and international take-aways have established. The main streets are also somewhat quieter as attempts have been made to divert through-traffic around the area and latterly to construct cycle lanes and other 'urban realm' improvements.



# crossroads

Crossroads Youth and Community Association was preceded by the 'Gorbals Group', effectively a collective of non-parish-based church ministers and members who lived and worked in Gorbals in the 1960s, developing a form of community ministry based on direct help and support to the very poor and vulnerable families of the time. Three members were paid Ministers of the Church of Scotland, and they were motivated by the community work approach adopted by the Harlem Church in New York. They understood the consequences for health and wellbeing of the overcrowded, dangerous tenements of the time, the lack of safe spaces for children, and the absence of any community voice in local government or elsewhere.

In 1968 the Gorbals Group set up Crossroads Youth and Community Association, which acquired charitable status in November that year, and became a Company Limited by Guarantee in 1994. Unlike the Gorbals Group, Crossroads was established as a constituted, charitable body able to employ staff and receive funding. The first staff were two youth workers. Initially the Association was run by outsiders with no serious attempt to involve residents, and reportedly with an over-relaxed approach to record-keeping and administration. Nevertheless the Association in this form saw to the establishment of the original Playbarn in 1970 funded by local and central government, and the first student unit in Gorbals in 1971: known as the Gorbals View as this was the administrative base for that community newspaper. A second student unit was established in 1974 in Govanhill and in the same year a set of community rooms at the base of the newly-built Stirlingfauld Place flats were assigned to Crossroads and became the base for the Laurieston Information Centre / student unit, a Playscheme, an Arts Room and a Clubroom. Funding for all this came from the then Glasgow Corporation, while the student units were funded by the Social Work Services Group of the then Scottish Office.

By 1974 staff pressed for the creation of a 'new Crossroads', as several of the original Gorbals Group had moved away or reduced their involvement. The new approach would be more efficient, financially scrupulous, and designed to be a local, user-controlled and neighbourhood-rooted organisation, with a philosophy always to listen to the needs of local people, and to help them access services and rights. (4)

4. We are indebted to 'Change and Conflict', published in 1982 by Aberdeen University Press. The authors, Barbara Bryant and Richard Bryant, were Fieldwork Teachers at Crossroads in the 1970s and much of the material about the Gorbals Group, the establishment of the student units, and the youth and community work of the time is drawn from that source.

## Student Units

For 35 years student units were an integral part of Crossroads organisation. They had been established as a result of collaboration between the social work course at Glasgow University, the Social Work Services Group of the Scottish Office, and the Gorbals Group. They provided social work students with supervised and assessed practice as an essential part of their professional training and qualification. For students, a community work placement offered direct experience of working with local groups on a collective rather than individualist approach to practice, an approach which required understanding and application of legal and welfare rights, and the political and economic processes that constrained the lives of many. For Crossroads, students provided additional capacity – albeit mainly short-term - to work with local groups, to undertake research and enquiry, to contribute to the ‘View’ newspaper and many other things. More broadly, the presence of students required staff to model good practice, to be clear on why work was done the way it was, to discuss and debate the links between theory and practice and to prepare for the internal staff/student seminars that were a regular feature of a mutual learning process.

The presence of students enabled Crossroads to engage in challenging areas of work that may not have been possible had funding been tied to the delivery of activities other than student learning. Equally, the organisation was strongly committed to encouraging a cohort of social work practitioners who would understand and apply community work thinking during their subsequent careers. It should be noted that at this time there was a widespread professional and academic interest in community social work, and the Crossroads units were well placed to contribute.

The adoption of a community action model of practice that involved direct challenge to both local and Scottish government of the later 1970s, in particular campaigning on housing issues, almost inevitably led to political pressures at Scottish Office level arising from community action work that seriously threatened funding, and imposed conditions on further work that Crossroads required to comply with.

During the 1990s Crossroads became the central point for voluntary sector social work student placements throughout the west of Scotland and became the first Student Unit in UK to be approved, with practice teachers accredited by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) recognising the value of from the organisation’s Equal Opportunities Policy.

Despite this, and along with all other student units in the voluntary sector, the Crossroads student units closed in 2009 due to withdrawal of funding by CCETSW. This was a money-saving exercise but also reflected a retrenchment in social work training. It was a major crisis for Crossroads to lose both experienced staff and almost half its funding, but the organisation survived to continue to provide a small number of practice placement opportunities.



## Context, Principles & Practice

The late 1960s and 1970s saw a significant increase in interest and investment in community work and community development. In Glasgow there were a handful of community projects at the time, mostly in the voluntary sector, small scale and often experimental.

More widely there was a rapidly growing literature about community work<sup>(5)</sup> and much of it reflected a radical view of the structural causes of inequality and poverty and the importance of community organising to challenge this. The then government had established a series of Community Development Projects<sup>(6)</sup> under Home Office administration and these also mounted a strong critique of economic and social policies and their impact on the poor.

Several reports and legislation from 1966 onwards envisaged a more progressive, less paternalist role for the state, and one of these, *Social Work and the Community* (1966) led to the provisions in the Social Work Scotland Act that laid a duty on social work agencies to promote social welfare <sup>(7)</sup>. It was against this background that Crossroads set up the first community work student unit in 1971.

In the later years of the 1970s the newly established Strathclyde Regional Council developed its Social Strategy for the 1980s. This recognised the human costs of industrial change in west-central Scotland and saw a strategy based on community engagement and community participation as key to change. Geoff Shaw, a leading member of the Gorbals Group had by this time become a councillor and was subsequently appointed as the first Convenor of the new regional council and played a key role in the development and implementation of the Social Strategy.

While never part of mainstream service delivery, Crossroads was grant-funded by the Regional Council to undertake community work and youth work, while the student units added to its capacity to work across a wider range of issues with cohorts of students who were, by and large, committed to community social work and progressive practice thereby contributing to the community work modules of several university and college social work courses.

5. For example the series of books on aspects of community work published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, and the well-regarded *Skills in Neighbourhood Work* by Paul Henderson and David Thomas.

6. LONEY, MARTIN. "The British Community Development Projects: Questioning the State." *Community Development Journal*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1981, pp. 55–66. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/44256094](http://www.jstor.org/stable/44256094). Accessed 7 Apr. 2021.

7. See <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/reports/community-social-work-scotland>

This period saw an explosion of academic and practitioner interest in community work, its theory and practice, its politics, and its purpose. There were government-funded projects, notably the CDPs; journals and readers; and books on values, skills and methods. Key debates revolved around the extent to which community work should be personally transformative through a pedagogic process of reflection and learning, as opposed to a more political approach taking direct action against the causes or symbols of oppression. The former position was aligned with the non-directive, process-led approach, while the latter was associated with more directive, task-directed work.

In these debates, the value dimension was key for Crossroads. The test of success was groups developing their capacity for self-determination and the collective ability to decide on their own policies. The community work role adopted by staff was essentially about building, maintaining and sometimes challenging local community organisations. However, this did not necessarily extend to supporting every position taken by a community organisation. It did not tolerate judgmentalism or prejudice – these would be confronted. For example, staff refused to work with a group who wanted to organise against squatters or to support a campaign to remove a hostel for alcoholics. Such decisions were supported, and occasionally driven by the management committee, which was politically and philosophically committed to social justice and inclusion.

In 1996 a reorganisation of local government in Scotland took place with the consequence that Strathclyde Regional Council no longer existed, and its functions including community development became the responsibility of ten new unitary councils. Many of these reduced their investment in community development substantially, with more community based work being taken up by community health projects (the Lottery-funded Healthy Living Centres were significant); by emerging community based housing associations (Crossroads had been instrumental in helping set up one of the earliest, Govanhill) and by third sector organisations focused on a particular need or experience – such as the Poverty Alliance, the Scottish Refugee Council or Glasgow Disability Alliance.

In 1999 the devolved parliament in Scotland was established, and responsibility for community work and related policies became, and remains a devolved matter. Community work was bracketed with youth work and adult learning under the umbrella of Community Learning and Development (CLD). Subsequently there was a focus on community engagement with the commissioning of a set of Standards for Community Engagement<sup>(8)</sup> to improve relationships between public bodies and community interests. Community Empowerment legislation was introduced in 2015 and this gave rights to community bodies to trigger ‘participation requests’ through which joint action could be taken forward on issues of community concern. It also extended the rights of community bodies to acquire or manage land and other public assets if they wished to do so.<sup>(9)</sup>

8. <https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards>

9. <https://www.scdc.org.uk/hub/community-empowerment-act/more>

These developments were not matched by sufficient attention being given to supporting the development or sustainability of the community bodies which were necessary to take advantage of the opportunities in the legislation, so many became vulnerable to funding discontinuity, or were encouraged to establish income streams that were often unsustainable. Local authorities continued to reduce their CLD staffing although some health boards welcomed and supported the notion of 'community-led health'. Several key funding bodies advocated the asset-based approach in their programmes, while community budgeting and co-production were becoming more widely adopted across the public sector.

## The nature of the work

Whilst in both neighbourhoods the agency engaged in community development activity, the distinctly different character of each led to different styles and models of practice. In each area the emphasis also changed over time both as a reflection of community priorities and the opportunities available to secure funding.

A time line on the following page illustrates when and where the different approaches were adopted. It is important to appreciate that different types of practice have frequently been conducted simultaneously.





**TIMELINE:** a generalised illustration of the predominant mode of practice in each area over time.

**Gorbals work:**



**Govanhill work:**



	1960s/70s	1970s/80s	1980s/90s	1990s/2000s	2000s/10s	2010s/20s
Information work and advocacy	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals	Govanhill	Govanhill
Youth work and outdoor education	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals
Playgroups, arts work and elder clubs	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals
Local community action / politicisation	Gorbals	Gorbals	Gorbals	Govanhill		Gorbals
Wider community development	Gorbals	Gorbals				
Action Research		Govanhill	Govanhill			
Anti-racist practice		Govanhill	Govanhill	Govanhill	Govanhill	Govanhill
Integration work						Govanhill
Community wellbeing					Gorbals	Gorbals
Women's rights						Govanhill
Partnerships and regeneration					Gorbals	Gorbals

As the work discussed took place in two defined areas of Glasgow: Gorbals and Govanhill, it is most accurately described as neighbourhood work. Henderson and Thomas describe the key elements of this as:

*‘direct face-to-face work with local people who form groups or networks to tackle a need or problem they have identified, to give support to each other and/or provide services to people in the area ... it is important to convey the tangible, practical content of working with local people (and) ‘neighbourhood work’ does this’.* (10)

The discussion takes as its starting point a statement from a founding member, Geoff Shaw. He wrote that:

*‘Everyone should have the right to live ‘gloriously ... whatever in society makes this impossible must be attacked: whatever in the individual may make it possible must be nurtured and strengthened’.* (11)

Crossroads has adopted this motto – indeed it is now part of the mural on the wall of the Barn, the base from which all work is carried out. It is a similar formulation to that of C. Wright Mills who wrote of the connection between ‘private troubles’ and ‘public issues’, arguing that many forces that affect people adversely are rooted not in their own circumstances, but in the wider social, economic and political environment. As will be explored, Crossroads understands ‘living gloriously’ as living to one’s full potential, encompassing wellbeing, security, connection and power over one’s circumstances. The two elements of the statement suggest different approaches to the work of the organisation, but they are not necessarily contradictory. At times the priority was to strengthen and nurture people through collective action over a common issue; at other times the focus has been on nurturing and supporting people in the expectation that confidence will grow in being able to challenge adverse factors in society. This relationship is the essence of the community work approach adopted, and the balance has partly been conditioned by the funds available. Work that focuses solely on nurturing and strengthening individuals will never change the circumstances that constrain them, while a sole focus on attacking adverse factors without their participation is a campaigning or political approach which is unlikely to strengthen those most adversely affected.

As the table shows, the focus of attention in each of the two areas was distinct, and this reflected the evolution of the priorities of funders in each area as well as the different demographics and issues confronting each area. Gorbals, as the site of the Playbarn and Barn has always had a strong involvement in youth work which was never more than an incidental activity in Govanhill. Govanhill saw a much wider involvement in anti-racist and inclusion practice given the significance of migration into the area. Gorbals was primarily a local authority housing estate so tended to have a lower turnover of residents, at least until the demolition of many of the high-rise and deck-access block led to rehousing, often out of the local area. New, replacement housing was either on the private market or developed by the local housing association which replaced the city council as landlord.

10. Paul Henderson and David Thomas, *Skills in Neighbourhood Work*, 2013 edition

11. Ferguson, Ron. Geoff, the life of Geoffrey M Shaw Farnham Publishers 1979

For many years the two neighbourhood-based staff teams were of a similar size and operated somewhat independently: there were often sub-committees taking responsibility for work in Govanhill, Gorbals, and youth work respectively and reporting to the overall management committee. Both staff teams included a student unit each of which provided a practice teacher and secretary. By 2010 the student units had been forced to close, while most of the funding for work in Govanhill was tied to advocacy work with migrants. When this was discontinued around 2015 the Govanhill office closed and the whole staff team became based in the Barn. There were from time to time tensions between the two staff teams – these were usually healthy and constructive, but sometimes difficult to address. Crossroads was reluctant to lose its physical Govanhill presence, as were many residents, but the amalgamation enabled an effective community work team to be established which works together in both areas, albeit on differing funding programmes.

We now take a closer look at the main models of practice adopted over the years.

## Origins in community ministry

In the 1960s, the Gorbals Group established several strands of work, including:

- An ‘open door’ approach to build personal relationships with families, with intensive support to vulnerable individuals,
- Provision of specific services to children and young people, including a ‘junk playground’
- Community development through social action, for example opposing the closure of a public wash-house, resisting the exploitation of tenants by unscrupulous landlords. and setting up various informal groups
- Establishment of the “Gorbals View” community newspaper, later ‘The View’
- Social work student training in community work practice
- Sharing concerns with other groups and organisations across the city:
- Seeking change via advocacy and through established political structures although not initially by running for office

The group worked from their own homes, making themselves available to anyone, and had a commitment to personal involvement and direct action. Practice was developed on a model that linked private troubles to public issues. It assumed that society is structurally unequal, so that to change inequalities requires the collective organisation of people around expressed needs, organising among the unorganised to distribute resources more fairly.



## Information work and advocacy

From its inception until around 2000, Crossroads operated drop-in information and advice services, from ‘The View’ shopfront in Govanhill and from Laurieston Information Centre at the base of a multi-storey tower in Gorbals. These offered advice and support on a wide range of welfare benefits, immigration, housing and other issues and there was often a difficult balance to be maintained between the intensive demands for these services and the time and attention needed to support the community action groups and campaigns that were in place, frequently addressing the self-same issues. Indeed, the information services had an important role in keeping alert to common issues in the area, and also had a role in linking callers to the relevant action groups, but nevertheless keeping both balls in the air was challenging. The majority of the subsequent work with Roma was advocacy based and as such an extension of the former information and advice approach.

## Youth work and outdoor education

Youth work is carried out from The Barn, a purpose-built facility now surrounded by newly-built social housing and housing for sale. Working with young people was a key priority for the Gorbals Group, who set up the junk playground and established the tradition of introducing young people to Scotland’s mountains and lochs, and growing self-reliance and life skills through camping, walking and canoeing. These activities continue: Crossroads runs a well-regarded Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme as well as continuing to take groups on expeditions.

For many years work with young people was based in the former Playbarn, essentially a large and very basic shed on railway land. In the late 1980s British Rail decided to develop the site for light-industrial use, which would involve demolition of the Playbarn. This threatened the discontinuation of revenue funding from the local authority but after a robust campaign by the management committee, funding was secured to continue youth work and compensation received from British Rail that allowed the replacement Barn to be constructed. The design and layout of the new building was led by the young people themselves through a community architecture process.

The approach to youth work is informal but structured, based on the staff team building strong relationships with young people, creating an environment in which they can grow and learn. There is an emphasis on arts-based activity, food, and in particular outdoor and adventure activity. In recent years the Barn has become a more general community hub, with adult groups using the space for a wide range of activities along with young people at different times of the day.

## Community-based services

As noted earlier, Crossroads was able to run a number of community-based services out of the suite of community rooms that were assigned to the organisation when one of the multi-storey flat blocks opened in 1971. One of these became Laurieston Information Centre, base for the Gorbals student unit and the youth and community work staff. Another room housed a playscheme, one an arts group, and another a Clubroom used mainly for community meetings and elder clubs. It should be said that these rooms were hardly ideal, having few windows and few facilities. However they were well used in the absence of other community spaces in the area. The Govanhill team always operated out of rented shops and required to move from time to time as leases expired or demands for space changed.

## Politicisation and local community action

From the mid 1970s onward Crossroads adopted a model of community work based on the community organising approach set out by Alinsky<sup>(12)</sup> and others in the United States, probably best described in a Scottish context as issue-based neighbourhood action. The core assumption was that the distribution of power is the critical determinant of the life chances of individuals and whole neighbourhoods, and that where a redistribution of power is required, society itself must demand it.

This approach encompasses a structural explanation of inequality – that deprivation is inherent in the structure of society, and it is synonymous with a lack of power. With powerlessness defined as the central problem, the community action approach advocates organisation and mobilisation as key. Many of the adverse experiences presented as ‘private troubles’ and therefore the responsibility of individuals are better understood as ‘public issues’,<sup>(13)</sup> a consequence of government or corporate decisions. For community work, a critical role is therefore to help people recognise this, and to mobilise and take power to address specific injustices. Organisations are started or supported where people face the same problem, and these organisations are made up of those people who experience that problem and own the decisions over what to do, when and how to do it.

When required, conflict is used as a strategy for achieving change, based on recognition that power-holding institutions will not concede power unless challenged.



12. Alinsky, Saul Rules for Radicals, Vintage Books 1971

13. C Wright Mills ‘the Sociological Imagination’  
Oxford University Press 1959

A good example of the private troubles: public issues dichotomy was the story of the Gorbals anti-dampness campaign<sup>(14)</sup>. Serious, health impacting problems of dampness were reported in Hutchesontown E, a large, newly built deck-access development. Glasgow City Council told tenants this was their own fault: they were not using kitchens or bathrooms correctly or were not ventilating the flat properly, thereby defining the issue as 'private troubles' and in effect blaming the victim. In reality the problem was caused by the physical layout of the flats in which warm, moist air generated in heated kitchens and bathroom would cause condensation in the exposed and cold bedrooms. This was a major design and construction defect much better understood as a 'public issue' and it was on this basis that the campaign was able to mobilise the 750 tenants in a multi-faceted campaign that ultimately led to the estate being demolished.

Clearly, this approach assumes a rejection of social pathology or cultural explanations of inequality. But personal change is important too: working for structural change implies a learning process in participants' understanding of political processes and the causes of inequality, their self-knowledge of how actions can achieve personal change and empowerment as well as external change, and it also leads to greater celebration, cohesion and solidarity as people come together in groups that work on common problems. So, although the emphasis was on politicisation there was always a balance maintained between building and enhancing personal relationships and adopting a structural analysis. Adherence to these values demonstrates the difference between a paternal or therapeutic relationship between the agency and the community and a participative, equality-based one.

14. Bryant, Richard, Dampness Monster: Report of the Gorbals Anti-Dampness Campaign, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations 1979





## Wider community development

In Gorbals during the 1980s, Crossroads was active in securing new services and resources such as the establishment and support of a new youth club in Hutchesontown; offering specialist welfare benefits and legal advice services in the Information Centre; supporting an exhibition of plans for the 'New Gorbals' with the recommendations from attendees being fed into local plans. Crossroads also supported the establishment of a city-wide Technical Services agency to help tenant groups combating dampness and other housing defects, and joined with other groups to successfully oppose the construction of an inner-city ring road through the middle of Gorbals. There was other work across the city work in areas such as the Red Road flats and notably Cranstonhill where CYCA opened an information centre that supported the establishment of redevelopment groups like Kent Road and Avalon Corner which eventually became a co-operative.

In Govanhill Crossroads adopted a collaborative approach with a strong focus on partnership working with the local authority in the Govanhill Working Party and Backcourt Improvement Schemes as well as the establishment of Govanhill Youth and Community Association and development of Batson Street Huts as a community facility. During the mid-1970s the local street warden scheme was commissioned to establish the needs of local elderly people, which led to the establishment of the Dixon Halls Day Centre, a community-run facility for seniors. This was a good example of gathering evidence to establish need prior to pursuing funding, and of students and staff actively involved in supporting and servicing local community action. Staff also assisted the Housing Association in its role of converting and improving the old tenemental housing stock. In both areas the greater part of community work was in helping action groups to set up, build their membership, and take action on issues of common concern.

## Action-research and anti-racist practice

For some time in the mid-1980s Crossroads had been largely unaware of the emerging needs of a growing Asian-origin community in Govanhill, but a local health visitor who was active on the Crossroads management committee was hearing of problems of isolation and harassment from Asian women she was meeting in the course of her work.

Management and staff began an internal debate on how on how to approach this reality and in particular how to confront racism. This was a challenge since not all those in the organisation accepted that racism existed. For an organisation with all-white management and all-white staff working with all-white community groups the need to divert resources and attention away from existing work was contentious, but it was agreed that work should start with this Asian community. On this basis the organisation concluded that it was its responsibility to identify unmet needs, and not leave it to Asian people alone. Perceived as a white organisation, Asian people were generally unwilling to access the available supports and services, so it was recognised that staff would need to take the initiative. It was also recognised that working practices would need to change as knowledge about the situation deepened.

Recognising that a concerted effort should be made to discover more about the issues affecting Asian women in particular, Crossroads established a partnership with Stirling University to take forward an action-research programme under the direction of Asian women themselves. Two studies went ahead: one in 1984 looking closely at Asian women's lives in general, and a second in 1987 looking specifically at services for and responses to domestic violence.<sup>(15)</sup>

15. Murray, Clare. *Ethnic Minorities and Community Work, the experience of Crossroads Youth and Community Association*, in Bowes, Alison and Sim, Duncan *Demands and Constraints*, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations 1991

For Crossroads, the action-research approach had great potential for community involvement and community control, and as a qualitative approach would identify the issues of major concern to the women. Steps were taken to ensure local accountability and regular review days identified issues for further exploration and action. It became clear that Crossroads itself would need to evolve and adapt if it was to become properly inclusive and ethnically sensitive. All staff and management undertook anti-racist training and frequent examination of attitudes and experiences. Selected staff also received training specifically on immigrants' rights to social security when many were reluctant to claim due to fears over their immigration status. Several student placements focused on welfare benefit take-up, on the needs of Asian elderly, on their experience of housing services and on working directly with BAME groups in the area. Funding was secured for an information and advice service including provision for translation and interpretation, and this provided properly paid work for several Asian women. Later, Crossroads intervened in a neighbourhood where a small number of Asian families had been rehoused, but were experiencing harassment from neighbours. Conflicts with the all-white tenants association in the area had to be addressed and reconciled.

Subsequent work led to the formation of an Asian Women's Action group that aimed to break the isolation of Asian women through education and socialising, increasing confidence and assertiveness, and a self-help housing group that worked to identify barriers in access to social housing.

## Integration work

The 21st century saw the issues typically faced by people in Govanhill continuing to include poverty, unemployment, discrimination and racism. New migrants also had to negotiate the asylum system, rogue landlords and severe overcrowding, while relationships with existing communities were often strained due to differing cultural practices, suspicion of disorder and threats of violence.

Crossroads' work with the Roma community in Govanhill commenced in 2007, and from the start offered clothes, food and one-to-one support to those in need, and this was quickly overwhelmed by demand. After a few months, it became evident that this ad-hoc approach to support was insufficient, and although the direct provision of food and clothes was invaluable, a more structured approach was required. The working assumptions, based on the thinking of Putnam<sup>(16)</sup> were to start with 'bonding' – bringing together people with similar backgrounds, then to move through 'bridging' between groups of different backgrounds, towards 'linking' where these groups would engage with the wider world to address adversity.

Within this approach the objectives were to facilitate the integration of Roma residents into the wider community in Govanhill. This would involve engagement with the Roma population, support interaction with the existing community, and providing safe spaces for Roma to meet and build solidarity.

16. Robert D Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster 2000

Based on these aims, Crossroads established an Advocacy Project, which employed two Slovak-speaking staff who provided an intensive support service to Slovak and Czech Roma individuals and families. Locally it also implemented a city-wide migration and cultural awareness programme, called Understanding Each Other. This was rolled out in primary schools to raise awareness and develop an appreciation of migration history and cultural diversity among the pupils. Drop-in groups were established specifically to provide a safe environment for Slovak and Czech Roma to meet. It provided opportunities to build friendships and work together on issues or concerns of common interest. In September 2012, a Slovak community worker was assigned to work with the Group. This resulted in members of the Roma community becoming less reliant on direct service provision, and more focused on empowering themselves to address the issues that they face.<sup>(17)</sup>

Other work included a collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior, Slovakia to focus on the issue of human trafficking from Slovakia to the UK, a phenomenon which affects many Roma and which made a significant contribution in raising awareness of the issue and the signs of human trafficking. Crossroads also played a role in supporting and organising Refugee Week, a week of action on gender violence, International Women's Day and International Roma day. A Roma Heritage and Music project was also established and the band E Karika Djal (Moving Wheel) formed at this time, playing a mix of Roma and Scottish music.

Crossroads also established good links with the city council's social work department, undertaking joint work with the local area team project specializing in supporting Slovak and Roma families in the area. This was a productive opportunity for student learning in relation to work with children and families from a migrant community. It also involved work with the local Housing Association on access to housing and tenancy issues, with the DSS in establishing rights to welfare benefits, and with a local law centre on a range of legal services.

17. Stuart Hashagen with Mick Doyle and Brian Keenan, Cultural identity, migration and community development in Glasgow, in Craig, Gary (ed) Community Organising against Racism, Policy Press 2018





## Community wellbeing

With the closure of the student units in 2009 Crossroads found itself with a focus on community work in Govanhill, and on youth work in Gorbals. It was felt to be important to identify a funding programme that would allow community work to take place in Gorbals once again. With this in mind Crossroads welcomed being selected as a site for the Link Up programme.<sup>(18)</sup> As was the case with other community development programmes at the time – including those supported by the National Lottery – Link Up adopted an asset-based approach to community work. This took the form of establishing activities that residents would welcome but did not have access to, and which would bring people together around shared interests and opportunities, e.g. gardening, cooking, arts and crafts, sports, and music – all informed by what local people wanted and in many cases could themselves offer.

Along with other community development organisations, Crossroads had some reservations about the asset-based approach, given that it contained little analysis of the factors behind powerless and inequality, and largely ignored the long-established Crossroads aims of challenging and attacking whatever would make the ‘glorious life’ impossible. However, it was clearly strong on nurturing and strengthening whatever would make a glorious life possible. This approach was welcomed in the hope and expectation that it would ultimately lead to a more challenging position by building the capacity and connection between people with adverse life experience and low expectations.

Building and investing in connection was central to how Link Up works. This is the work of not only drawing disparate people together but other projects or organisations too. Within the work of the local Third Sector Forum the team contributed to joint projects while acting as a critically reflective presence. Highlighting where voices of local people had been forgotten or ignored became one of their most significant contributions to inter-organisation working. This could be seen as a departure from the community-led model of change towards an advocacy approach, but was justified by the need to publicise hardships in a wider setting, checking whether similar problems are experienced in other local organisations and co-ordinating responses.

Link Up was closely and externally monitored for changes in people’s lives and the indications are that at an individual level, positive outcomes emerged in the areas of mental health, sense of cohesion and wider social connections. These led to transitional outcomes for some; for example accessing counselling and recovery programmes to address longstanding issues; taking part in community education courses; challenging benefit rights issues all the way to tribunal. More widely there was evidence of engagement and reciprocity as a radical act stimulating wider community action. Fundraising, youth work support, caregiving and childcare are some of the community activities local people now share. Organising responses to poor mental health provision and mobilising local debates on isolation are examples of an emerging wider social consciousness led by local people, and this community action is more remarkable because it is enacted by the most vulnerable, and previously excluded in the community. The Covid pandemic sadly ground much progress to a halt, perhaps into reverse, and the Link Up programme closed in 2022.

18. <https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Link-Up-2020-report.pdf>

## Partnership work and regeneration

*Like the shrill birds that scout the area, defecating from a height before flying off with whatever scraps they find, decision-making in places like the Gorbals is a messy, top-down business, conducted over the heads of the people who live here. In communities like this it has created a fertile bed of resentment from which anger and apathy have grown. (19)*

The introduction of community empowerment legislation by Scottish Government from 2014 offered little to Crossroads or similar organisations, given that the main opportunities were to take on ownership or management of local services or facilities, or to use the participation request process to highlight concerns that could be addressed through a form of collaboration between the community organisation and the relevant authority. Neither of these were of particular relevance to Crossroads.

Recently Gorbals made real progress in developing partnership work and putting third sector sustainability into focus since it was designated a Thriving Place in 2013. The Laurieston area is concurrently subject to a major urban regeneration project encompassing the demolition of eight 24 storey blocks and their replacement with a new street pattern and a mix of new, low-rise housing both for purchase and for housing association tenancy. Crossroads has been influential in accelerating partnership working: helping the voluntary organisations based in the area to establish a more formal and effective Gorbals Third Sector Forum that works with public sector services - sharing resources, harmonising outcomes and generally providing more effective service for community. Crossroads is active on several cross-sector sub-committees alongside the Health and Social Care Partnership, Glasgow Life and the local Housing Association specifically looking to develop a positive joint approach to local community engagement, develop a joint youth employment strategy for Gorbals and planning how best local services could be better co-produced. Being connected to this wider community of service providers and local people means that local third sector agencies can better safeguard that they are not duplicating work, meeting local requirements and using scarce resources to the best advantage. The Covid 19 crisis put much of this work into abeyance.

19. McGarvey, Darren. *Poverty Safari: Understanding the Anger of Britain's Underclass*. Luath Press Ltd. 2017



This engagement represented a significant shift in Crossroads practice by adding engagement with official bodies, and closer partnership work with other community and voluntary organisations to its work. This was less about direct work with people, more about working at a different level seeking to alleviate problems that may become more adverse in future. Crossroads' response has been to carve out a role in the Third Sector Forum to put in place several of the Thriving Places outcomes, while reserving the right to critique the process alongside other local organisations with a community development approach. These local organisations share the view that the developers who ultimately profit from the physical regeneration should give more back given that it is the third sector organisations that are leading in making the area safer and prouder, and consequently enabling the new housing to command a higher price than before.

Moving to a more strategic approach in this instance suggests the importance in certain circumstances of adopting what has been termed an 'institutional advocacy' approach. This enables issues faced by community members to be communicated directly to decision-makers and considered by them. It allows for gaps in services and gaps in the knowledge of professional staff to be highlighted by those who are receivers of the service. As with Link Up, the pandemic halted progress in this area of activity.

## **Women's rights**

Following the closure of the advocacy project that had employed three staff to work primarily with the Roma and other eastern European groups, Crossroads was left with a sole worker based in Govanhill. To establish a degree of resolution on the question of the balance between individual advocacy and collective organising, Scottish Government funding in the area was repurposed to focus on working with women, including an emphasis on the 'double disadvantage' of gender and ethnicity experienced by BAME women. Additional community work staff time was assigned to this initiative.

The work started with local women expressing concern at the lack of 'voice' or influence over decisions affecting their lives. The workers helped the women identify the demands and expectations on them which limit their ability to live 'gloriously'. Under the banner of 'Southside Women Roar!' the aspiration is to help women organise and develop actions and engagements which improve the quality of community life for women in Govanhill and the wider south side of the city.

## Crisis intervention – a footnote

The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound effect on the way Crossroads operated. The Barn was closed, and as this is the base for the greater part of work, as well as for administration and management, new ways of working had to be devised and adopted. Lockdown affected communities in multiple and new ways. This means redressing pre-crisis priorities and practices – a huge task involving the restructuring of multi-year grants secured earlier in the year. Priority was given to what is in essence crisis-intervention work and while this has been essential in supporting local people financially and emotionally it is clear that it is no substitute for proper community work – which is about bringing people together rather than working with isolated individuals, working collectively rather than simply providing a service, doing as best as possible helping people live gloriously while having to reduce the focus on what makes this impossible.

Looking ahead, Crossroads will continue to challenge displacement, marginalisation and inequality faced by people in Gorbals and Govanhill as we move into the next phase of youth and community development work. The challenge will also be to make the right call between engaging with the most disadvantaged and excluded, and maintaining a critical perspective on the questions of power, money and politics: who gains, who loses, how and why.

## DISCUSSION

In drawing together some conclusions from experience two major themes emerge: first how Crossroads has navigated the various dilemmas that changing community circumstances have necessitated; and second to set out the key factors that may have contributed to the survival of the organisation in an environment that has not always been easy. From this exploration some comment will be made on the ways community development organisations may themselves be better sustained, and on the value of local community development in public policy more generally.

Community development alone cannot bring about change in entrenched political and structural realities, but it can highlight their impact on some of the most affected, and it can directly tackle certain local manifestations, as well as promote wellbeing. Over the decades the approaches adopted have encompassed issue-based community action; action research; social capital building; integrationist practice, an asset-led approach; provision of advocacy and other direct services; and alliance-building locally and more widely. Before turning to discussion of the dilemmas and complexities of practice over five decades in two distinct neighbourhoods, it is worth returning to the definition of neighbourhood work set out above, that it is ‘direct face-to-face work with local people who form groups or networks to tackle a need or problem they have identified, to give support to each other and/or provide services to people in the area ..... it is important to convey the tangible, practical content of working with local people (and) ‘neighbourhood work’ does this’.<sup>(20)</sup> The work of Crossroads has adhered to these principles, and it is perhaps worth emphasising the value of this tangible and practical work, much appreciated and needed by many local residents.

20. Paul Henderson and David Thomas, *Skills in Neighbourhood Work*, 2013 edition



The overall aim of Crossroads over the five decades has been to work towards the outcome of a 'healthy community'. In work taken forward by the Scottish Community Development Centre<sup>(21)</sup> a healthy community is understood to be 'liveable, sustainable and equitable' with the role of community development to work directly with people to establish and sustain local groups and organisations, to ensure inclusion and equality, to enhance knowledge, understanding and confidence, and to seek to influence decisions affecting the community. The result of this would be a community with adequate and shared wealth, health and care; that would be environmentally and physically safe and attractive; that would encourage creativity and enjoyment, and that would be politically and democratically engaged.

Within this framework, particular attention has been given to Crossroads' understanding of the three vital determinates for living well in community development terms - status (the respect we receive from others), control (influence over the things that affect our lives) and affiliation (sense of belonging) – all of which are determinants of sound mental health & well-being. Related work on the five "R"s (rights, responsibilities, resources, roles and relationships) and citizenship are useful in considering the ways in which communities are constructed, and an exploration of how and why people are excluded has been carried out by a former Crossroads staff member.<sup>(22)</sup>

Returning to the words of Geoff Shaw there is clearly a duality, if not a dichotomy in the relationship between attacking whatever in society makes the glorious life impossible, and nurturing and strengthening whatever in the individual may make the glorious life possible. In many ways this is a formulation of the long-standing distinction between 'task' and 'process' in the community work literature, or the distinction between social work and social action. Good practice in community work recognises that the two can more properly be understood as complementary and that progress in each can be realised through action in the other.

In the experience of Crossroads the interplay between these two positions has varied. An organised focus on change and conflict has a well understood and beneficial impact on the confidence, assertiveness and quality of life of those involved, while a focus on nurturing and strengthening individuals can also lead to their being confident and assertive in addressing the wider circumstances that affect them. But in practice there is always a choice to be made on where and how to engage, and how that choice will ultimately lead to change. This highlights the dilemmas that the two purposes present in practice. A community crisis is more likely to precipitate a task-driven response, while a more generalised sense of alienation would encourage a process-led one.

21. Barr, Alan and Hashagen, Stuart. Achieving Better Community Development. Community

22. [https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/62652/1/Stewart\\_etal\\_AJPR\\_2017\\_Constructing\\_community\\_to\\_achieve\\_citizenship\\_using\\_recognition\\_theory.pdf](https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/62652/1/Stewart_etal_AJPR_2017_Constructing_community_to_achieve_citizenship_using_recognition_theory.pdf)

## **A) Individualism and wellbeing / Collectivisation and change**

Contemporary community development funding has led to a focus on the inner life of people as the concept of wellbeing has developed political traction; much energy is spent on linking an individual's wellbeing and mental health to their material situation and the way that structural inequalities affect them. How does community development maintain the disciplines of collectivism, politicisation, and action/change while responding with support to the key prevailing issue of wellbeing, which often begins, and can remain for a long time, with the individual? The questions for community development should always be to consider the factors of opportunity, motivation and capacity. Where a clearly perceived issue presents an opportunity to mobilise and organise - as was the case with the Gorbals dampness issue - there can be a clear motivation for change, and working towards change increases the capacity of people to do so. Where there are fewer external issues around which mobilisation is possible, and where a community is marginalised and dispirited a wellbeing approach is more appropriate, and in time participants will gain the confidence to address obstacles to their wellbeing.

## **B) Community wide / Specific marginalised groups**

Neighbourhood work by definition implies working across the area in question. Both Govanhill and Gorbals are in the 'worst' 10% neighbourhoods in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, yet within this, certain groups are subject to more adverse circumstances than others and have less power. Work with the Asian community, and with migrants from Eastern Europe are examples of Crossroads choosing to encourage motivation and capacity among marginalised groups, sometimes at the expense of damaging relationships with the wider community and sometimes funders. How these tensions were navigated was often facilitated by the role of the management committee. This has always been strongly rooted in the work of the organisation: local residents are motivated to join the committee after personal experience of the youth work or community work supported by Crossroads, or as former staff members who know the organisation well. This committee has a good understanding of the issues affecting people in both neighbourhoods, and thus able to lead the direction of work at any specific decision point, underpinning and informing the decisions taken in the organisation. A former staff member vividly recalls sub-committee meetings where staff and management debated endlessly about the approaches to working with the Asian community and the strong direction given by the management.

## C) Advocacy / Organisation

This leads to questions of the balance between individual advocacy and collective organising. Crossroads' approach to community work was traditionally to focus on local neighbourhood work, to have a structural perspective and analysis of power and powerlessness, to build community organisations and to adopt resistance and direct action where necessary. The central ethos behind more recent work has been integration – to facilitate people from different backgrounds in the community coming together through groups while providing one-to-one support and advocacy to the most vulnerable people. So while there is a primary need to tackle the most immediate and serious problems confronting people, especially new arrivals, and to create environments where mutuality and solidarity can be built, there becomes a point where this strategy can create dependency and become static, rather than moving to a position where critical issues around which collective action can be initiated and supported in the interests of the most vulnerable.

## D) Engage with / Contest public policy

Much of the work of Crossroads has been rooted in opposition to the adverse consequences of both public policy and financial interests, with housing being the most obvious example where public housing has been of poor quality and private landlords have weakly organised and vulnerable tenants. The organisation has not traditionally been engaged in the various regeneration programmes that have taken place particularly in Gorbals, with the Social Inclusion Partnership an example. In recent years there has been shift in focus with the designation of both Gorbals and Govanhill being designated as Thriving Places. In Gorbals, Crossroads took a leading role in the Third Sector Forum which brings together the community and voluntary organisations in the area to participate in decisions and delivery of the thriving places agenda. In these circumstances Crossroads staff rather than community members are involved in the structures, and the work is collaborative rather than independent. The extent to which this approach has a significant effect on the way in which millions of pounds are spent or invested in the area remains to be seen.



## Sustainability: practice and organisational characteristics

How has Crossroads survived for over 50 years when so many other similar organisations have not? There are perhaps two main elements to consider – first the way that practice has evolved in light of community change and availability of funds; and second the way the organisation itself has adapted.

Navigating successfully between the approaches described has undoubtedly been one of the characteristics that have allowed the organisation to survive. But there are others. At many times Crossroads has felt to be in crisis mode, and this is not unusual in small organisations that are wholly dependent on their relationship with funders and sponsors. Some of these crises have been imposed from outside, as with the politically motivated attempt to constrain the operation when it was perceived to have been too close to campaigning activities directed against local government, or when the original playbarn was to be demolished with no provision being made by the Council for its replacement. One councillor threatened to stop all funding because he thought some young people had been too cheeky for his liking. There were also a number of internal crises that were demanding to address, involving as they did tensions or differences of strongly-held opinion between people who would each have a strong personal investment in the work. A significant number of staff have stayed with the organisation for many years, and several former staff members have taken up roles as trustees on the management committee.

A further important factor is the strong connection between the organisation and its local community. This means it is quickly able to gather intelligence about what is happening and use its network of contacts in formulating a response. This relationship carries forward to the composition of the board of directors, which is, and always has been predominantly composed of residents and service users alongside others who know the organisation well. This secures local relevance and accountability in a way that more remotely-run local charities do not. But it was not always easy. Seven decades of innovation and cliff edge grant applications to enable the employment of committed and energetic individuals has placed enormous and unrelenting pressure on the administration staff and unpaid voluntary managers.

Inevitably, this had a toll on managers and staff alike and burnout was a recurring factor. The staff mentoring and coaching that has recently become available may mitigate the potential damage to individuals and staff teams. As Darren McGarvey observed:

*Organisations like The Barn in the Gorbals ... are well-run grassroots groups that are known and loved by locals. Despite the level of experience and expertise they bring to the table, they are constantly having to repurpose and redefine themselves in accordance with the political whims of the day. (23)*

23. McGarvey, Darren; Poverty Safari: op cit



Once funding has been secured, Crossroads has taken great pains to ensure that it is compliant with all the legal and financial obligations that come with any support. This consistency has led to several funders seeking to ensure that they can continue to fund the organisation in the knowledge that the funds have been used effectively and properly. Where it is necessary to re-purpose funds due to changing circumstances this is done in full consultation with the funders involved. It is important to note that Crossroads has always resisted any pressure to go down the route of setting up as a social enterprise as this would take it away from its core purpose and principles. It has also avoided the temptation of asset transfer as in the Scottish community empowerment legislation. There is already one significant asset belonging to Crossroads in the form of the Barn, and the costs of maintaining this have sometimes reached the point where it could have become a liability.

For 50 years Crossroads ran a non-hierarchical, collective staff structure. This had many advantages as workers would be more committed to delivering work that they had a personal investment in shaping, and it would encourage good teamwork and collaboration. There was also a downside to this in the event of differences of opinion or disputes – even minor ones - would go straight to the management committee as there was nowhere else for them to go. And in the collective structure itself there were inevitably differences in the relative power and influence of individual workers, and this could also cause resentment or worse. After some five years of internal discussion and a period of damagingly strained relations it was agreed in 2018 that a charity manager would be appointed to manage the workers and projects on behalf of the Board, while otherwise retaining a relatively flat, team-based organisational structure retaining a collective ethos. This has established clear lines of accountability and management, clear expectations on staff enshrined in review of all policies and their incorporation into a new handbook, and considerable investment in staff development.

## Conclusions

55 years down the road Crossroads has weathered major economic and social changes. What can the approach offer other neighbourhood organisations now, and should government do more to encourage and sustain local community-led organisations?

Although a cost-benefit analysis has not been attempted. It should be clear from this paper that youth and community development is a cost-effective intervention. Good youth work complements school and home learning and leads to confident, competent young people. Community work alters demands on state services, enables democracy to work more effectively, and reduces the costs on mental health and other services through supporting families and individuals. The Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated that community organisations are best placed to respond to a crisis through their networks of information and contacts, and ability to distribute support quickly and at low cost.

During the years that Crossroads was able to offer student training, it produced a cohort of social workers who were in tune with community perspectives and able to support people to find their own solutions rather than imposing them. This community experience would be invaluable for many other public services including policing, health, regeneration and others.

Over the past decade Scottish Government has invested heavily in community engagement, co-production, participatory budgeting and their definition of empowerment. This has been positive, but it has sought primarily to influence the behaviour of public bodies in their relations with community interests. There has been little or no parallel or complementary investment in community development as understood by Crossroads and many others. The notion of community anchor organisations has found favour in recent years but these have been predominantly financially robust bodies such as housing associations or community development trusts with an interest in regeneration, rather than in community development organisations with interests in wellbeing and glorious living.

Crossroads has remained significant and valued for three important reasons: first, because it evolved over time, and was responsive and realistic about what was possible and where compromises were sometimes needed; second, it was rooted in clear principles and operated 'properly' in terms of governance, accountability and administration; and third and most importantly was rooted in community networks.

These are vital lessons for government and others in the community sector. It has long been held that robust, active, active community organisations are essential in a well-functioning society and economy. One of the outcome indicators in the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework concerns social capital, described as 'the resource of social networks, community cohesion, social participation, trust and empowerment.' Yet between 2017 and 2019 there was a decrease in the social capital themes of 'empowerment' (feeling able to influence decisions) 'networks' (neighbourhood help and support), and 'participation' (volunteering). These are the themes that community development is best placed to address, yet investment in this area is in steady decline and the consequences are visible as we experience growing inequality, deprivation and exclusion.

To reverse this trend is important. To do so, Government, public bodies, grant-making Trusts, educational bodies and the community sector should work more closely together to produce a policy framework to encourage the emergence, effectiveness and sustainability of local community organisation, especially in areas of stress. It would invest in training and development for community leadership, improve the infrastructure of support and solidarity across the sector, focus on wellbeing rather than on engagement, at least in the first instance, and recognise that stronger, supportive connections between people contribute to health and wellbeing.



**CROSSROADS**  
YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION  
*everyone should have the right to be heard*



**55 years**

of youth  
and community work  
in Glasgow