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**Popular Education, Participatory Democracy and Social
Change: The Renton - A Case Study**

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**Thesis submitted in the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy - PhD**

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this piece of work to the people of Renton and to all those engaged in the struggle to make the world a better place. This struggle can at times appear a daunting task but we take encouragement and hope from people like Arundhati Roy who wrote “not only is a new world possible; on a quiet day I can hear her breathing” (New Internationalist, 2011, 445).

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature _____

Printed name _____

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Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

- Carman Centre = Social Enterprise under local control
- CDW = Community Development Worker
- CHA = Cordale Housing Association
- ILO = International Labour Organisation
- IMF = International Monetary Fund
- Ma Centre = Physical base of RCDT
- PEN - Popular Education Network
- PEP - Popular Education Programme
- RCBO = Renton Community-based Organisations = CHA, RCDT which includes the Carman Centre and Ma Centre
- RCDT = Renton Community Development Trust
- RCDT CEO = Renton Community Development Trust Chief Executive Officer
- RHP = Renton History Project
- SFHA = Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
- WB = World Bank
- WTO = World Trade Organization

Abstract

Through history popular education has evolved against the backdrop of social movements engaged in the struggle for social change in a variety of contexts. During the past forty years some of these movements have found expression in a wide range of participatory processes with a particular focus on community empowerment.

In 1993, in the village of Renton, Scotland, local people created their own housing association, Cordale Housing Association (CHA) and from its inception declared that it would not build houses “for people to live their poverty in” (CHA Mission statement, 1993). Since then the community has acquired local physical assets and created the Renton Community Development Trust (RCDT) focused on eradicating poverty in the village.

Based on data collected in the period 2009 - 2011, I examine the community’s claim to social change in the village over the past twenty years. I also discuss the community’s claim to local peoples’ active participation in the process of social change and whether the Renton community experience can be considered a process of popular education.

This research is a contribution to the body of knowledge identified with critical social-educational research. It is also a contribution to the debate about the creation of a new socio-economic and cultural model of society based on the values of equity, solidarity and justice.

Introduction

Over the past twenty years the people of the village of Renton, West Dunbartonshire, Scotland have engaged in a collective process of struggle for social change. This thesis outlines the research that I conducted in the village, with data collected between 2009 and 2011. The research is a case study which critically analyses the struggle for social change in the village, local peoples' participation and the educational processes implemented by the Renton Community-based Organisations (RCBO). Although the research focused on a local village in Scotland, the village is part of a wider Scottish, UK and World context that I now introduce.

The Global Context

The unjust production, accumulation and unequal distribution of wealth have acquired global dimensions (Pilger, 2003; Klein, 2007). The recent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan seem to indicate that geopolitical control through war and invasion is high on the agenda of Western capitalist countries. These countries have been described by some authors as the Minority World countries or the developed world as opposed to the Majority World countries or the developing world. It is a distinction characterised by global inequalities and unequal power relations with the Majority World countries experiencing intense degrees of poverty as a result of the Minority World countries' policies (Boff, 2003; Albert, 2008; Hilary, 2009).

The Minority World countries insist on maintaining a foothold in strategic regions throughout the world to guarantee access to raw materials and control over the socio-economic development of the Majority World countries. Cheap labour, reduced tax barriers, privatisation of public services and a minimisation of the role of the state, enforced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), guarantee the necessary support for transnational

companies to implement Minority World policies and sustain the current socio-economic model (Klein, 2007; George, 2010).

One of the consequences of the current socio-economic model is widespread poverty experienced both in the Minority and Majority Worlds, albeit in different degrees of intensity (Albert, 2008; Hilary, 2009). Pilger (1999) argued that poverty is “constructed by divisive and discriminatory laws, inflexible organisations, acquisitive ideologies of wealth, a deeply-rooted class system and policies which serve privilege in the short term and destroy society in the long term” (Pilger, 1999,79). Poverty is a consequence of structural issues which are experienced more intensely by people in the Majority World countries (Christian Aid, 2012).

Statistics show that the rich continue to get richer while the poor increase their ranks incorporating the new unemployed (Klein, 2007; ILO, 2009). The result is a world where an elite of fewer than a billion people control 90% of humanity’s wealth (Pilger, 2002). Hilary (2009) reported that “the rich countries of the global North hold 90% of the world’s wealth with just 18% of its population and the poorest countries continue to pay them \$100 million every day in debt repayments” (2009, 223). This wealth has been extracted from the Majority World countries through the exploitation and plundering of their natural resources and in the process destroyed traditions, cultures and entire native populations (Galeano, 1987; Klein, 2010).

Historically, the Minority World countries invaded and plundered the Majority World countries under the guise of promoting civilisation, development and progress and it could be argued that today this is still the case (Galeano, 1987; Pilger, 1999; Klein, 2010). The Minority World countries drain the Majority World countries’ natural resources, exploit cheap labour and establish alliances with local elites according to their economic convenience and geopolitical strategies (McLaren, 2000; Christian Aid, 2012). The current socio-economic model reinforces the centralisation of power in the hands of transnational corporations under the auspices of

the Minority World countries, accumulating a historical, social and environmental debt (Pilger, 2002; Joseph, 2006; George 2010).

This socio-economic model promotes not only economic control but also ideological control over workers, communities and societies. Those who sustain this model attempt “to justify their economic position by saturating society with ideas which support the status quo” (Youngman, 1986, 67). This attempt at ideological control pervades every aspect of peoples’ lives and in a special way the disenfranchised, the poor, the oppressed (Mendel, 1986; Joseph, 2006). Mayo (1995) argued that in a capitalist society

“the ruling classes strive to dominate the framework of ideas so that the hegemonic culture, in a capitalist society, is a culture in which capitalist economic and social relations, in the market economy, are seen as normal, and indeed natural; the only “common sense” way in which society could be organised” (1995, 9).

Freire (1970) argued that the oppressed can at times incorporate the ideological position of the oppressors regarding it as normal and natural, the only way that society can and should be organised. However, Freire (1992) also argued that one of the educator’s key tasks is “to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be” (1992, 3). Education can further legitimise the ‘common sense’ agenda or alternatively it can question it and support the creation of alternative social models. Allman (2001) argued that an alternative socio-economic model, which she identified with socialism, would require embracing a radical agenda for change which would entail “a total revolution of the relation of production and therefore a revolution in people too” (2001, 123). Education is a powerful tool which can guarantee continuity of the current socio-economic and cultural model or it can contribute to a revolution in people and across societies.

Youngman (1986) argued that “as long as the share of the world’s wealth is so unevenly divided we must know which side of the scale we are on” (1986, 3). Education is strategic in every society because it can be a channel for propagating or subverting the dominant ideology transmitted through state apparatuses, churches, trade unions, the family, the legal system, the media, cultural and community-based organisations (Youngman, 1986). To establish and guarantee the sustainability of an alternative socio-economic and cultural model based on justice, equality and solidarity will require investing in a radical educational process to generate really useful knowledge identified with social change (Allman, 2001; Thompson, 2007; Albert, 2008).

Radical education promotes critical consciousness which according to Freire (1972) occurs when “people’s empirical knowledge of reality, nourished by the leaders’ critical knowledge, gradually becomes transformed into knowledge of the causes (dialectical contradictions) of reality” (1972, 104). Critical consciousness is a process which involves a combination of liberatory action and reflection (Allman, 2001).

Freire (1972) argued that at times the oppressed identify with the oppressors’ because “the oppressed internalise the image of the oppressor and adopt his [sic] guidelines” (1972, 29-30). Radical education challenges the “oppressor’s guidelines” and is an integral part of the process which strives to create a new socio-economic and cultural order. This new order challenges the current market-driven socio-economic model based on competition and individualism, focused on preparing people to enter the globalised capitalist world of work (Britto 2006; Albert, 2008).

Popular education is situated in the field of radical education and promotes a critical analysis of oppression in its different forms involving both educators and learners in the struggle to create a just and egalitarian society (Allman, 2001; Cunningham, 2005). This type of education is collective and is experienced in a wide range of social movements and

community groups (Scanlon, 2007; Craig et al, 2011; Scandrett, 2011). While the current global socio-economic model “attempts to reconstruct a political culture around individualism and self-help” (Allman & Wallis, 1995, 110) popular education promotes collective learning rooted in the struggles of people throughout the world in a variety of contexts.

Popular education can be defined as a critical-revolutionary practice (Allman, 2001) which generates new critical knowledge rooted in a wide range of collective processes of struggle (Peloso, 2001; PEP, 2012). For effective social change to occur local peoples’ knowledge must become critical knowledge which will constitute a robust foundation of a new socio-economic model, experienced both locally and globally. Popular education is a political-pedagogical process which aims at developing critical thinking so that those engaged in the struggles for social change can investigate and understand the underlying causes of the issues which affect their daily lives.

The Research Study

In this research I have been influenced by a critical research paradigm and my research analyses social structures from the perspective that perceives society as divided between “oppressors and oppressed” (Freire, 1972, 26). The research aims to investigate “beneath the surface of apparent reality to reveal the nature of oppressive social structures” (Harvey, 1990, 197). Through analysing a particular grassroots experience in the Scottish village of Renton, I discuss how oppressive social structures exist and control society but also how people and communities resist and engage in the struggle to create new social structures through liberating practices.

The thesis is divided into two parts; the first part discusses the research foundations and consists of four chapters. Chapter one presents an overview of the socio-economic context within which this research is conducted. The second chapter analyses education as a site of struggle between those who sustain the current socio-economic model and those who challenge it.

Chapter three examines popular education defined as a political-pedagogical process of social change and the fourth chapter explores community empowerment as an expression of liberation from or integration into the current socio-economic model. These four chapters are the basis on which I analyse the struggle for social change in the village of Renton over the past twenty years.

The second part of the thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter five is a brief presentation of the history and the people of Renton. Chapter six presents details of the research methodology used in the study. The research findings are presented in chapter seven under the three headings of the thesis: social change, participatory democracy and popular education. Chapter eight discusses four main themes which emerged from the research findings: Community Ownership and Control, the Renton Community-based Organisations and the State, Leadership and the Political Perspective of the RCBO. Chapter nine discusses the three overarching themes of my research: social change, participatory democracy and popular education and finally chapter ten presents the research conclusions and recommendations.

From the perspective of popular education the struggle for change in Renton offers the opportunity to examine to what extent local people have engaged in an educational process which has attempted to promote a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of the problems experienced by local people in the village. Freire (1972) argued that to engage in an educational practice which aims at transforming reality defines our existence as human beings to the extent that “to exist humanly is to name the world, to change it” (Freire, 1970, 69). This thesis examines to what extent the Renton community “named the world” while engaging in the struggle to change it.

Part 1 - Research Foundations

Chapter 1: The Socio-Economic Context and the Struggle for Change

This chapter presents an overview of the socio-economic context within which my research takes place. I examine this context through the prism of three interlinked crises; a socio-economic crisis, a crisis of work and an environmental crisis. The chapter concludes proposing an alternative socio-economic model based on equity and solidarity.

1.1 Socio-Economic Crisis

Different authors agree that the current globalised world is in crisis and argue that the responsibility for the crisis lies with those who have unjustly and immorally accumulated the wealth generated around the world (Pilger 1991; Youngman 2000; Allman 2001; Boff 2003; Klein 2007; George 2010). George (2010) calls them the “Davos Class”, referring to the owners and chief executives of transnational companies who meet every year with a select group of political leaders in the Swiss town of Davos.

One of the many contradictions of the current socio-economic model is evidenced by the exorbitant production of wealth on one hand and extreme poverty of the majority of human beings on the other (Pilger, 2003). Due also to the robotization and computerization of the workplace, a huge amount of wealth has been produced (Mandel 1986; Boff 2003). Consequently, it would seem that people should work less and be able to enjoy life more. However, this is not the case because the wealth produced has been usurped by a small group of people and has created an even broader gulf between rich and poor (Boff, 2003).

With the advances reached in technology today, no human being should go hungry or thirsty or die from curable illnesses. However, in 2001 the United Nations Development Report claimed that 6000 children die from diarrhoea each day, because they do not have access to clean drinking water. In the

year 2000 the United Nations set out the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) one of which was to reduce by half the amount of people in hunger by 2015. At that time the number of starving people was calculated at 800 million. In January 2010 the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) published a number of 1.02 billion people in hunger and declared that at the rate hunger is increasing it will take over 100 years to reach the MDG hunger milestone (George, 2010).

The increasing gap between rich and poor is a result of exploitation of the workforce which benefits an elite and generates an unequal accumulation and distribution of wealth (Mandel, 1986; Boff 2003; Joseph, 2006). Inequality is an underlying element of the current socio-economic crisis and influences how human beings relate to one another. Inequality reduces solidarity among human beings (Albert, 2008) and has provoked “the most cruel and barbaric times remembered” (Boff, 2003, 11) at times generating sentiments of frustration and anger which on many occasions are not channelled into an alternative proposal for social change (George, 2010).

The riots in London in August 2011 were indicative of this anger and frustration. The Guardian/LSE conducted a research project in 2011 that interviewed 270 young people who took part in the riots and discovered that more than half of those who participated lived in the most deprived areas in England, were unemployed and had not been enrolled in any form of formal education. The Guardian/LSE research indicates that the poorest people bear the brunt of any socio-economic crisis, even in a Westernised economy like the UK. In this particular case it could be argued that the crisis is related to the UK Coalition Government’s policy of drastic cuts in public services directly affecting the lives of millions of people who rely on the state for support.

In response to the riots the UK Work and Pensions Secretary admitted that “there was every chance riots would recur unless structural reforms were made to repair communities in which so many families are broken”

(Guardian 2011,6). What he meant by “structural reforms” is unclear as the UK Coalition Government’s policies continue to reinforce the privatisation of public services, reduction in salaries, scrapping of jobs and elimination of grants for education. All of these changes are likely to erode support mechanisms and exacerbate these problems.

Recent bank bail-outs with public money alongside a lack of investigating what and who is responsible for causing the bank crisis also seem to indicate the UK Coalition Government’s support for large corporations. In a report published by the High Pay Commission the chief executive of Barclays Bank, Bob Diamond, was offered a pay deal of £18 million over the next three years if targets were met (Guardian, 2011, 23). He also accumulated £27 million selling special shares in the bank’s asset management arm. This is only one example of bank executives who continue to receive “stratospheric salaries” (Guardian, November, 2011, 6). Diamond was also one of the bank executives involved in rigging the interest rates through manipulation of the libor index, which regulates loans and borrowing indices between and from banks, and caused enormous losses to individuals and businesses.

One of the main causes of the current socio-economic crisis can be found in military expenditure. Governments have invested public resources in military activities around the globe to maintain their strategic geopolitical control. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Yearbook (2010), world military expenditure in 2009 is estimated to have reached \$1.531 trillion which represents a 49 per cent increase since 2000. This corresponds to 2.7 per cent of world gross domestic product (GDP), or approximately \$225 for each person in the world. The USA alone accounts for just under half of the world total in military expenditure, 46.5% (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2010).

Engaging in wars to guarantee a foothold in strategic regions around the world has become an integral part of Western countries foreign policy (Pilger, 2003). However, Klein (2007) argues that those who really profit from war are the transnational companies “who provide everything from

bullets to coca-cola for the soldiers” (Klein, 2007, 329). The influence of transnational companies has become so powerful that control over the world economy is no longer in the hands of nation-states (Pilger, 2003; George, 2010). The real power lies with transnational corporations to the extent that “of the 100 largest economies in the world, over half aren’t countries, they are corporations” (Albert, 2008, 169).

Control and domination by invasion and war is followed by another mode of control through the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Klein, 2007). The central capitalist countries, mainly USA and Europe, offer a “rescue package” to the invaded countries, which basically consists of ‘Structural Adjustment Programmes’ (SAPs). SAPs are policies which demand that countries, mainly in the Majority World, adjust their internal political, social and economical structures to become more market orientated. Based on each country’s ability to adjust to SAP requirements, WB, IMF and WTO will loan money to these countries to help boost their economy.

SAPs are also known as part of the Bretton Woods system, so called because of the place Bretton Woods in USA, where a historic meeting was convened in 1944. Delegates from forty-four countries assembled to negotiate a new world order at the time in a post-war world. As a result of this meeting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) were created. Their remit was to help maintain fixed exchange rates between countries, mainly Europe and USA, control inflation and help boost world trade. Through time these organisations moved away from their initial remit and are now designed to improve a country’s foreign investment climate, mainly in favour of Westernised capitalist countries. This remit is delivered by eliminating trade and investment regulations, boosting foreign exchange earnings by promoting exports, and reducing government deficits through cuts in public spending (Bordo & Eichengreen, 1993).

The control of Western capitalist countries over the rest of the world, is consolidated through the implementation of three “-ations” described by Klein as “privatisation, stabilisation and liberalisation” (2007, 231). Applying the three “-ations” means privatisation of public services and stabilisation of an IMF approved government, generally technocratic or when necessary authoritarian, at times through military coups. Liberalisation basically means opening the countries’ doors to transnational corporations and subjecting their economies to global market demands. This is accompanied by the appropriate government support in the form of guaranteeing cheap labour and reducing, if not totally eliminating, tax barriers (Klein, 2007).

The IMF and WB guarantee the implementation of the three “-ations” under the veil of SAPs which Davison Budhoo, an IMF member of staff who became a whistleblower, described as

“a form of mass torture in which ‘screaming-in-pain’ governments and peoples are forced to bend on their knees before us, broken and terrified and disintegrating and begging for a sliver of reasonableness and decency on our part. But we laugh cruelly in their face and the torture goes on unabated!” (Budhoo quoted in Klein, 2007, 262).

Both IMF and WB have become the implementers of a legalised form of extracting resources, privatising public services, reducing wages and forcing countries, predominantly from the Majority World, into a spiral of debt (Klein, 2007). Discussing this new form of control and domination Pilger (1999) reported that “more than 600 million people suffer from malnutrition and a lack of basic health care and education because the money that should be spent on them is being used to repay the interest on debt owed to Western financial institutions” (1999, 608). This new form of control and domination is part of a worldwide strategy according to Colin Ward who wrote in the Guardian: “this is not a tragedy *sui generis* but the effect of a global logic from which no region of the world is immune; it is the logic of

capitalism which breaks down all bonds between people” (Ward cited in Pilger, 1999, 608).

Capitalism has no particular home in one country; it spreads indiscriminately into societies and peoples’ lives as the Russian writer Gorin confirmed: “for a long time we lived under the dictatorship of the Communists, but now we have found out that life under the dictatorship of business people is no better. They couldn’t care less about what country they are in” (Gorin quoted in Klein, 2007, 218). This indiscriminate globalisation of capitalist intervention is summed up in the words of the chief economist at the World Bank in 1991, Lawrence Summers: “spread the truth - the laws of economics are like the laws of engineering. One set of laws works everywhere” (Summers quoted in Klein, 2007, 218). In Westernised countries this set of laws has generated unemployment, people forced to live in poverty, at times having to choose whether to heat their house in winter or buy food. In the Majority World the effect is death threatening with widespread hunger and disease and the dislocation of entire populations forced to live in refugee camps dependent on international aid (Christian Aid, 2011; NI, 2012, 449).

A wide range of statistics indicates the degrees of poverty of the majority of people in the world. World Bank is contradictorily one of the main sources of these data as its policies are part of the system that causes poverty (Pilger, 2003; George, 2010). World Bank Development Indicators (2008) have shown how world poverty increased not only in relative terms between those above and below the poverty line but also in absolute terms with an increase in those below the poverty line. Due to a massive forced exodus of small farmers from their land, cities have grown out of proportion with insufficient infrastructure to sustain this growth (World Social Forum, 2009). The exodus is also a result of agribusiness policies in tandem with the exploitation of the earth’s underground resources that has given rise to towns and cities with enormous social and economic problems (Barros & Betto, 2009). The effects of this aggressive exploitation of the earth’s

resources are felt more intensely by the Majority World where these resources predominantly exist. However, with the discovery of tar sands in Canada, now considered the biggest energy project in the world, producing 1.9 barrels of oil a day and in the process producing three to four times more greenhouse gas emissions than conventional oil extraction, it would seem that even Minority World countries are no longer immune to capitalist greed for profit (NI, 2010, 431; 2012, 439).

A characteristic of the current socio-economic crisis is the reduction in work opportunities in the Minority World and the exploitation of cheap labour in the Majority World. In 2009 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) reported that the “working poor”, those on low wages, combined with the “vulnerable employed”, those in part-time and temporary jobs, together with the unemployed made up 90% of the entire global workforce. The global context of “jobless growth” (Tandon, 2009) has provoked a crisis in the world of work which is another characteristic of the current socio-economic model.

1.2 Work Crisis

From the point of view of improving working conditions and workers’ general wellbeing the automation of production should be welcomed. However, automation in the current socio-economic context has caused a reduction in the need for manual work: “the machine, this remarkable product of human ingenuity, becomes a source of tyranny against the worker” (Mandel, 1986, 22).

One of the consequences of the automation of production is that hundreds of thousands of workers are ‘laid off’ and excluded from the production process. David Cameron, the UK prime minister, admitted that “while people with good skills are able to benefit [from globalisation], and indeed those who can best capture the opportunities of globalisation see rewards...those without [the necessary skills] are increasingly shut out of the

global economy” (Cameron, 2009). For many of working age the possibility of a meaningful presence in society is reduced considerably and as a result more families are forced into poverty.

The exclusion of a majority of people from the possibility of participating in society in a meaningful way presents a key challenge for the state. This challenge would entail investing in a broad range of publicly-funded training programmes and education which could eventually lead to other opportunities for participating in society. In terms of the UK, the Coalition Government has focused its energies on reducing the fiscal and economic deficit rather than focusing on creating jobs. The UK Government argued that the private sector would guarantee meaningful work for the unemployed, but this does not seem to have happened as the number of people forced to claim benefits in 2012 soared to 1.6 million (Channel 4, 2012).

Since the inception of the UK Coalition Government the state has gradually withdrawn from peoples’ lives. On the issue of benefits the Government declared that “the model of payment by right will be replaced by payments by results” (Cameron, 2009). The focus is on each individual’s ability to cope confirming Mandel’s words that “ours is a society based on the principle, every man [sic] for himself” (1986, 28). If people cannot adjust then they will have to invent their own survival strategy as the state becomes more absent in their lives.

Pilger (1999) argued that the crisis in work is a result of the implementation of the current socio-economic model where “labour is cheapened and cast aside, social legislation is eliminated and whole countries are transformed into one big ‘free trade’ zone stripped of rights, sovereignty and wealth” (1999,610). It is a crisis which affects all countries, albeit in different degrees of intensity. The right to work enshrined in international law (ILO, 1944) so that people could live a life of dignity is becoming more a privilege of the few who manage to secure some form of employment. Even for those

who do manage to secure work, salaries are frozen, based on the minimum wage with the right to a pension becoming a rarity.

Boff (2003) envisaged that in automating production there would be an opportunity to rise to another level of humanity. However, Pilger (1999) argued that the opposite has taken place: “the rise of technology exacerbates class differences rather than abolishes them, increasing the vulnerability and tempo of work” (1999, 610). The advent of technology does not seem to have improved the working conditions of the majority of workers; on the contrary it has increased the gap between rich and poor and alienated more people from any form of meaningful work. Nevertheless, those who sustain the current system continue to justify the present mode of work described as flexibility, up-skilling the workforce and multi-tasking, characteristics of the new workforce and the prerequisites to enter the new world of work.

The discourse of flexibility and adaptability in the workplace has not altered the basic capitalist approach to work based on “the institution of wage labour in which people are forced to sell their labour power, the only power they possess, on the labour market” (Mandel, 1986, 21). However, in the present context of jobless growth even the possibility of selling labour power is becoming more complicated as jobs are scarcer and governments’ strategies worldwide focus on fiscal and economic deficit reduction and not job creation.

Duncan Smith, the UK Coalition Government Work and Pensions Secretary, referred to certain communities as the cause of social degradation because work was not a part of their way of life (Tonybee, 2011). However, work currently available is “casual, part-time, agency-based, and often based on self-employment and commission rather than a wage, devoid of prospects” (Tonybee, 2011). The UK Coalition Government employment minister, Chris Grayling, cynically declared that “temporary work gives you an idea of the kind of career you might want” but the opportunities of work even on a

temporary basis are currently few and far between (Harris, 2011). Nick Clegg, the UK deputy prime minister, talked of “a time of aspiration, ambition, hope, optimism for young people” while the numerical reality of under-25s unemployed in the UK bluntly said the opposite with 991,000 out of work in 2011 (Harris, 2011).

Mandel (1986) argued that it has become more difficult to sustain the concept of work as a moment of creativity or active participation in society. On the contrary, work is predominantly a means for people to acquire money to buy consumer goods and keep the present system in place (Mandel, 1986). Work in the current socio-economic context is also an instrument of domination and control to the extent that it eventually controls what people think based on what they do (Joseph, 2006). Mandel (1986) argued that in the capitalist mode of production a worker performing a certain type of activity for a living will be inclined to have “an extremely narrow horizon” (1986, 25) because a society produced through capitalism has “less development of dialogue and therefore a lesser formation of intelligence” (Mandel, 1986, 27). Less dialogue and less formation of intelligence are convenient for those who control society because workers will have a restricted social and political awareness of their condition as exploited workers and will tend towards accepting the current system as inevitable (Freire, 1970; Mayo, 1995).

Those who control the current socio-economic model find support in what would initially appear to be different political ideologies expressed in “esoteric jargon” (Pilger, 1999, 610). In the UK, Thatcher (1987) denied the existence of society; Blair (1999) used the discourse of the Third Way and Cameron (2009) introduced the Big Society. Under different titles, but always in line with the esoteric jargon to which Pilger (1999) referred, Thatcher, Blair and Cameron sustained the same socio-economic model. Blair (1999) summed up this ideological position when he declared that “the grand ideological battles of the twentieth century are over, what matters now are recovery and growth, competitiveness and flexible working; all else

is obsolete” (1999, 322). In political terms the result of this discourse is “a reduction of democracy to electoral ritual: that is, competition between indistinguishable parties for the management of a single-ideology state” (Pilger, 2003, 2). McLaren (2000) argued that “the free market destroys workers’ rights, suppresses civil liberties and neuters democracy till all that is left is the vote” (2000,21). Thatcher, Blair and Cameron epitomise this political posture in the UK which guarantees the continuity of a socio-economic model that privileges a minority elite to the detriment of the majority of society.

The society produced by the current socio-economic model fosters the separation of workers and on many occasions competition among workers themselves (Britto, 2006). Work is either reduced to specific individualistic monotonous tasks or to a wide range of tasks under the title of flexibility or multi-tasking, with very little if no time at all to reflect critically upon the meaning of work and how it affects what people think and eventually who they become. Whether in monotonous individualistic tasks or in multi-tasking, workers are alienated from any form of meaningful activity (Mandel, 1986; Joseph, 2006) and also from one another, reducing the possibility of any organised form of collective challenge to the current socio-economic model.

Not only does this form of society affect workers’ daily lives but it also has a resounding long term effect on the environment. A heavy price has been paid by the environment that has been subjected to intense systematic aggressive degradation resulting from unethical exploitative activities (NI, 2009, 419). Boff (1999) argued that the current world of work has reduced the entire planet to an object of manipulation and exploitation; a machine to satisfy the individualistic consumerist desires of a minority group of people. This distorted relationship between the world of work and the environment has provoked an environmental crisis.

1.3 Environmental Crisis

Many are the examples of how our planet has been violently attacked in order to exploit the world's resources. From disasters in Bhopal (1984), Chernobyl (1986) and the Gulf of Mexico (2010), as well as the destruction caused by war for economic and geopolitical control of oil producing countries, the warnings of the potential environmental degradation resulting from over-exploitation of natural resources have been obvious but seemingly disregarded. Boff (2003) argued that as a result of these disasters the entire planet could be under the threat of an ecological imbalance which could eventually affect the Earth's ability to integrate all living systems.

These environmental disasters have had a devastating effect also on peoples' lives. Reporting on the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 Klein (2010) observed that not only the physical space but also peoples' traditions, cultures and belief systems established through centuries had suffered drastically.

Boff (2003) declared that planet Earth is like the heart: "if gravely attacked, all respective dependent organisms will suffer, climate, drinking water, the soil, microorganisms and human societies" (2003,13). The Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 recognised the interdependent nature of all living systems and confirmed the importance of finding a way to establish harmony among them. It was an important moment for humanity to capture the importance of protecting the environment; however, the Earth Summit's message seems to have fallen on deaf ears. Since then environmental disasters continue to occur with calamitous effects on peoples' lives (Boff, 2003).

Another area under constant threat is the earth's underground resources, extracted at dangerously irresponsible levels (NI, 2012, 458). Transnational energy companies continue to invent methods for extracting gas and oil from any physical space they can access, whether on land or at sea or under

both. The tar sands in Canada, the gas and oil mines in Peru and the mineral resources in Brazil are exploited by transnational companies at a high cost for the environment. In Canada, BP has left a hole the size of England in what is described as the “most carbon intensive fossil fuel development on the planet” (NI, 2012, 458). In Peru 300,000 people have been poisoned by mining companies in different parts of the country, while 100 people have died in environment-related conflicts between 2008 and 2011 (NI, 2011, 448). To date the people of Bhopal in India continue to suffer the effects of the disastrous gas leak in 1984. Children are born with serious physical impairments to the extent that the rate of birth defects in Bhopal is still many times higher than in the rest of India (Brown, 2010). Various cancers are rife in Bhopal and local communities are still subjected to consuming contaminated drinking water (NI, 2011, 448).

While on the one hand populations suffer from the lack of proper drinking water on the other hand food and water have become commodities for investment on the stock market. Research shows that in 2003 investments in food on the stock market stood at US\$ 3 billion while in 2011 this grew to a staggering US\$ 126 billion (NI, 2011, 447). Delegates at the World Food Summit in 1996 introduced the concept of food security and declared that food should be guaranteed for all populations in the world. The transnational small farmers’ organisation, Via Campesina, contested the concept of food security and argued that food security does not explain who controls the food chain, the cost of production and processing whereas food sovereignty guarantees control over the production and processing of food in each country. By promoting food sovereignty Via Campesina argued that credit would be made available to small farmers, water sources and soil would be respected and food would be detracted from the world of commodities (George, 2010).

Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio climate change has become an issue discussed by people all over the world. This discussion has generated social movements focused on creating awareness about the changes in the earth’s climate but has also generated “climate change deniers” (NI, 2011, 449).

These are people who dispute evidence produced by a wide range of sources that the environment and the life of future generations are at risk. Research shows that 2010 was the joint hottest year in recorded human history, previously equalled only in 2005, while between 1980 and 2009 the amount of natural disasters doubled (NI, 2011, 449). Meteorologists warn that the planet is becoming overheated causing entire countries and populations to disappear (NI, 2009, 428). Every year more and more people are displaced as a result of droughts, floods, crop failure, landslides and earthquakes.

The current socio-economic model promotes indiscriminate exploitation of the earth's resources in different regions around the world provoking major disasters with socio-economic and environmental consequences. These disasters have caused hundreds of thousands of human deaths, displaced families and annihilated livelihoods resulting in a general mass of disregarded people inflating the number of human beings forced to live the rest of their lives in poverty. Enormous extensions of barren land have resulted in further reduction and even elimination of already endangered species. This disastrous relationship between the environment and the current socio-economic model has resulted in an irresponsible reduction of the earth's resources and has put all forms of life under threat.

Summary

All three crises, socio-economic, work and environmental are intrinsically linked and produce disastrous consequences, mainly for the poor. Warnings from scientists, environmentalist and a wide range of social movements have helped generate awareness about the importance of caring for the environment. Apart from generating disastrous effects on the lives of the majority of people worldwide the current socio-economic model has provoked fear of possible consequences for the environment in the future. People also feel a sense of frustration and powerlessness due to the global dimension of this environmental crisis (George, 2010). The daunting task of creating another society where all living systems are respected and live in

harmony seems difficult if not impossible. However, Knight (2008) reminds us that not all is doom and gloom:

“Statistics often paint a bleak picture of reality. Sometimes this is necessary. But statistics don’t show the full picture. They don’t reveal the resilience of the human spirit; they don’t reveal that in the midst of such suffering there is hope” (Knight, 2008).

On an individual basis little can be achieved and any form of real change lies in the ability of people coming together to elaborate an alternative (George, 2010). The resilience that Knight (2008) refers to is visible in a variety of ways around the globe and the final section of this chapter discusses emerging possibilities of change and alternatives to the current destructive and degrading socio-economic model.

1.4 An Alternative Socio-Economic Model

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) had their new roles consolidated in a meeting between the two institutions and the US Treasury Department, held in Washington in 1989, which resulted in the Washington Consensus. This Consensus produced a list of economic proposals that every country in the Majority World should adhere to in order to develop. These proposals were based on trade liberalization, privatisation and deregulation of markets.

Hilary (2009) argued that an alternative economic model would have to challenge the Washington Consensus. The World Social Forum (WSF) in 2009 declared that an alternative economic model would be based on the principles of “decent work, environmentally sustainable development and the reorientation of production towards social ends” (WSF, 2009). To implement these principles the WSF discussed the need for reasserting the public sphere, applying the criteria of justice and redistribution in relation

to wealth production, recognising human rights and supporting democratic control.

Health and education, food and water, have all been redefined as commercial activities with financiers and bankers speculating on the world's hunger (NI, 2011, 446). Hilary (2009) argued that reasserting the public sphere would entail guaranteeing essential aspects of human life as rights and not as commodities for financial investment on the stock exchange. Reasserting the public sphere would entail regaining control over essential aspects of human life from food, water and shelter for basic survival, to health, education and meaningful work in order to guarantee a life of dignity.

An alternative socio-economic model would include a redistribution of the world's wealth based on the principle of justice. Poorer countries would receive priority in terms of attending to basic needs such as food and shelter. The sovereignty of each country would be respected so that each country could reorganise its production primarily for internal consumption. Exportation would be on the basis of exchange with other countries to complement the needs of each country (Hilary, 2009).

Tax redistribution would be an integral part of an alternative economic model to guarantee the just redistribution of resources. The Tobin tax, proposed by Professor James Tobin, focuses on reducing speculation and stabilizing markets. It is taxation on financial transactions at a rate of 0.005% which would currently generate over \$33 billion each year for use in development projects and public service investment (George, 2010). These financial resources would guarantee that each country could invest in appropriate infra-structure and the production of goods necessary to sustain dignified living conditions for all of its citizens.

Democratic control is the fundamental element without which the above proposals would remain merely good intentions. The United Nations, open to

all nations, would be the main forum with legitimacy for deciding a just response to the global crisis (Hilary, 2009). Global organisations the likes of WB, IMF and WTO have been dominated by countries of the global north and have deep-rooted underlying issues that are contrary to the interests of the majority of countries in the world (Albert, 2008). These global organisations would have to be substituted by organisations focused on the development of every country based on the principles of justice and equality (Albert, 2008; Hilary, 2009). An example of a new organisation which prioritises the development of each country can perhaps be found in the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas - ALBA. Apart from confronting directly the USA, Canada and Mexico's North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), ALBA proposes a more equitable form of trade where each country provides what it is best placed to produce, in return for what it most needs, independent of global market prices (Klein, 2007).

Bello (2010), from the Bangkok-based research and advocacy institute "Focus on the Global South" proposed 'deglobalisation' as an alternative to capitalist globalisation. Deglobalisation is an alternative development strategy mainly for the Majority World countries based on the principle of subsidiarity. Bello argued that by implementing the principle of 'subsidiarity' production on domestic markets would become the centre of gravity within the economy rather than production for export markets. The principle of subsidiarity would be enshrined in each country's economy by encouraging production of goods at local community and national level, in order to preserve community life. Bello's "deglobalisation" proposal is based on each country having control over its own development and being respected in its sovereignty. This control should reach the level of local communities because the "scope of democratic decision-making in the economy should be expanded so that all vital questions become subject to democratic discussion and choice" (Bello in NI, 2010, 430, 10)

To guarantee sustainability of an alternative economic model, a new social model of active citizenship based on the principles of justice, democracy

and participation would also have to be created. New forms of participation have been and continue to be tested and implemented throughout the world, albeit with varying degrees of success, indicating a tendency towards the creation of a new democratic model of society.

In some South American countries these new forms of participation have also resulted in the election of presidents from left to left-of-centre Parties, identified with social change who in turn have facilitated the creation of new possibilities for active participation of their citizens in the struggle against poverty. In Venezuela during Chavez' presidency, new forms of participation strengthened the local economy: "by 2006, there were roughly 100,000 cooperatives in the country, employing more than 700,000 workers, a reverse of the logic of government outsourcing" (Klein, 2007, 455). In Brazil, the participatory budget process has involved thousands of communities in deciding how public money should be spent_ (Schuguerensky, 2000) and unproductive land has been assigned to small farmers organised in cooperatives, trade unions and the landless movement.

In terms of peoples' organisations at local, regional and national levels, South American countries have witnessed an upsurge of organizations which have reinforced the role of civil society, resulting in networks at national and international level. In Brazil, the Brazilian Association of Non Governmental Organisations (ABONG) is a pool of over 100 organisations engaged in a variety of activities, promoting democracy and citizen participation. The Latin American Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations (ALOP) engages at international level focused on influencing public policy. Trade Unions, community organisations, cooperatives have all recently thrived in these countries. Of significant importance is the Brazilian Landless Movement (MST) which has occupied and repossessed thousands of acres of unproductive land for small farmers and is engaged in the struggle for agrarian reform in direct opposition to agribusiness.

An alternative model of economy based on active participation of people deciding their future will also require new values which can give sustainability to an equitable distribution of the world's wealth. Different proposals have emerged which attempt to install this alternative model of economy based on the principles of fairness and above all solidarity, in particular with those who suffer most the consequences of the current socio-economic model (Albert, 2008).

Van Heijningen & Keune (2001) proposed an alternative socio-economic model based on “an economy of solidarity and a structural transformation policy” (2001, 3). They argue that the final aim of the economy is an ideal society with no restrictions because of economic difficulties and as a result people would be free from oppression and free to develop. In order to reach this ideal society they propose a transitional stage of an economy of solidarity which would focus on the satisfaction of the basic needs of all and guarantee a sustainable global environment.

An economy of solidarity would challenge the dominant concept of economy identified as growth, proposing an economy based on the concept of enough. For many Western countries an economy of enough would become an economy of shrinkage due to over production and exaggerated levels of consumption. Production and distribution of goods in richer countries would be lowered and in countries with high levels of poverty production and distribution of goods would focus primarily on the basic needs of the population. Production on a global level would be re-orientated to satisfy peoples' needs and not to generate profit. Van Heijningen & Keune (2001) argue that in order to implement an economy based on the concept of enough a new culture is necessary, founded on solidarity. They argue that “co-operation, mutual support and a responsible way of dealing with the environment will yield more in terms of durability than competition and the boundless pursuit of profit” (2001, 4).

Another alternative which focused on restructuring the economy to benefit the whole of society was proposed by Albert (2008) who created the term

“Parecon” to describe a participatory economy, meaning a new and equitable form of organising the economy. Based on the principles of equity, solidarity, diversity, self-management and ecological balance, Albert (2008) proposed new structures at international, national and local levels. At an international level WB, IMF and WTO would have their role redefined while at national and local levels democratically elected councils would be the seat of decision-making whether in government or in the workplace. As opposed to the imposition of a top-down profit focused model, Parecon proposed bottom-up, cooperative, informed choosing which would require free access to information and the appropriate training to acquire the necessary skills to participate in decision-making processes.

Albert’s Parecon and the economy of enough proposed by Van Heijningen & Keune confront the current socio-economic model of unjust production, accumulation and unequal distribution of wealth. These alternative models will require new social structures and a new vision of society. Over the last twenty years a wide range of social movements have emerged challenging the current socio-economic model. Since 1999 in Seattle, meetings held by WB, IMF and WTO have been targeted by direct action. More recently in 2011 the “Occupy” movement set up camp sites in strategic places in cities all over the world, contesting the 1% who control the world’s wealth while the other 99% struggle to survive. What unites the activists involved in these movements across the globe is the anti-corporate and pro-democracy struggle, both of which are important aspects of the struggle for a more equitable and just global society.

While respecting the diversity of the wide range of struggles for change implemented by communities and social movements worldwide, it is crucial that local communities capture the global dimension of the struggle for social change. When people and communities acquire knowledge of the mechanisms of exploitation and oppression operating in their daily lives they become stronger, more difficult to confuse and better prepared to take on the challenge of creating an alternative socio-economic system based on

solidarity (Klein, 2007). Education has a key role to play in contributing to unveiling the truth (Freire, 1972) and when communities engage with education which promotes a critical analysis of the oppressive structures in society they are better equipped to take on the struggle for social change.

Chapter 2: Education - A Site of Struggle

This chapter discusses education as a site of struggle between those who sustain the current socio-economic model and those who challenge it. The chapter highlights three historical social movements: Owenism, Chartism and the Women's movement, and how they engaged with education from the perspective of social change. Lifelong learning, adult education and critical pedagogy are examined and the chapter concludes by arguing that radical education is an integral part of the struggle for social change.

2.1 Introduction

Freire (1970) in his seminal work 'Pedagogy of The Oppressed' argued that

"there is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (1970, 65).

This quote summarises the educational philosophy underpinning this research. Different social classes have engaged with education albeit with different focuses and objectives. Steele (2000) argued that while certain organisations embraced education for "germinating the means of independent workers" others envisaged education as a means for establishing "social harmony and class conciliation" (2000, 671). These two

positions show how education can be used to reinforce conformity to a socio-economic system or to challenge it (Youngman 1985; Martin, 2008).

Those who sustain the current socio-economic model pursue means to guarantee the implementation of this model on a global scale. Other organised groups strive to galvanize support in order to challenge the implementation of this model, engaging in the struggle for just and equitable societies throughout the world (WSF, 2009).

A powerful cultural strand identified with Westernised homogenization permeates the current socio-economic model (Pilger, 2002; Boff, 2003). This homogenization has an ideological content which reinforces individualistic competitiveness and attempts to eliminate the possibility of any collective challenge to the current socio-economic model (Britto, 2006). On a global scale Westernised homogenization is evidenced in the production, accumulation and concentration of wealth and power under the control of the Minority World, shared with selected elites in the Majority World (Galeano, 1986; Pilger, 2002; Albert, 2008). In the disputed context between those who sustain and those who challenge the current socio-economic model, formal, non formal or informal education become sites of struggle between those who sustain or challenge the expansion of westernised homogenization (Hake, 1996).

Many authors argue that the manipulation of education to exercise control over people and subjugate them to Westernised cultures is not a recent phenomenon (Freire, 1972; Galeano, 1986; Allman, 2001; Crowther, 2002). Education has been an integral part of colonisation processes imposed on the Majority World under the guise of bringing civilisation to these countries (Galeano, 1986; Boff, 2003). The invading European states implemented economic and social models which were pervaded by western cultural relations and imposed them on the colonised countries, on many occasions through violence, torture and death (Galeano, 1986; Pilger, 2002; Klein, 2007). It could be argued that the colonisation process of the Majority World

countries continues to date in other forms whether economic, political or cultural (Pilger, 2002; Boff, 2003; Klein, 2007).

However, Crowther (2002) argued that the 19th century produced examples of how education played a positive transformational role in the social, political and economic formation of societies. Different educators and social movements envisaged “adult learning as a resource for groups in struggle to understand and change their world in ways they saw fit” (2002, 63). Crowther (2002) examined the role of education in relation to social change in three historical social movements, Owenism, Chartism and the Women’s movement. Important elements emerge from these three movements which can be useful in analysing the empirical data in this research.

2.2 Education in Three Historical Social Movements

Owenism was a movement linked to the experiences of Robert Owen who established his textile factory business on the banks of the River Clyde in the early 19th century, which eventually gave birth to the village of New Lanark in Scotland. He employed poor people, many of whom had fled famine-stricken Ireland in search of work and survival. In Owen’s work establishments, rigid techniques in discipline were installed to guarantee production and strict sanctions were applied to workers who stepped out of line. Owen’s focus was on the development of each person’s character and he believed that “a person’s character was shaped by the social environment and this, in turn, could be improved to develop character” (Crowther, 2002, 65). There was a strong moral force underpinning this concept of education attracting many followers known as Owenites. The Owenites also became involved in educational activities with trade unions and co-operative societies which they believed stimulated the growth of character, described by Silver (1965) as “education from below” (1965, 203).

The liberation that Owen aspired to was to be achieved solely through reason and not by class struggle. His focus was on educational activities that contributed to the formation of character on an individual basis and not on a class basis. The emphasis was on personal growth disassociated from any critical reflection about the context of oppression in which most workers and their families were forced to live. Consequently the educational processes did not identify with collective processes of social change.

Another example of a movement where education played a key role was Chartism, a working class movement for political reform in Britain between 1838 and 1848. It takes its name from the People's Charter of 1838. The Charter advocated for wider political participation focusing on the electoral process and issues such as universal male suffrage, secret ballot and payment for members of Parliament so that poor men could also be elected.

Chartists believed in the importance of having an independent educational system: "to be useful it had to be free from state control, middle-class interests, the church and other organisations which reflected the values and beliefs of the establishment" (Crowther, 2002, 67). Many halls and schools funded by the Chartist movement formed an educational network across the country. These schools contributed considerably to the creation of an intellectual and political consciousness among a working class who developed the ability to question and challenge power relations in society (Silver, 1965).

However, through time Chartism gradually became less influential among the working class, opening the path to the formation of trade unions. Nevertheless, Chartism left an indelible mark in the history of working class education expressed by Silver (1965) in relation to a group of workers on trial in 1919, in connection with a Chartist protest:

"the human material was different from what it had been half a century earlier. Intelligence 'in a degree which was formerly thought impossible' had spread to 'the lower and down to the lowest rank'; and with

intelligence went the faculty of disciplined action and an adherence to principle” (1965, 88).

This quote indicates that education at the time had previously been the privilege of a higher class in society as opposed to “the lower and the lowest ranks”. Through acquiring access to education the lower classes became more aware of their condition and began to organise themselves for change based on a new set of principles. It would seem that the Chartist Movement promoted educational processes which established a strong link between theory and practice in the struggle for social change.

A third movement was the Women’s movement which had seen women struggle for many years to guarantee their rights in a wide range of social spheres. Towards the later half of the 19th century “some middle-class women, and women’s organisations, were able to access Mechanics Institutes” (Crowther, 2002, 68). These Institutes promoted extension work from universities but their main purpose was “taking understanding to people’ but not ‘taking the tools of understanding’” (2002, 68). A top-down pre-established agenda of education was implemented. The curriculum for working class women was generally limited to learning the ‘three Rs’, reading, writing and arithmetic, while middle-class women followed daytime classes in “ladylike accomplishments” (2002, 68). This top-down approach to education guaranteed the sustainability of the class-based society among women.

The creation of the Women’s Co-operative Guild influenced by the Suffragette Movement gave working class women a voice free from male dominance. This created the possibility of linking education to social action and popular movements. Crowther (2002) argued that from this process of independent learning under control of the women themselves “learning was valued in terms of how it contributed to social and political struggle, freeing people from the limits of the prevailing orthodox ideas and institutions that constrained their lives” (2002, 69).

Each of the three examples of popular movements engaged with education to acquire more knowledge about how to enhance their struggle for social change. Crowther (2002) argued that many popular movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries focused on “who had the right to define what counted as knowledge and the purpose and interests it served” (2002, 69). Owenites, Chartists and Women’s popular movements all defined what counted as knowledge for them and attempted to bring about social change by promoting the interests of oppressed groups in society, albeit in different degrees and with considerable methodological diversity. All three movements involved poor people, the oppressed, the working class, the disenfranchised and exploited, by promoting learning through work and the struggle for basic human rights.

Since the beginning of 20th century governments, trade unions and social movements have intensified their engagement in learning processes through promoting courses to upgrade workers’ employability skills and improve their personal development. Communities and social movements have also engaged in similar courses, many of which have been grouped under the heading of lifelong learning. Depending on the perspective of the educators and learners involved, these courses can be a source of really useful knowledge and can contribute to the promotion of social change (Thompson, 2007).

2.3 Lifelong Learning

In 1919 a UK government-nominated committee reported that “adult education was an inseparable aspect of citizenship and therefore should be both universal and lifelong” (Ministry of Reconstruction, 1919, 5). Worldwide changes have taken place since then which have influenced every area of government policy including education. Field (2000) argued that “public policy tends to be driven, globally, by largely economic concerns: competitiveness, rather than citizenship as the primary focus for policy” (2000, 3). Private companies created their own training systems and

structures adapted to the particular needs of each company with the ultimate goal of competing more effectively in the capitalist market. An example was the Motorola University which “was said in 1998 to have some 1000 academic staff with centres in 49 countries and classes in 24 languages” (2000, 24).

The shift in the provision of education from the state as the main provider to private companies produced a shift in the understanding of the role of education. Hake (1996) argued that education became reduced to certificated courses focused on the labour market with employers and business interests taking control over the purpose of education. This narrow vision of education solely for employability purposes represented “a fundamentally undemocratic and anti-democratic trend” (Martin, 1995, 83). Thompson (2007) described this approach to education in the following terms:

“increasingly, some would say, relentlessly, the notion of adult education, rooted in broader definitions of learning to do with curiosity and passion, the development of critical intelligence, social justice and active citizenship has given way to an increasingly narrow, instrumental and utilitarian concentration on skills and knowledge for the labour market” (2007, 45).

The acquisition of skills is important for personal development and societal advancement but would have to be accompanied by the ability to critically analyse the context within which these skills are acquired. Mayo (1995) argued that a critical approach to education and training is required in the current socio-economic context because of the potential economic, social, ideological and cultural implications that pervade the wide range of courses on offer. Education and training can sustain or challenge the current socio-economic model and according to Mayo (1995) educators and learners should engage in the debate around “what type of education and training is used to

promote what type of economic growth and development, and for whose benefit” (1995, 12).

Learning in the workplace has opened up another field of discussion within lifelong learning. A characteristic of workplace learning is the upgrading of skills to “keep up with technology, global markets and hyper-competition” (Fenwick, 2001, 4) resulting in workers being continually put under pressure to reach individualised targets dictated by the market (Britto, 2006). The acquisition of knowledge through workplace learning focuses on developing skills to deliver outcomes established previously by those who own and control the workplace (Tett, 2008). Learning in the workplace becomes an instrument of conformity and adaptability to predetermined work objectives and conditions.

Barnett (1999) argued that learning in the capitalist workplace is reduced to fulfilling “multiplying expectations, standards and evaluations” (1999, 37). In this type of learning, issues relating to class, race or gender become oblivious, as workplace learning focuses solely on the acquisition of skills to carry out specific tasks and deliver pre-established objectives. Those who sustain this approach to work argue that it promotes fairness and impartiality. However, further analysis would indicate that this approach is based on a concept of work which reinforces individual competitiveness and marginalizes democracy (Brookfield, 2005; Britto, 2006).

Martin (1999) argued that this pseudo-democracy of the workplace has “controlled workers’ knowledge as a commodity and has colonised their hearts and minds as capital resources “(1999, 16). Workers are forced to sell their acquired knowledge and skills in order to stay alive. For many people work is not perceived as a means of self-fulfilment but as a means of survival. This struggle for survival requires a constant re-adaptation to market dictates that in the current socio-economic context are driven by efficiency requirements, cost effectiveness and production demands (Joseph, 2006). Through transforming all aspects of work into a continual learning process of adaptation to market requirements the class

stratification that distinguishes the capitalist and the worker is apparently eliminated or at the very least extremely difficult to visualise (Fenwick, 2001).

The instrumental use of education focused narrowly on incorporating men and women into the capitalist labour market tends to nullify the collective dimension of education which could stimulate critical discussion around issues that affect humanity and the contemporary world (Thompson, 2007). Lifelong learning becomes an individualised pursuit of certificates where workers must assume personal responsibility for acquiring the necessary employability skills and learning required in order to enter the capitalist market-driven world of work (Hake, 1996). Consequently, the possibility of challenging market dictates becomes more difficult as the struggle for individual survival takes precedence over the struggle for social change.

2.4 Lifelong Learning and Government Policy

Field (2000) argued that lifelong learning acquired visibility both as an educational proposal and government policy in the 1970s when it briefly won a degree of political favour. Edgar Faure chaired an international committee convened by UNESCO in 1972 which produced a report entitled 'Learning to Be'. This report introduced the term 'lifelong education' which had at its core a humanistic concept of the "fulfilment of man [sic]" (Field, 2000, 5). Faure's report stated that education should be "universal and lifelong and that education precedes economic development; it also prepares an individual for society" (Merricks, 2001, 6). Education opened its doors to incorporate new themes such as "health education, cultural education and environmental education" (2000, 5) which eventually encouraged governments to take on new initiatives such as paid educational leave and a wide range of certificated courses.

However, Merricks (2001) argued that government interest in lifelong learning did not derive from a focus on the "fulfilment of man [sic]" but from "the rapidly changing technology and economic structure of Western

societies and the consequent need for a more highly trained and flexible workforce” (2001, 11). To create this workforce governments embraced the idea of “education as universal and lifelong with a focus on the goal of creating a Learning Society” (Merricks, 2001, 10). However, Watson & Taylor (2001) claimed that the vision behind the Learning Society was predominantly functional towards readapting the work force to continue to sustain and reproduce the capitalist market-driven world of work.

Throughout the 1990s the focus on readapting the workforce to the changing capitalist environment continued to permeate successive governments’ and political parties’ policies on education. In Britain in 1996, the Labour Party stated that “everyone has an entitlement to a high quality lifelong education; without this entitlement, individuals will be unable to be part of the multi-skilled, creative and adaptable workforce we will need in the twenty-first century” (Labour Party policy statement, 1996). The Conservative Party took this vision even further when it declared that “older people with a background of continuing learning are likely to remain active in the economy and community for longer” (Lifetime Learning: A Policy Framework, 1996). In the Green Paper *“The Learning Age: A renaissance for a New Britain*, the foreword declared that “learning is the key to prosperity for each of us as individuals; an investment in human capital in the knowledge-based global economy” (UK Government, 1998). Tony Blair, Prime Minister at the time, crowned this perception of education by saying that “education is the best economic policy we have” (Dfee, 1998, 9). Blair continued: “we do not think it would be appropriate to make income-contingent loans available to students who do not plan to re-enter the labour market following studies and so would not be in a position to repay” (Dfee, 1998, 30). These declarations were all based on an individualistic-economic vision of education understood as an instrument of preparation of the workforce for the capitalist employment market.

The Labour Party minister for higher education in 1999 urged universities to treat their students as ‘customers’ (Blunkett, 1999), promoting education as

a commodity available on the market to be bought and sold. A recent example of education as a commodity is evidenced in the fees that the UK Coalition Government implemented in English universities. Students can be charged up to nine thousand pounds per year for tuition fees which have to be paid back when they find employment and reach a certain salary level. This policy promotes a process of elitism in the education system and reinforces class division in society where low income families will find it almost impossible to fund and access higher education.

In spite of governments' elitist and employability focus on education, a shift in government policy regarding education can be perceived in a declaration made by UNESCO in 2000. It defined education as an "organised and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding valuable for all the activities of life" (Tight, 2000, 17). On a positive side there is recognition in this definition that education is for life and that the acquisition of skills and knowledge is for all activities in life and not solely for employability purposes.

More recently in 2009, participants at UNESCO's 6th International Conference on Adult Education - CONFINTEA VI, held in Belem in the north of Brazil, declared: "we are convinced and inspired by the critical role of lifelong learning in addressing global and educational issues and challenges" (CONFINTEA VI, 2009, 9). The Belem declaration also concluded that the role of education is to equip people "with the necessary knowledge, capabilities, skills, competencies and values to exercise and advance their rights and take control of their destinies" (2009, 9). These declarations reposition lifelong learning as an integral part of the development of critical citizens where the acquisition of skills and competencies is not solely for the purposes of work but mainly for the recognition of peoples' rights and to gain control of their destinies. The World Social Forum of 2011 in Dakar reiterated the need to guarantee education as a universal right. Participants at the Forum directly opposed the privatisation and commercialisation of education and concluded that the democratization of knowledge constitutes

a basic element in the overall struggle to create democratic societies (WSF, 2011).

Martin & Shaw (2008) argued that the role of education should not be defined by policy makers and governments but rather “it is an issue which requires citizens to act” (Martin & Shaw, 2008, 23). Citizens are acting through social movements such as the WSF to promote education and lifelong learning as a source of really useful knowledge and critical citizenship. However, this is a considerable challenge as the employability focus and the pursuit of certificates puts pressure on learners in order to find work and survive.

Narrowing down education to a mere functional process, supporting economic and vocational concerns, is a challenge for educators who envisage education as the “practice of freedom” (Freire, 1972), an integral part of any authentic process of social change. Allman (2001) advocated in favour of a much broader agenda for education and argued that educators “either engage in the struggle for social and economic justice - the ‘project for humanity’ as some have called it - or we capitulate to capitalism and the continuing dehumanization of millions of human beings” (2001, 162).

Different proposals have emerged in an attempt to reinvent education as a means of promoting critical citizenship, by developing a critical analysis of the world and engaging in struggles for social change. I now examine two particular areas, adult education and critical pedagogy, to verify to what extent they promote ‘really useful knowledge’ and engage in the struggle for social change.

2.5 Adult Education

Cunningham (2005) argued that “adult education is about critically assessing our reality, to name that reality, to devise strategies through adult education to change that reality” (2005, 2). This approach to education aligns to Freire’s definition of education as the practice of freedom which

entails not accepting the world as it is in a fatalistic manner but engaging in the struggle for liberation (Freire, 1994; Mayo, 1995). Adult education should contribute to developing “a critical, even radical view of the world” (Watson & Taylor 1998, 140) which would require a political decision to identify with the struggles of the exploited, disenfranchised and oppressed (Freire, 1994; Mayo, 1995; Crowther, 2005). From this perspective adult education becomes directly linked to the struggle for social change and the creation of a democratic, participatory and egalitarian society. In direct contrast to the individualistic-competitive nature of the current socio-economic model the content and methodology of adult education engaged in the struggle to build a democratic and egalitarian society would be based on collective participatory processes (Crowther, 2005; Kane, 2011) which would involve both educator and learner in the creation of really useful knowledge (Thompson, 2007).

However, similar to lifelong learning, adult education is also an area of dispute (Tight, 2000; Brookfield, 2005). Tight (2000) argued that adult education “implies the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it” (2000, 16). Defining education as an activity of “transmission” could imply that the educator has knowledge which will be passed down to the learner. Freire (1972) described this approach to education as banking education where the learner is a passive recipient of the educator’s knowledge. The definition of what is “worthwhile” would depend on both the educator and the learner’s vision of society and their understanding of the role of education. For those who understand education solely as a means for accessing employment, “worthwhile” education would focus on preparing people to adapt to the capitalist work market. For those who perceive society as a contested space between the oppressed and oppressors (Freire, 1972), “worthwhile” education would be an opportunity to critically analyse society and engage in the struggle to promote a society based on equality and justice (Allman, 2001).

Participants at the 6th International Conference on Adult Education - CONFINTEA VI (2009), promoted by UNESCO, declared that “adult learning and education are also an imperative for the achievement of equity and inclusion, for alleviating poverty and for building equitable, tolerant, sustainable and knowledge-based societies” (CONFINTEA VI, 2009, 9). From this perspective adult education could be perceived as an opportunity to critically analyse the causes of poverty and engage in processes which promote social change. Adult education would be an opportunity for learners to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to challenge injustice and contribute to building a world that is equitable, tolerant and sustainable.

Another important event where adult education was discussed was the World Assembly of the 6th International Council on Adult Education (ICAE, 2009). The Assembly confirmed education as a fundamental human right to the extent that “education and learning enables the realisation of other human rights” (ICAE, 2009). The recognition of adult education as a right indicates that adult education should promote educational processes which stimulate critical citizenship so that educators and learners can engage in the struggle to guarantee the recognition of other rights. The 8th ICAE also declared that “adults have a right to be well informed and to understand the changes that affect their lives, and those of their wider society; to participate in those changes, and to shape them; learning has a key role to play in enabling them to do so” (ICAE, 2009). This declaration promotes learning as a fundamental element of active participation in society focused on social change. Adult education offers the possibility to critically analyse society and can make an important contribution in the discussion regarding alternatives to the current socio-economic model.

In different historical periods educators have been challenged by the socio-economic context and provoked by different social movements to support the struggles of the oppressed. A workers’ journal entitled “The Poor Man’s Guardian” published in 1834, reported that education should focus on “how

are we to get out of our present troubles” (Mayo, 1995, 97). In the same year, 1834, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) declared that the purpose of education was to inform “how we are to break the chains that bind us” (Mayo, 1995, 97), again calling upon education to contribute in the struggle against injustice. SDUK argued that education should “enable men [sic] to judge correctly the real causes of misery and distress so prevalent and to consider what remedies will prove most effectual in removing the causes of those evils” (1995, 98).

These three quotes indicate that as far back as 1834 educators were challenged to promote education focused on creating really useful knowledge which could contribute to social change. The three quotes suggest a clear role for education which is to promote really useful knowledge through supporting those who suffer “misery and distress” (Mayo, 1995, 98) to become aware of the causes of their distress and find ways of removing them.

Adult education is under constant pressure from the competency-based agenda focused on employment and the individualistic approach to self-esteem and confidence building detached from any collective critical analysis of society (Martin, 1995; MacLachlan 2008). In spite of these pressures, adult education can be an arena for engaging in critical thinking and promoting resistance to the current socio-economic model (Thompson, 2007). Adult education offers the opportunity to unveil the oppressive nature of the current socio-economic model and engage in education for liberation (Freire, 1970, 1992; Martin, 2000). In adult education for liberation, political solidarity and engagement replaces the false detachment of professional neutrality and will require “making choices, choosing to take the side of subordinated and marginalised groups” (Crowther & Martin, 2007, 115). These groups can be found in societies throughout the world as both capitalism and the struggle for social change permeate all societies indiscriminately whether in the Majority or Minority World (Kirkwood, 1989; Freire, 1994).

2.6 Critical Pedagogy

Freire (1972, 1992, and 1994) has played an important role in the field of critical education and his influence has surpassed the geographical limits of his native Brazil. His contribution to education, generated in the Majority World, has been inspirational in giving birth to a wide range of educational processes and conceptualisations, both in the Majority and Minority World. Referring to the proliferation of these educational processes in the Minority World he wrote that

“with respect to a democratic pedagogy, there is no reason why the pedagogy cannot be applied just because we are dealing with the First World. A power elite will not enjoy putting in place and practicing a pedagogical form or expression that adds to the social contradictions which reveal the power of the elite classes” (1994, 104).

Some authors argue that an expression of the democratic pedagogy to which Freire refers can be found in critical pedagogy. Cunningham (2005) described critical pedagogy as an “educational action which develops the ability of a group to critically reflect on their environment and to develop strategies to bring about democratic social change in that environment” (2005, 5). Critical pedagogy challenges anti-democratic practices through collective thought and action. This approach to pedagogy is similar to Freire’s concept of “conscientisation” which entails becoming aware of the oppressive structures in society and engaging in the struggle to change those structures.

McLaren (2003) argued that “critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge get constructed the way it does” (2003, 196). Critical pedagogy challenges education as a passive process of knowledge transmission and questions the underpinning structures which sustain the transmission of knowledge. This approach to education requires that educators and learners engage with the mechanisms which attempt to control peoples’ perception of reality.

Shor (1980) argued that people can become aware that much of what happens in the world is under the control of others. However, this awareness does not necessarily generate a critical perception of reality. Critical pedagogy promotes learning which contributes to learners developing the ability to critically analyse the context within which they live and understand the mechanisms which attempt to control their lives.

McLaren (2003) argued that educators and learners who engage with critical pedagogy identify with those who suffer the consequences of injustice, inequality and disempowerment. Critical pedagogy fosters empowerment by helping to unmask the dominant culture which attempts to maintain control over the majority of people. In referring to the social, cultural and political reality of society and the task of critical pedagogy, parallels can be drawn with Freire's concept of critical consciousness which he defined as "a process through which men [sic] who had previously been submerged in reality begin to emerge in order to reinsert themselves with critical awareness" (Freire, 1974, 29-30). By generating critical consciousness people will be able to critically analyse reality and engage in the struggle to intervene in society.

The knowledge generated in critical pedagogy is rooted in a critical analysis of society defined by McLaren (2003) as emancipatory knowledge which he described as "that which helps us understand how social relationships are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege (2003, 197). Knowledge which is generated in societies that are divided between the powerless and the powerful requires an ongoing critical analysis of any proposed learning because all learning can be ideologically contaminated (Allman, 2001; Brookfield, 2005). Critical thinking will therefore require vigilant critical educators who should be part of a "revolutionary movement of educators informed by a principled ethics of compassion and social justice (Allman, 2001, 162).

Critical pedagogy generates knowledge which supports critical engagement in different social contexts. This inevitably brings critical thinkers into contact with power relationships in society. McLaren (2003) argued that “critical pedagogy is fundamentally concerned with understanding the relationship between power and knowledge; a social construction deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations” (2003, 197). To engage in critical pedagogy will require that both educators and learners continually question if they are supporting or challenging the power structures in society through the educational processes they promote.

Knowledge is generated through a wide range of educational processes which can either serve the purpose of enhancing or challenging the current socio-economic model defined by some authors as capitalist globalisation (Youngman, 1986; Joseph, 2006). Consequently, the vision and analysis of society of educators involved in a particular educational context will determine their educational purpose. Educators engaged in critical pedagogy claim to identify with learning which generates really useful knowledge where both educators and learners promote a critical analysis of society and challenge injustice and inequality. From this perspective critical pedagogy could be considered an expression of radical educational practices that are supportive of and contribute to social change.

2.7 Radical Education

Freire (1994) argued that “we are surrounded by a pragmatic discourse that would have us adapt to the facts of reality. Dreams and utopia are called not only useless, but positively impeding” (1994, 1). This quote is a challenge to educators who identify with radical social change. This challenge becomes even more urgent as critical education is substituted with “the rationale of conferences preoccupied with the management of the education marketplace, in which the talk is about strategic plans and targeting techniques, about franchising and credit transfers” (Taylor, 1993, 21). In the current socio-economic context education has become a

commodity and the focus on employment in the capitalist world of work has become the dominant trend accepted by many as normality (Thompson, 2007).

Adult education and lifelong learning are gradually being absorbed into the capitalist employability market whose main purpose is to maintain and reproduce the present system (Martin, 2006). The “Davos class” discussed in chapter one seeks to use education as a force for reproducing the current system encouraging expressions of lifelong learning and adult education which serve the needs of the capitalist labour market and legitimate the current social order (Youngman, 1986). In this context of legitimating the current social order, adult education and lifelong learning acquire value in terms of their economic function where learning is for survival purposes in the capitalist world of work (Martin, 2006).

A radical redefinition of the role of education would transform education into a source of critical analysis of the current socio-economic order and an important contributor to social change. Embracing the struggle to promote a radical shift in education will be an ongoing challenge for critical educators because education is experiencing

“a fairly determined departure from left-radical, progressive and even liberal definitions of education as a way of assisting in the democratic creation of knowledge and the development of practical and critical intelligence, in favour of various kinds of training and measurements of competency” (Thompson, 1995, 2).

The competency focus in education reinforces the individualistic competitive nature of the current socio-economic model which thrives on breaking up any form of collective participation for social change. Education focused on developing training and competencies situates educational activities on the level of adjusting to the immediate needs of the current socio-economic system and reinforces the logic of competition and

individualism (Britto, 2006). In order to challenge this individualistic and competitive approach to learning, critical educators together with learners would need to promote educational processes based on a collective critical analysis of the socio-economic context in which they are both situated and identify possibilities of social change.

Cunningham (2005) provokingly argued that in the current socio-economic context most educators' discourse "is framed by the work place; learning for earning is the goal" (2005, 1). The economic vocational tendency in education entails domesticating learners as opposed to promoting collective critical intelligence. Engaging with education to adapt learners to the capitalist work market can lead to a frustrating experience for educators that identify with radical education.

However, Cunningham (1995) argued that educators identified with radical education should understand their contribution as part of a long term process of liberation: "we should never have assumed, or permitted others to assume a direct or automatic sequential relation between radical education and macro-level social change" (Cunningham, 1995, 19). Freire (1992) had previously advised that "winning the fight is a process of which it can never be said we've won, period; when this point is absolutised, the revolution is paralysed" (1992, 175).

Reinventing education which promotes the development of critical intelligence requires taking a radical stance to challenge the dominant trend in education focused on training and competency measurements. The focus of radical education is to promote human agency and political growth to challenge what is generally taken for granted (Freire, 1970; Mayo, 1995; Thompson, 2007). In promoting human agency and political growth, radical education becomes part of the broader struggle for justice and the creation of a new world order (Martin, 1995; WSF, 2011).

Educators identified with radical education cannot remain impartial when confronted with the reality of the current socio-economic model (Pilger, 2003; Joseph, 2006; Boff, 2007). During the past forty years in Latin American countries many educators embraced the struggle for radical social change in extremely adverse circumstances. In this adverse context, popular education emerged as an expression of radical education in the struggles for democracy and citizenship. Since then popular education has spread throughout the Majority and Minority Worlds, with a considerable contribution coming from the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Popular education has found expression in a wide range of social movements throughout the world as a collective learning process for social change and from this perspective has a valuable contribution to make in analysing the empirical data generated in this research.

Chapter 3: Popular Education: A Political-Pedagogical Process

This third chapter discusses popular education in the context of radical education rooted in the struggles for social change. The historical development of popular education in the UK is examined against the backdrop of poverty and oppression. The rediscovery of popular education in Latin American countries is discussed with a particular focus on the contribution of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. The chapter concludes arguing that popular education is a collective learning process for social change and provides a useful theoretical perspective for this research.

3.1 Popular Education and Social Change

Allman (2001) distinguished between two forms of educational practice: “limited/reproductive praxis and critical/revolutionary praxis” (2001, 85). The former serves the purpose of legitimating a particular socio-economic model while the latter challenges that model. Allman (2001) argued that an alternative educational approach was required in order to engage with education as a critical/revolutionary practice. Popular education could be considered an alternative educational approach in the sense that it does not align to the current employability strand promoted by mainstream education curricula (Martin, 1995; Britto, 2006). On the contrary, popular education could be described as a critical/revolutionary practice because it combines what Freire (1972) termed “action-reflection-action” which entails reflecting critically on reality and taking the necessary action to change that reality in order to benefit those who are oppressed.

In Latin American countries, during the military dictatorships of the 1970s, popular education played a key role in the struggle for democracy and the recognition of basic human rights (Gadotti, 2005). In an analysis of three case studies of popular education in the north of Brazil, Scanlon (2008)

argued that popular education was firmly rooted in the struggles of ordinary people, the oppressed. Similarities with these struggles for social change in Latin American countries can be traced as far back as the late 19th century in Europe (Silver, 1965) indicating that the context of human struggle for social change was then, and is today, the backdrop for popular education.

The Popular Education Network described popular education as education which is “rooted in the real struggles of ordinary people; overtly political and critical of the status quo, and committed to progressive social and political change” (Crowther et al, 2005,3). Popular education focuses on generating really useful knowledge by stimulating a critical awareness of the unjust and oppressive structures in society and urges those who are downtrodden or oppressed to take action to transform those structures (Peloso, 2001; Thompson, 2007).

Popular education identifies with educational processes that focus on promoting a world of justice and equality (Cunningham, 1994; Peloso, 2001). These educational processes are comprised of a pedagogy and curriculum which “come out of concrete experience and material interests of people in communities of resistance and struggle” (Crowther, 1999, 4). Popular education embraces the struggle for social change as a key reference for collective learning, focused primarily on group as distinct from individual learning (Peloso, 2001).

Popular education strives to “connect the local and the global and deliberately sets out to foster international solidarity by making these local struggles part of a wider international struggle for justice and peace” (Crowther et al 2005, 4). While promoting international solidarity popular education has also generated a wide range of interpretations in the different historical and cultural contexts where it has been practiced (Kirkwood, 1989). At times it was and continues to be used inappropriately, in some cases reduced solely to a series of participatory techniques dislocated from its ideological and political roots (Kane, 2004). In spite of

these apparently contradictory attempts, the upsurge of popular education over the last forty years, with a significant contribution coming from Latin American countries, has confirmed and reinvented its visceral link with the struggles of the oppressed (Freire, 1992; Allman, 2001; Peloso, 2001; Crowther, 2005).

3.2 Popular Education - UK Context

This research generated empirical data in the village of Renton in the West of Scotland. The village is situated in a social, economic, cultural and environmental context considerably distinct from that of Latin American countries. However, the current socio-economic model exists globally, filtered locally through different historical and cultural processes (Galeano, 1986; Pilger, 2002). Examining interpretations and expressions of popular education in the Minority World as well as the Majority World can help situate more precisely the Renton community-based experience of the past twenty years and its possible identification with popular education.

In the 18th century, working class people in the UK did not have the right to formal education and some educators and members of the aristocracy argued that education would “confuse and agitate working people” (Flowers, 2004,2). The aristocracy did not want to alter their privileged status in society and giving the poor access to education might challenge that status. In order to justify and sustain a class-divided society the aristocracy found support in some prominent people at the time, one of whom was Bernard de Mandeville who wrote in 1723 in his ‘Essay on Charity and Charity-Schools’ that

“the poor do not need any education; if they have learning, they become too proud to work; education makes servants claim higher wages while at the same time they do not want to do servile work; though it might be reasonable to teach reading, the teaching of writing cannot possibly be justified” (Mandeville cited in Flowers, 2004, 3).

During the second half of the 19th century in Britain a royal commission was appointed to “inquire into the present state of popular education in England, and to consider and report what measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and cheap elementary instruction to all classes of the people” (Flowers, 2004,1). This quote indicates that on the one hand education was a privilege enjoyed by the few while on the other there was an interest in diffusing some form of education to all of society. The diffusion of education to all classes in society, in this particular case, consisted of a top-down process which would sustain the control of the aristocracy over the working class and guarantee that servants did not claim higher wages but continued to do servile work. The type of sound, cheap and elementary education which Flowers (2004) referred to indicates that education served the purpose of legitimating the class-divided society and consequently did not engage in any process of social change.

Neuburg (1971) argued that a dominant idea in the 18th and 19th centuries was that society had pre-determined divisions, basically, rich and poor. To disturb these divisions by granting access to education would “eventually destroy society and the only way to preserve it was to deny education to the poor” (1971, 2). Some religious groups argued that the poor “might read the Scriptures and earn a useful though humble living” (Neuburg, 1971, 2). Learning to read in this context seemed to have the function of convincing the poor to accept their condition while justifying through a debatable interpretation of the Scriptures, the inevitability and consequent sustainability of a society divided between rich and poor.

Griffith Jones, a minister of the Church of England in 1742, argued that the poor should have access to “cheap education, only moral and religious branches of it to make them good people, useful members of Society, faithful servants of God, and men [sic] and heirs of eternal life” (Neuburg, 1971, 6). Reinforcing this mixture of religious beliefs and subjugation of the working class, George Chapman, an English writer, declared that “labourers, servants and the greatest part of manufacturers need not a very extensive

education because subordination is necessary in society; they ought to submit to their masters or superiors in everything that is lawful” (Neuburg, 1971, 9). The diffusion of the inevitability of social division (Mayo 1995) and the necessary domination of one class over the other (Joseph, 2006; Albert 2008), was the focus of this form of top-down popular education. It was described as popular only because it was imposed on the poor. This type of popular education was further justified as bringing “happiness due to consciousness of doing our duty in the station in which we are placed” (Neuberg 1971, 10) using education to justify the inevitability of the poor having to remain poor.

It would seem that reluctance towards poorer classes accessing education confirmed that education contributed to generating awareness about the unjust and oppressive structures in society. Historically, the aristocracy and their allies seemed to be aware of the power inherent in education to the extent that they

“sensed the power to affect society that was implicit in mass literacy, and reacted against proposals for any extension of education by arguing that the status quo could only be maintained if the poor were kept in ignorance” (Neuberg, 1971, 5).

This underlying belief and fear that education of the poor would subvert the class-based society and bring about radical change also influenced those who favoured education of the poor. The Reformers and Church schools in general aligned to the belief that the class system in society had to be maintained and that education should confirm and sustain that belief. The Christian stance was that education was perceived as an answer to the problems of ignorance, but equally as an important element in the promotion of an ordered Christian society in which “a pious and hard-working labouring class was content with its lot” (Neuburg, 1971, 6). Denying the hard-working labouring class access to education was also justified through the religious belief that poor and rich were two

predetermined categories in society and this division was not to be challenged or changed.

However, to maintain their privileged state the rich required that the poor should work in their favour and consequently some form of education had to be implemented to develop or increase the workers' skills. The Bishop of Bristol, Joseph Butler, declared that "it is most manifest that a Christian and useful Education to the children of the Poor is very necessary to their Piety, Virtue and honest Livelihood" (Neuburg, 1971, 7). This declaration was supportive of the poor accessing education for the purpose of sustaining their livelihood which they earned by working for the rich, but did not make any mention of injustice or oppression to which the poor were subjected or even less to the possibility of challenging the class-based society which sustained the unjust division between rich and poor.

Control of the poor and fear of social change pervaded the dominant approach to education in the 18th and 19th centuries in the UK. Some authors argue that this control continues to date and is exercised through the media, religious groups, schools and certain community groups (Willis, 1977; Youngman, 1986; Storey, 1998). Fear of social change can also be perceived in formal educational settings where the curriculum has a strong focus on adapting people to the capitalist employment market (Martin, 1995; Britto, 2006). Promoting critical reflection about the unjust structures in society and the causes of oppression and injustice has become a rarity in many educational settings (Brookfield, 2005; Thompson, 2007).

Historically, popular education was implemented by those in power to control the oppressed and guarantee continuity of a class-based society where the rich exploited the poor. An alternative expression of popular education emerged in the struggle of the oppressed for social change, promoted mainly by a wide range of social movements. In this research popular education is perceived as a stimulus for the oppressed to challenge

the oppressive structures in society and engage in the struggle for social change (Scanlon, 2008; Kane, 2011).

3.3 Popular Education and Movements for Social Change

A more defined class society emerged in the 19th century with the working class organised in trade unions. Shepherd Smith, a prominent figure in the 1830s, wrote: “the trade unions, whatever one might think of them, were going to change the pattern of government and trade; every strike, every failure is teaching them wisdom” (Silver, 1965, 202). Different historical movements influenced social change in the 19th century among which were Owenism, Chartism, the Suffragette movement and later the trade unions who engaged in a more confrontational role with those in power to the extent that “a distinctively working class movement was not merely a struggle against insecurity: it was reaching out for the power of control” (Silver, 1965, 202). Even with differences between Owenites, Chartists, Suffragettes and Trade Unionists in terms of control and power in society, one of the most lasting effects of Owen’s ideas regarding the working class was “to persuade it that it had such power, and had, among other things, the absolute power and right to educate and be educated” (Silver, 1965, 202).

A significant contribution to social change at the turn of the 19th century came from the Mechanics Institutes. These Institutes were created to promote “the diffusion of science among the working classes” (Silver, 1965, 210). A wide range of expressions of fear and doubt emerged about the aims of these Institutes, one of which declared: “the different ranks of society will be commingled and annihilated - power will take the place of right, and all will be confusion and anarchy” (Silver, 1965, 211). However, Silver (1965) argued that through time the Institutes distanced themselves from any form of radical change in society and did not present a threat to the aristocracy and controlling classes. In 1832 the Institutes’ AGM reported that “many who had regarded the Institution with aversion, now considered it

not only harmless but useful” (Silver, 1965, 215). The Institutes eventually turned their attention to upgrading workers’ employability skills and opted to support the more literate mechanic leaving the majority of workers out of reach of the different topics that were discussed. Any relevant issue relating to everyday life of the workers or political issues were not discussed to the extent that “religion and politics became the terror of Mechanics Institutes” (1965, 216).

Working class support for the Mechanics Institutes gradually dwindled due to their refusal to tackle issues that most affected the workers. Their constitutions stated that “the object proposed to be obtained is the instruction of the Members in the principles of the Arts they practice, and in the various branches of science and useful Knowledge, with the exception of Religion and Politics” (1965, 222). This declaration clearly distanced the Institutes from any possible questioning of the injustice inflicted upon the workers who, as a result of low wages and a rapid increase in urbanization, were living in squalor and extreme poverty. The Institutes became training centres for more literate workers to improve their employability skills to better serve their employers.

The individualistic upgrading of employability skills was supported by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) in its publication ‘The Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties’. The book demonstrated how certain people became successful even although they started their lives in poverty and this was a model to follow (Silver, 1965). The book served the purpose of guaranteeing the continuity of the class-based society as well as convincing the poor that their condition was to be accepted but could change depending on their own individual abilities. Poverty was promoted as a possible springboard which could lead to success in life: “an easy and luxurious existence does not train men (sic) to effort or encounter with difficulty. Indeed so far from poverty being a misfortune, it may, by vigorous self-help, be converted even into a blessing” (Silver, 1965, 220). The Owenites, Chartists, Suffragettes, Mechanics Institutes and the SDUK all

participated in some form of popular education albeit with different foci. Their approach to education was defined as popular because it related to the poor, the oppressed, those who suffered injustice and not necessarily because it engaged in creating the ability to critically analyse society and promote social change.

The Chartists eventually distanced themselves from the individualistic skills-based approach to education and proposed “a class commitment to education, not to education at random, but to well-defined concepts of democratic, popular education” (Silver, 1965, 232). Perhaps the most significant contribution to education by the Chartist movement was “education by collision” (Crowther, 2002). This entailed confronting the dispossessed with the realities of society in which they held no political rights and little social justice (Silver, 1965). A wide range of social movements emerged from these ‘collisions’ among which were the Labour Colleges which attempted to “institutionalise a radical form of education which could create critically conscious and militant workers” (Crowther, 2002, 31). Later, together with the Workers Educational Association (WEA) in the second half of the 20th century, the Labour Colleges gave birth to a new form of popular education identified more in the terms of radical adult education. Both the Labour Colleges and WEA were rooted in the firm belief that a fundamental characteristic of popular education was the need to relate education with politics (Crowther, 2002).

As a result of being actively involved in the world of ‘collisions’ education became a source of contention and had to redefine its role. On the one hand it was used by those in power to hinder social advancement of the poor. On the other hand, albeit in fewer cases, education was an instrument of social change which focused on generating critical knowledge. Critical knowledge for the Chartists was defined as “knowledges calculated to make you free” (Crowther, 2002, 30). This critical knowledge emerged from the working class movements of struggle for better living conditions out-with the grasps of the state. At a trade union conference in Scotland, John MacLean, a

teacher who taught evening classes on Marxism to the workers on the Clydeside in Glasgow, declared

“it is my hope that you delegates will become just as aware as the masters are of the need for specific forms of education. The state provides an elementary and higher education that certainly needs purging and overhauling: but the state, because it must be a capitalist state so long as capitalism endures, will not provide a full education to equip workers to carry on the working-class movement or to fight for the ending of capitalism itself” (Martin, 1995, 92)

Popular education has an important contribution to make in the struggle to challenge capitalism and eradicate oppression. In this struggle Freire (1972) argued that ‘conscientization’ (Freire, 1972) is crucial, which he defined as people, mainly the oppressed, becoming aware of the oppressive structures in society and taking action to transform them. Freire’s contribution to the resurgence of popular education as a crucial element in the struggle for social change has gained worldwide recognition and merits further examination (Torres, 1999).

3.4 Freire and the Resurgence of Popular Education

During the last forty years popular education has found a powerful and meaningful expression in the Majority World, particularly in Latin American countries (Peloso, 2001; Gadotti, 2005; PEN, 2005). In Spanish and Portuguese, the two languages spoken in Latin American countries, the word popular means “of the people”, focusing on specific groups in society. According to Kane (2001) these groups are “the working class, the unemployed, peasants, the poor and sometimes even the lower middle-class: it excludes and stands in contradistinction to the well-off middle-class and the rich” (2001, 8). In the Latin American context of popular education the word popular acquires an explicit political definition at an organisational level expressed in urban neighbourhood associations,

indigenous groups, rural landless movements, quilombolas (communities of black people, descendents from slaves), women's groups and many other groups. The term popular defines these organisations as "of the people" but also relates to the struggle for social change which is a characteristic of these organisations. It is in this context of the struggle of popular organisations for social change that popular education evolves (Kane, 2001; Crowther, 2005; Scanlon, 2008).

In Latin American countries popular education entails engaging in educational processes based on action-reflection-action (Freire, 1972). These educational processes are an integral part of the struggles of popular organisations to the extent that the struggle for social change itself becomes a popular education experience (Scanlon, 2008; Crowther & Scandrett 2011; Kane 2011). The resurgence of popular education in Latin American countries has confirmed popular education as a radical educational process rooted in the struggles of the subjugated classes in society.

Freire's contribution to popular education has influenced educational practices throughout the world. The relevance of his contribution can also be justified by the fact that his seminal book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* published in 1970 has since been translated into twenty languages (Schugurensky, 1998; Freire & Macedo, 2000). Freire initiated his pedagogical activities in literacy programmes in the Northeast of Brazil where the vast majority of the population lived in dire poverty, with little or no access to education. The combination of physical and educational poverty was the backdrop against which Freire created an educational methodology which challenged both of these issues.

The struggles for democracy, recognition of human rights, participation and sharing of knowledge served as the basis on which Freire created his methodology. The methods and techniques he applied included learning to read and write words and numbers relevant to everyday living, establishing

a political-pedagogical relationship between the learning processes and everyday life. These learning processes were not only descriptive but also critical of peoples' everyday life, stimulating a critical analysis of both the *how* and *why* of the different situations discussed.

Freire's methodology expressed his political-pedagogical stance in response to poverty and oppression, within a specific country, Brazil, during a particular historical period. As a result of his political-pedagogical stance Freire was exiled for nearly twenty years and during his exile he continued to discuss his pedagogy in countries where he lived and in others where he was invited to deliver talks, seminars and workshops. One of Freire's greatest legacies is perhaps that he has

“been able to communicate and connect with so many people and to help them see that there is something called education and something called poverty and oppression, and that there is a relationship between the two, and that this can be one of liberation or one of further oppression” (Torres, 1999, 249).

Due to the significance of Freire's contribution in the field of popular education, it is important to capture some of the basic concepts contained in the methodology he created so as to grasp their relevance in a variety of cultures where they have been implemented. Freire (1970) used terms to which he gave specific meanings in order to express his ideas. Central to his analysis of society are the terms oppressed and oppressors, both of whom he considered to be “manifestations of dehumanization” (1970, 32). He applied the word “true” as opposed to “false” to his concept of knowledge and argued that the popular educator not only identified with the oppressed but also generated “true” knowledge which contributed to liberation from the oppressive structures in society. Freire (1970) argued that the oppressors disseminated “false” knowledge which they transformed into myths to the extent that “the oppressed, having internalised the image of the oppressor become fearful of freedom and are at one and the same time themselves

and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalised” (1970, 28) and as a result the oppressors strengthened their control over the oppressed.

“Dialogue” is a term which Freire used to indicate “the communication that goes on between two or more people who are genuinely thinking and working together on some aspect of their lived reality” (Kirkwood, 1989, 141). This dialogue would generate true knowledge rooted in a political-pedagogical process of “action-reflection-action”. Freire defined the process of action-reflection-action as “praxis”, referring to a term used by Marx to indicate a combination of critical thinking and action to transform the unjust relations of production and accumulation of wealth in the capitalist society (Allman, 2001; Joseph, 2006).

Freire’s educational methodology clearly identified with the struggles of the oppressed and challenged the oppressor: “problem-posing education does not and cannot serve the interests of the oppressor. No oppressive order could permit the oppressed to begin to question: Why?” (Freire, 1970, 67). When the oppressed begin to question oppression they initiate a process of ‘conscientization’ (Freire, 1970; 1994) which Cunningham (2005) described as “people becoming aware of the unjust and oppressive reality within which they are living and collectively deciding to take action to transform it“(2005, 5).

Popular education in the Majority World emerged in the struggles of popular movements for social change but in the current socio-economic context popular education is a legitimate concept and methodology for questioning educational practices throughout the world. Engaging in educational processes to “unveil the truth” (Freire 1994, 1) in the struggle for social change, has proved valuable not only in Latin America but also around the globe. Findsen (1998) argued that “many of his [Freire] concepts have been used in less oppressive contexts but where social stratification in societies is particularly marked” (1998, 12).

Freire's contribution to popular education in Latin American countries has given new impetus to the methodology and practice of popular education in the Majority World. However, the definitions of Majority and Minority World are not so distinct: "we are experiencing a rapid Third Worldinization of North America, where inner cities resemble more and more the shantytowns of the Third World with a high level of poverty, violence, illiteracy, human exploitation, homelessness and human misery" (Macedo, 1994, xiii). In this context of a "Third Worldinization" of the Minority World popular education emerges as an opportunity to engage in collective learning processes which can stimulate social change.

3.5 Popular Education - A Collective Learning Process for Social Change

People involved in popular education engage with the struggles of the oppressed for justice in different socio-economic and cultural contexts. One of the aims of popular education in these struggles is to produce and socialise knowledge from a critical perspective (South African Popular Education Programme, 2012). Popular education stimulates critical thinking and the ability to analyse each particular socio-economic and cultural context and elaborate proposals for social change which will benefit those who are oppressed (Scanlon, 2008; Kane 2011). Popular education will only be of interest to the oppressed because they are the ones who can free themselves and their oppressors (Freire, 1972).

Popular education values knowledge which people acquire through life experience. However, knowledge acquired through life experience is fragmented and controlled (Peloso, 2001). Those who participate in social movements engaged in the struggle for social change must be aware of this fragmentation and control of knowledge because the perception of reality can become confined to that of the oppressors. As a result the oppressed could perceive reality from a fatalistic stance accepting the world as it is because they have been led to believe that that it is the only way it can be

(Freire, 1970; Mayo, 1995). The oppressed could also become convinced that the only way to survive is to become like the oppressor and reproduce injustice and oppression (Freire, 1970). Engaging in popular education is also an opportunity for educators and learners to critically analyse possible contradictions that the oppressed may encounter in the struggle for social change and promote an alternative society based on justice and equality.

Popular education has a specific methodology which incorporates participatory techniques but in the context of the collective struggle for justice, equality and liberation (Kane, 2004; Gadotti, 2005). This methodology engages with groups of people so that they can become authentic 'subjects' of change (Freire, 1972; Kane, 2011) where both educators and learners share knowledge and together develop their ability to critically analyse their socio-economic context and promote social change.

One of the characteristics of popular education is collective learning through local struggles. In Brazil it is also known as "trabalho de base" - "grassroots work" which entails engaging with local people in their struggles for social change and creating really useful knowledge. Local community groups provide an opportunity to channel discontent and generate proposals that can contribute to social change. However, local community groups, popular movements, trade unions and any group that engages in the struggle for social change will be challenged in their attempts to create a new organisation of society. Popular education is a source of support for these groups to link into wider fora that identify with social change to strengthen and support the struggle at local level.

Popular education challenges the predetermined fatalistic approach to interpreting reality (Freire, 1992; Mayo, 1995). The oppressed do not suffer the consequences of socio-economic and cultural oppression out of choice but as a result of unjust oppressive structures in society (Pilger, 2003). To change the unjust oppressive structures in society will require that the

oppressed collectively engage in the struggle to overcome their condition of socio-economic and cultural oppression. Popular education is a collective learning process for social change and an integral part of this learning process promotes the engagement of the oppressed in their struggle to create a society free of injustice and oppression.

Part of popular education methodology is collective participation in the struggles of ordinary people to generate community empowerment (Craig et al, 2011; Kane, 2011). The leaders of the Renton Community-based Organisations claim that local people have empowered themselves in the village through taking ownership of local assets and control over the socio-economic development in the village. The next chapter discusses community empowerment as a possible source of liberation or integration in the struggle for social change.

Chapter 4: Community Empowerment: Liberation or Integration

This fourth chapter examines to what extent community empowerment contributes to the struggle for social change. Local peoples' involvement in elaborating government policies and participating in government agendas are discussed and how this involvement and participation can placate or bolster communities. The chapter highlights different interpretations of community empowerment some of which can manipulate, while others can enhance participatory democracy. The chapter concludes by arguing that community empowerment is an intensely political and contentious issue but also an integral part of a political-pedagogical process for social change.

4.1 Community Empowerment - An Ambiguous Term

Language and meaning influence community practice because “the words we use matter; they tell us how to think and what to do” (Martin, 2008, 12). Community and empowerment are two contested words which have become an integral part of government, business and voluntary sector agendas (Craig et al, 2011). Troyna (1994) warned of the ambiguous use of the term empowerment “hijacked and rearticulated within the political discourse of the New Right” (1994, 19). Despite the apparent interest to incorporate the terminology of community empowerment, active participation and partnership with local communities into government policy and agenda, the meaning of these terms remains open to a wide range of interpretations (Collins, 1997; Brock et al, 2001).

Local People Leading (Lpl), an organisation comprised of groups and individuals who campaigned for an independent community sector in Scotland, defined community empowerment as “the development of strong active communities which can take action by themselves or with others to tackle issues which concern them” (Lpl 2008). This definition reinforces the

importance of communities engaging with different partners to improve life in their communities. However, this same definition could be interpreted as embracing the current UK Coalition Government's discourse and policy enshrined in the "Big Society" proposal. This proposal promotes the creation of community trusts, foundations and social enterprises to assume responsibility for a wide range of public services for which the state has the ultimate responsibility (Cameron, 2009).

Lpl argued that the aim of community empowerment was "the devolution of leadership and power to communities" (Lpl, 2008). This definition indicates that communities would receive power to have authority and control over their own development. However, Lpl goes on to declare that "community empowerment is not something that can be given or provided by external authorities or agencies" (Lpl, 2008). This second declaration from Lpl seems to contradict the first one which talked of devolution. The second declaration seems to deny the possibility of devolution and that community empowerment will only occur through active engagement of communities in the struggle to claim leadership and power.

Community empowerment has become a recurring theme in government policies, channelled through government organisations and agencies such as Community Planning Partnerships or more recently the UK Coalition Government's 'Big Society' proposal (2009). This proposal argued in favour of a new relationship between the state and society and "the first step is to redistribute power and control from the central state and its agencies to individuals and local communities" (Cameron, 2009). This declaration could be interpreted as the government offering communities the opportunity to assume control over their own socio-economic development. However, it could also be interpreted as the state downsizing and disassociating itself from the responsibility of delivering public services:

"free market, neo-liberal, New Right strategies aim to roll back the state and community participation is related to goals of cost-cutting/cost

reduction for the public sector delivered through voluntary/unpaid work and self-help initiatives to increase project/programme efficiency” (Craig & Mayo, 1995, 4).

Transferring responsibility from the state to communities to deliver public services can create a false impression of community empowerment both on the part of government, perhaps intentionally, and in communities that lack a more critical awareness of their role in relation to social change. Through taking on responsibility for delivering public services, communities assume the onus of guaranteeing the necessary financial and human resources to deliver these services with quality and efficiency, but these processes remain open to government inspection. While giving the impression of a decentralisation of service delivery, it could be argued that the government is mobilising “a reserve army of support effectively and on its own terms to guarantee a recentralisation of political control” (Taylor, 2011, 292).

In order to access the necessary funds to deliver public services, communities are forced to engage in competitive fund-bidding processes. These processes absorb communities’ time and resources and require attending training sessions focused on management, finance, administration and business. With the responsibility falling on the communities’ ability to respond to public demand for high quality service delivery, the state is “absolved from its role as the ultimate responsible for delivering public services” (Taylor, 2011). Control over the delivery of public services by local communities could be a form of empowerment. However, transferring the delivery of public services to local communities also presents the state with the opportunity to reduce or gradually eliminate funding for communities as the communities themselves become responsible for their own financial sustainability.

Community empowerment derives from the collective struggles of people and communities engaged in building a just and equitable society (Collins, 1997; Crowther et al 1999; Martin, 2006; Shaw 2008). Government

involvement in community empowerment could be considered contradictory because communities engaged in the struggle for a just and equitable society are critical of the current socio-economic model and of governments that support it (Young, 1996). Shaw (2008) discussed community empowerment in government policy and argued that “when community empowerment is official government policy it is arguably time to create some critical distance rather than seek shelter or approval as many have done” (Shaw, 2008, 2).

Incorporating community empowerment into government policy is the result of many years of struggle by communities. However, it would seem that governments have merely incorporated the terminology into the mainstream discourse and not the original meaning of community empowerment which was to bolster the collective struggle of the oppressed for social change (Ledwith, 2011).

4.2 Community Empowerment and the State

Recent experiences in the exercise of participatory democracy in some Latin American countries are relevant to the issue of community empowerment and its relation to the state. With the advent of politically left and left-of-centre governments coming to power in Latin America during the last thirty years, the issue of community empowerment has become more complex. Many of the recently elected political leaders were active in popular movements. These leaders had a confrontational relationship with the state and in opting to participate in government institutions, created a situation of crisis and the need to revisit the role of the state and communities in the struggle for social change (Peloso, 2001; Gadotti, 2004; Kane, 2005; Scanlon, 2008).

In spite of former community activists participating in government institutions in Latin American countries, popular movements and communities continued to engage in struggles for social change (Peloso,

2001). The task of organising the population in the struggle for control over its socio-economic development continued as did the need for a continual critical analysis of society, albeit in a context which should have been more supportive of community empowerment. Participation in government institutions did not eliminate the challenge to generate really useful knowledge; former community activists involved in the state structure had the opportunity to support community empowerment and help unveil the contradictions inherent to participating in government institutions while supporting popular movements for social change (Freire, 1994; Thompson, 2007; Duffy, 2012).

Since 1997 UK governments have engaged with communities through Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) which later became Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). Lpl (2008) argued that “Community Planning Partnerships are a unique opportunity for the democratic empowerment of our communities” (Lpl, 2008, 6.02). However, Taylor (2011) argued that CPPs were highly contested and government-controlled spaces used to transfer responsibilities from the state to communities (Taylor, 2011). Collins’ (1997) analysis of CPPs indicated that community empowerment could occur in these spaces but only if the community representatives had the ability to formulate viable proposals and had the backing of local communities to put pressure on the CPPs in order to guarantee their proposals.

In 2009, the Scottish Government published its Community Empowerment Action Plan declaring that “Government in Scotland has a shared role to provide strategic leadership in promoting and supporting community empowerment” (Scottish Government, 2009). One of the main aspects of the Action Plan is that “successful community empowerment depends on investment in on-going support, training and individual capacity building” (Scottish Government, 2009). The term community empowerment would seem to indicate the acquisition and exercise of power by a group of people. Consequently, any form of support would be based on a collective approach,

enhancing collective organisational structures and relevant educational processes. The Scottish Government's policy regarding training and capacity building continues to focus on the individual and could be interpreted as avoiding underlying collective socio-economic issues such as inequality, poverty and injustice.

Thompson (1997) challenges the individualised focus of public policy which insists on "a pre-occupation with training, or knowledge for 'personhood' and individual self-fulfilment" (1997, 143). This tendency reduces inequality, poverty and injustice to individual problems and avoids a deeper critical analysis of their root causes in society (Pilger, 2002; Albert, 2008). The focus on the individual in public policy is also a means of avoiding any collective challenge to the current socio-economic order. Martin (1987) argued that communities should be aware of government policies which continually attempt to reduce social inequalities to "personal troubles of milieu" rather than "public issues of social structure" (1987, 13).

Ledwith (2011) argued that the new government policy context presents a challenge for communities to remain faithful to the agenda for radical social change. In times of tight financial budgets and cuts in every aspect of social policy and under the guise of participation, governments are offering communities the opportunity to deliver a wide range of services. Sharing information with communities about the lack of financial resources and inviting those who access services to participate in government created spaces could be defined as a form of participation and community empowerment (Arnstein, 1969). However, the mere creation of spaces to discuss these issues does not address the imbalances in power between communities and the state (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001). The state controls budgets and has a staff of paid workers at its disposal while communities struggle to survive on intermittent and insecure short term funding resources with which to participate in these government-created spaces on a voluntary basis.

Collective spaces of governance have emerged recently in the ambiguous context of partnership. Brock et al (2001) referred to them as “invited spaces” (2001, 25) where governments claim to promote decentralisation. In the context of financial cuts in the public sector and governments’ policies of community participation, invited spaces are a convenient and pragmatic approach for governments to transfer the delivery of public services to communities. In invited spaces the remit generally remains confined to ensuring the efficiency of service delivery. Most decisions reinforce government policy and communities become mere observers or spectators as opposed to active citizens with equal power and the ability to make decisions (Taylor, 2011). Brock et al (2001) also discussed “created spaces” where communities establish their own remit. However, the effectiveness of these spaces, whether government-invited or community-created, in relation to social change, will depend on the ability of each community to elaborate proposals for social change and galvanise support both within the community and with appropriate partners to guarantee the implementation of their proposals.

Ledwith (2011) argued that by concentrating on local service delivery and practical projects, communities tend to operate on “principles of amelioration rather than transformation” (2011, 284). At times, perhaps unwittingly, communities can be attracted to short-term actions proposed by the state that give the impression of contributing to their general well-being. These short-term actions can be prejudicial because communities are “distracted by the symptoms of injustice and fail to reach the root causes and in so doing give free reign to the *status quo*” (Ledwith, 2011, 284). This distraction towards short-term actions is exemplified in Collins’ analysis of the Ferguslie Park experience which showed how a government-controlled partnership replaced “a long standing community organisation with forms of representation more amenable to its aims” (Atkinson & Cope, 1997, 215).

Shaw (2008) argued that more involvement by communities with state organisations and agencies “may result in less democracy leading to

entanglement or incorporation, producing an unhealthy preoccupation with the business of the state at the expense of local democracy (2008, 6). By participating in government policy-making or taking responsibility for the delivery of public services, communities must be aware of becoming absorbed in administrative and bureaucratic tasks distracting them from their historical role to engage with the oppressed in the struggles for radical social change (Ledwith, 2011).

4.3 Community Empowerment and Participatory Democracy

Different governments and organisations claim that local peoples' participation is essential in order to guarantee effective partnership work and community empowerment (Patterson, 2010). White (2000) argued that some forms of participation focus on "technical solutions that obscure the politics of participation" (2000, 143) bureaucratising and at times manipulating community empowerment. On many occasions the mainstreaming of participation in government policy and practice reduces community empowerment to participatory techniques (Kane, 2004; Shaw, 2008).

Policy-makers and practitioners attribute different meanings to participation and community empowerment but generally agree that the public should increasingly participate in government decisions (Collins, 1997). Atkinson & Cope (1997) argued that communities should participate at all stages of their socio-economic development which includes "problem definition, agenda setting, goal setting, policy appraisal, policy implementation, policy review, policy succession and policy termination" (1997, 216). Incorporating participation at every level of public policy is extremely time-consuming and can be overwhelming for many communities and could result in a tokenistic approach to participation which eventually de-motivates people rather than bolsters local power.

Community participation at any level is time-consuming and requires preparation, commitment and effort (Gaventa, 2011). Critical and effective community participation entails meeting with local people, defining objectives, planning strategies and finding the necessary support for community representatives to argue their case with firm purpose (Shaw, 2008). Access to training opportunities and public funding would need to be put in place to support community participation and would only occur if a government identified with community empowerment focused on social change. In order to guarantee effective community participation governments would have to implement a radical agenda of participatory democracy aware that communities could eventually oppose government proposals and policies.

Patterson (2010) outlined different approaches to community engagement in terms of regulation or liberation. He distinguished between top-down and bottom-up engagement, both of which he claimed offer the possibility of liberation or regulation and used the diagram in Figure 1 to illustrate these possibilities.

From a bottom-up perspective the diagram illustrates how community initiatives can either be co-opted by state agencies or lead to liberation. In the diagram a community launches a campaign to save a school under threat of closure by the state, which Patterson argues, leads to liberation while other bottom-up community initiatives are co-opted by state agencies. These two examples of community engagement indicate that not all bottom-up community initiatives are automatically of a liberatory and empowering nature.

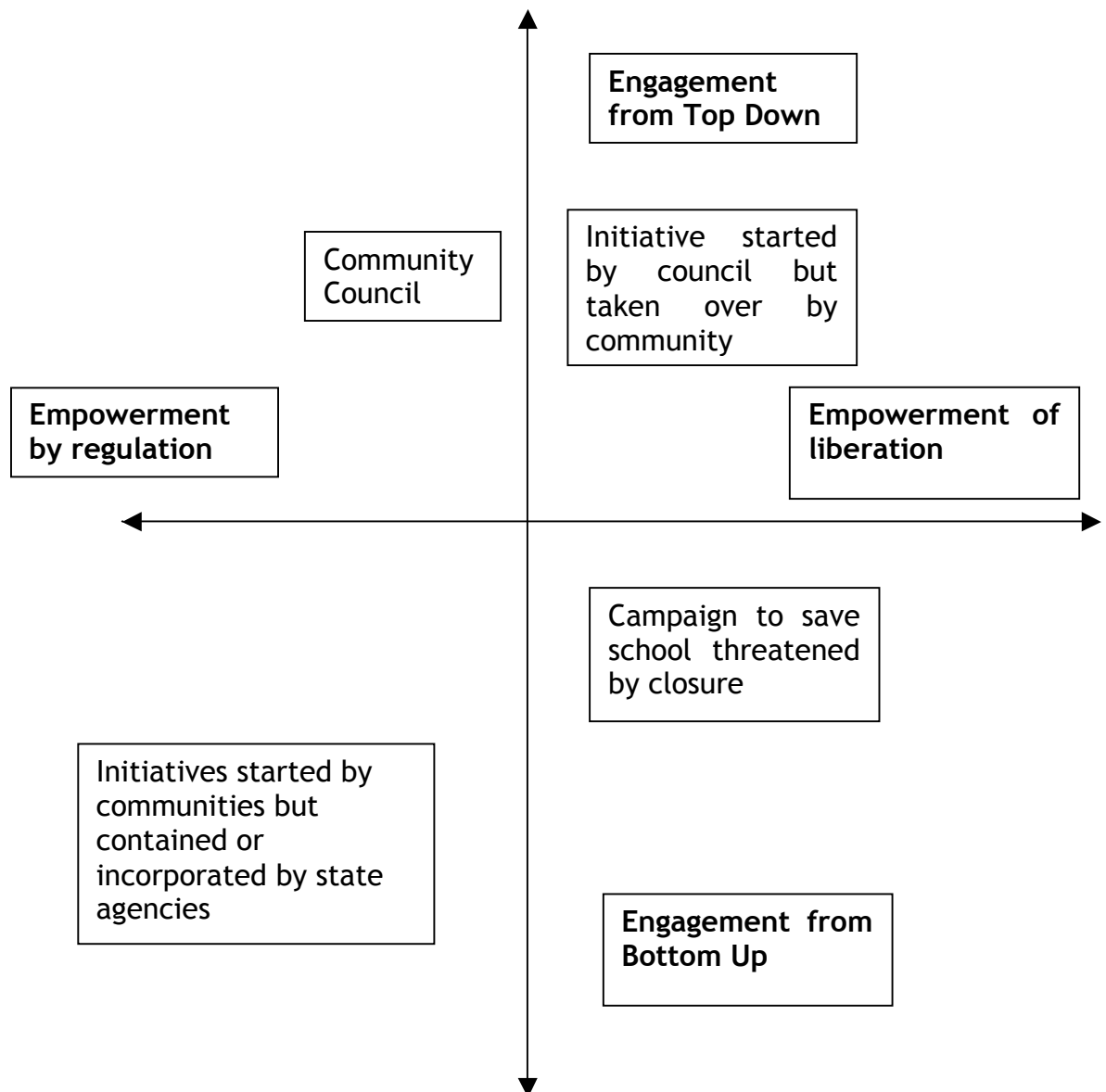


Figure 1: Engagement and empowerment - toward a paradigm map (Patterson, in The Glasgow Papers, 2010)

From a top-down perspective the example shows a community council, a formal government structure for community involvement where participation is mainstreamed and controlled through a mechanism of state regulation. The diagram also shows how a council project is taken over by the community through pro-active engagement, which illustrates how a community is capable of taking control over a top-down government initiative and transforming it into a possibility of liberation.

Patterson's diagram indicates possible contradictions and manipulations that are inherent to community empowerment. In order to become aware of and challenge these contradictions and manipulations, communities should engage in a continual process of critical reflection about their practice and how it relates to social change. Whether participating in top-down or bottom-up initiatives of community engagement it would seem that in both approaches there is an opportunity for communities to engage in the struggle for social change and enhance community empowerment.

Communities are invited to participate in a variety of partnerships which will require clarity as regards to their purpose. Community participation in government-proposed structures of participation can become an opportunity for the state to implement new and more effective means of conflict management and social control over communities. Participation then becomes a means of guaranteeing continuity of the power structure currently in place in society:

“though there have been great moves towards public involvement in local service provision in recent years, little has been achieved by way of a fundamental shift in power. In the end elite perspectives have won out, and participation has served the purposes of building up a consensus for the proposals of those in power, thereby legitimating them” (Atkinson & Cope, 1997, 220).

Communities would have to develop the ability to evaluate the purpose of each partnership and decide which partnerships contribute to community empowerment and strengthen participatory democracy as opposed to those partnerships which are tokenistic and serve the purpose of guaranteeing the continuity of the current socio-economic model.

Atkinson & Cope (1997) argued that in certain cases participation will simply act as a legitimating device for governments. However, the Latin American experience of community leaders becoming part of government institutions

shows that the relationship between communities, popular movements and the state can be one of support and cooperation (Duffy 2012). This relationship will depend on the political vision of both the communities and the state. It is a power-sharing exercise which also entails sharing resources and from the state's point of view would require "(often radical) organisational restructuring to facilitate community access to and control of resources" (Atkinson & Hope 1997, 213).

Arnstein's (1969) seminal work "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" illustrated different levels of community participation, some of which contributed towards guaranteeing the implementation of government policy while others offered the opportunity to generate community empowerment and social change.

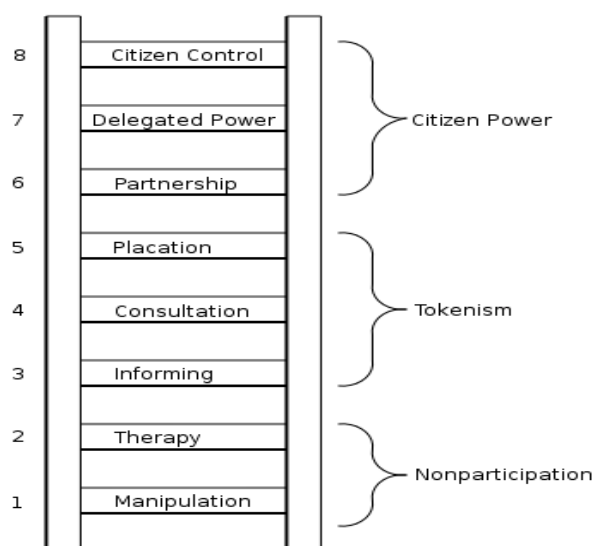


Figure 2: A Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969)

The diagram presents participation in a progressive form from manipulation at the lowest level to citizen control at the highest. It could be argued that participation is not necessarily a linear process and that different rungs of the ladder can crosscut the three levels of participation. For example, partnerships, which according to the diagram are identified with citizen power, could also be regarded as tokenistic, under control of government agencies (Collins, 1997; Martin, 1995). Informing and consulting are

described as tokenistic by Arnstein, however, access to information is essential for communities to elaborate informed proposals for social change and could therefore also be characterised as part of citizen power. Arnstein identified delegated power with citizen control in the diagram but delegating the delivery of public services to local communities can be a means of placation or manipulation implemented by the state to distract communities from their historical role which is to engage in the struggle for radical social change (Ledwith, 2011).

Arnstein's ladder of participation indicates that at times certain forms of participation which are promoted as liberatory can be non-participatory or tokenistic. Consequently communities must be constantly vigilant, revisiting community participation to verify if it is placating any possible challenge to the socio-economic order or if community participation is enhancing community empowerment focused on social change.

4.4 Community Empowerment and Social Change

White (2000) distinguished four types of participation. The first type he described as nominal where "interest is for legitimating; it serves the interests of inclusion and groups serve the function of display" (2000, 145). I experienced this form of nominal participation in a housing association where I worked. In 2010, the housing association was shortlisted for an award in urban regeneration and the criterion for receiving the award was partnership work with the local community. Managers asked the community worker to invite some local tenants to a meeting with the judges to show that the community had been actively involved in the housing development. Many activists in the area considered the invitation tokenistic as they had only been consulted on minor issues regarding the housing development while major issues were decided by the housing association, the building contractor and the local Council. The community was used to legitimate the housing association's bid to win an award for partnership work. In terms of

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation this type of participation would be described as manipulative.

White described a second type of participation as instrumental where "peoples' participation is to reduce costs and increase efficiency" (2000, 145). Governments can be supportive of this type of participation because it reduces their costs in the delivery of public services. In terms of efficiency, communities are usually better placed to deliver these services because they are in direct contact with local people who access these services. Participation in this case focuses on communities becoming independent and financially sustainable. It is a form of participation that fits well with the current UK Government 'Big Society' strategy of downsizing the state by transferring its responsibilities to communities. This type of participation entails that communities spend a great deal of time in bureaucratic managerial activities and have to compete with one another to access the meagre resources available to deliver services (Craig & Mayo, 1995; Shaw, 2008).

Gates & Stout (1996) discussed the possible manipulation or instrumentalisation of community participation, illustrated in the conjugation of the verb to 'participate' in French (see Figure 3).

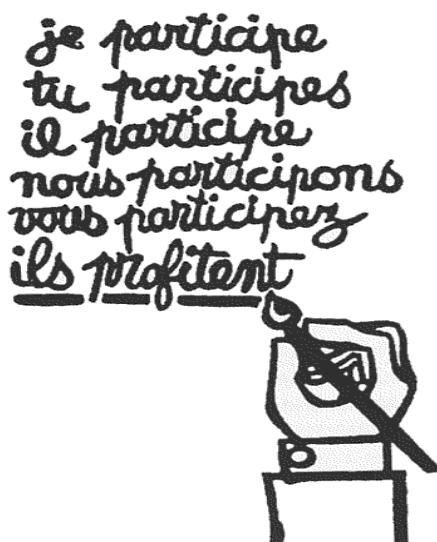


Figure 3: Conjugation of the verb to 'participate' in French (Gates & Stout 1996)

In the illustration the verb 'participate' is conjugated from the pronoun 'I' to the pronoun 'you' plural, but in the third person plural 'they participate' becomes 'they profit' which could be translated as 'they take advantage'. The illustration indicates that in partnerships between state, business or voluntary organisations and communities, community participation can be manipulated to benefit the state, business or voluntary organisation. For example, in transferring the delivery of public services to communities most of the work is delivered by communities while governments could take the credit for apparently making a democratic decision to outsource the delivery of public services to communities.

White (2000) described a third type of participation as representative where there is "the possibility of people expressing their own interests; local people have a voice" (2000, 146). Participation in this case could provide an opportunity for communities to bolster local power but would require that community representatives develop the necessary skills to elaborate proposals that produce effective social change (Craig et al, 2011).

White (2000) identified a fourth type of participation with empowerment which generates "greater consciousness of what makes and keeps people poor" (2000, 147). This definition indicates that participation identified with empowerment offers the opportunity for communities to analyse and perceive the oppressive structures in society and the causes of poverty. Communities generate political awareness when they acquire the ability to analyse society and perceive the unjust oppressive structures in place (Klein, 2007). Participation in these terms can generate really useful knowledge acquired through collective struggles for social change (Thompson, 2007; Scanlon, 2008; Shaw, 2008; Craig et al, 2011).

White (2000) argued that participation is a dynamic process, a site of conflict and a political issue because "it relates to who is involved, how and on whose terms" (2000, 155). Participatory democracy and community empowerment are intensely political because they involve issues that relate

to power structures in society. Any form of participation which involves government and communities will require that the community representatives develop sufficient political awareness of the oppressive structures in society and how government and communities can sustain or challenge these structures (Chaney, 1994).

This chapter draws to a close the first part of this study which discussed the research foundations. The second part examines the grassroots community-based organisations in the village of Renton, West Dunbartonshire, Scotland, presents the methodology for this research and analyses the empirical data generated in the research activities.

Part 2 - “The Renton” - A Grassroots Case Study

Chapter 5: Renton - The Village and its People

This chapter examines the village of Renton and its people through the prism of their economic development, social organisation and the evolving relationship between the emerging social classes (Youngman, 2000).

5.1 Introduction

Renton is a small village of approximately 2100 residents in the local authority of West Dunbartonshire, Scotland (Census 2001). The village is immersed in Scottish history with links to William Wallace and Robert the Bruce (Education Pack - Renton History Project - RHP 1988). Castlehill, a nearby housing estate in West Dunbartonshire, lays claim to being the site of one of Bruce's castles, his preferred home, while Wallace is said to have fled from the English through a tunnel in Carman Hill, situated above Renton (RHP, 1988). Renton's local Artisan Association, the Strathleven Artizans, nurtures these historic roots and transformed Renton train station into a museum of Scottish history with particular focus on Robert the Bruce.



Figure 4 Renton Railway Station/Robert the Bruce Heritage Centre

In the early 18th century Scotland was divided geographically into Parishes and Renton came under the parish of Cardross, a village situated on the other side of Carman Hill, distant from Renton and extremely difficult to reach. Historians claim that Renton developed its independent character ever since those times as Rentonians had to fend for themselves (Agnew, 1975). This self-reliance and independence is expressed in local peoples' own description of Renton as "the Renton" or "the capital" or "the village" and persists to date as I had the opportunity to verify in the interviews I conducted.



Figure 5 Cardross Road leading to Carman Hill (1)



Figure 6 Cardross Road leading to Carman Hill (2)

However, Renton's independent stance did not emerge solely because of its geographical isolation from Cardross. Renton is strategically situated on the banks of the River Leven and became a source of economic development in the early 18th century (MacPhail, 1962). This development generated wealth for the rich and hardship for the poor but also stimulated local people to engage in the struggle for better working and living conditions in the village.

5.2 Economic Development and Exploitation - The Textile Industry

Due to the strategic geographical position of Renton on the banks of the River Leven, the village became home to a textile finishing industry known as bleaching. Textile production was high on the industrial agenda in the early 18th century and the UK strived to become more independent of European production because UK governments were constantly at war with a number of European countries. The industry developed and employed a considerable number of Rentonians. Initially the work was only available during the summer months as bleaching depended on the sun and the possibility of laying out textiles on the hedges along the river, known as the bleach-fields (Agnew, 1975).



Figure 7 Banks of the River Leven

By 1770 the temporary seasonal work terminated giving way to more permanent employment. This was due to the expansion of the textile finishing works and also the installation of a calico print-works on a new site at Cordale, bought by a Glasgow merchant, William Stirling. Cordale was an area situated on the River Leven and took its name from the Gaelic word for cordale which means “field of heron”. The area known as Cordale was a piece of land identified as the heron point on the river and the heron bird can still be found nesting there today. The Stirling family later built Cordale House which remained the home of future textile owners until 1930 when it was demolished.

The textile industry flourished during the industrial revolution and required more space to expand. Stirling eventually bought the Dalquhurn bleach-fields and both the Dalquhurn textile industry and the Cordale print-works guaranteed work for Rentonians for many years. In 1835 the workers totalled 350 and by 1875 totalled 6000 (MacPhail, 1962). In 1897 the Dalquhurn Bleach Company merged with another company to form the United Turkey Red (Agnew, 1975).

The emergence of Renton as a catalyst for work in the textile and print-work industries did not occur without conflict inherent to any form of capitalist development (Allman, 2001; Joseph, 2006). Most of the workers originated from the Highland clearances and the potato crop failure in Ireland and were accustomed to working in agricultural activities. Through settling in Renton they were forced to take on factory jobs to guarantee their survival. Working conditions were inhuman with workers subjected to long hours and low wages: “factories demanded their pound of flesh with grinding hours of toil” (RHP, 1988, 53). The factory owners’ focused on profit with little or no interest in the health and well being of the workers to the extent that “if workers died through overwork or disease caused by poor diet, with homelessness and famine being rampant, the owners could easily employ others” (RHP, 1988, 54).

Life outside the workplace was characterised by poverty for most Rentonians who were forced to live in poor housing conditions:

“Unfortunately there wiz only one room, there wiz a kitchen an bedroom, mother, father and the youngest children slept in the kitchen...the cooking wiz aw dun on the fire, an open fire, gas hadn’t been introduced to Renton...and there wiz a little lobby wi’ a door leading onto the Main Street, an now an again one of us wid be sleeping in this wee lobby jist lying on the floor, and this was typical of Renton” (RHP, 1988,74).

While the workers and their families suffered under inhuman conditions both at work and at home, the River Leven also suffered from pollution caused by the dyeing process together with sewage coming from the houses. Pollution was detected in the 1820s when it was discovered that the dye produced by the textile industry contained “rancid olive oil, horse manure and bull’s blood” (WD Libraries, 2012). Over the years the pollution seeped into the soil on the river banks and was detected as recently as 1992. Engineers discovered high levels of poison in the soil at Cordale point on the river Leven with almost “200 times the safe level of arsenic” (Lennox Herald, 1992).

The village of Renton developed in the midst of exploitation and poverty for most Rentonians. However, local people did not succumb passively to exploitation and poverty. Many Rentonians became involved in activities of resistance both in the workplace and in the struggles to improve living conditions in the village. These struggles also served as a source of comfort, support and solidarity for the workers and their families.

5.3 Rentonians’ Spirit of Solidarity and Defiance

In spite of the hardships of everyday life, the people of Renton supported one another: “it wiz one for all and all for one. People could have a loaf and the other could have nane, well ye could say away in and get a couple oh

slice oh bread till the morning” (RHP, 1988, 94). Heavy drinking became one of the outlets for hardship at work but even then there was a degree of understanding among Rentonians for those who abused alcohol: “Renton is still one of the very few places where a local could fall down drunk and wake up in his own house with the money still intact in his pocket” (RHP, 1988, 56).

Rentonians seemed to understand that not everyone was able to guarantee a decent livelihood for their families in the adverse context of poverty and exploitation and that there was a need for support and solidarity with those who suffered most:

“not everyone is born strong, practical and resourceful...as they say we are all Jock Tamsons’ bairns, and the weakest man is still a brother. The Renton being such a close community the weakest man usually really was a brother, or at least a cousin, or a school friend. Hence our greater understanding should they succumb to the pressures of modern day living,” (RHP, 1988, 56).

A characteristic that transpires throughout the history of the people of Renton is their refusal to accept their subjugated condition of poverty combined with their ability to negotiate with those in power. The creation of the first library in West Dunbartonshire which boasted a collection of 3000 volumes (Agnew, 1975) was funded by William Stirling, owner of one of the textile industries in Renton, who treated the workers harshly. However, Rentonians were able to take advantage of the wealth they produced in hardship to develop their reading and writing skills. The Renton Library Society was created and local people took full advantage to further their education and create better opportunities in life both for themselves and their children (Murphy, 2007).

Renton produced some literary figures, albeit predominantly from the rich landowners’ class, most of who are unknown to the Scottish public. The

most renowned were Tobias Smollett, Sir James Hamilton, John Matheson Jnr. along with Alexander Wylie who commented on the social conditions of that period in his book “Labour, Leisure and Luxury” published in 1884 (Dennett, 1995). Wylie is remembered for his involvement in social issues that affected the poor in the village along with his wife who supported local people to guarantee free education in the village (Murphy, 2007).

While most Rentonians were exploited in the textile and printing work industries, the factory owners and other rich landowner families flourished. One of these families was the Smolletts, composed of merchants and lawyers and one of their homes was the Dalquhurn House on the Dalquhurn estate situated adjacent to the bleach-fields. Tobias Smollett was born in this house and later became a famous novelist and writer.



Figure 8 Signpost at the entrance to the village

Tobias Smollett's sister, Jane, became heir to the family fortune and is regarded as the founder of the village in 1762, naming it after her daughter-in-law, Cecilia Renton. Jane Smollett owned most of the land adjacent to the bleach-fields and print-works and saw an opportunity for generating income by building rented accommodation for the workers. Since its initial creation the village of Renton continues with the same basic geographical structure which consists of two parallel streets, the Main Street and the Back Street. New houses have given rise to three housing estates, Tontine, Cordale and Dalquhurn, each of which has its own street division.

Exploitation at work, dismal living conditions and the experience of war created more awareness among Rentonians about poverty in the village and the need to engage in an organised struggle for social change, as one local resident reported after serving in the army in India:

"things were hard at home and then we went over to India and the conditions there were even worse, and it got me thinking, in the name of goodness, and this is the empire they bum about, nothing but murder and slaughter all the time...by the time ah got home ye kin be assured ah didn't feel too good against the authorities, and when ah got home ah discovered conditions in our own country were almost as bad, an ah joined the National Unemployed Workers Movement" (RHP, 1988, 83).

Rentonians in the National Unemployed Workers Movement did not limit their struggles to the workplace but joined in solidarity with neighbours from towns nearby to defend their rights as one member reported:

"If there were good reasons for the rent not being paid, if an eviction order was taken out I immediately got back into the Vale of Leven and we organised crowds who had backcourt meetings, we had meetings at the crossings, you name it we had meetings there and we got people out onto the street and we barricaded the houses and wouldn't let the sheriff's

officer near, we hunted them when they came near the place to carry out their evictions,” (RHP, 1988, 87).

Many of Renton’s male population enlisted in the army, some of whom did not return to their homes. Katherine Drain, a local poet, wrote in one of her verses:

*“Five hundred lads and more, gathered on Leven’s shore,
Marching from Renton, some who’ll ne’er come back,
Stricken they lie, alack, out on the Flanders track
Far, far from Renton” (RHP, 1988, 63).*

A group of Rentonians also volunteered to join in the struggle against fascism in Spain and enlisted in the International Brigade to combat Franco’s fascist forces. Rentonians were obliged to go to war as a result of conscription but in the case of the Spanish civil war, Renton’s participation came from its political identification with democracy and the struggle against authoritarianism.



Figure 9 Spanish Bull erected in memory of “Rentonians” who fought in the Spanish Civil War, unveiled in 2011

The struggle against authoritarianism and exploitation is described by Drain in one of her poems which refers to a woman who was contracted to work in a rich landowner's home. The poem illustrates how, by becoming aware of the landowner's exploitation, the worker courageously confronted the owner and left:

*“when you advertised I came here to you,
you told me I would be happy, scarcely anything to do;
and this morning you have broke your word already...
I lifted my luggage and they never spoke a word,
but stood speechless at my daring explanation” (RHP, 1988,59).*

The economic development of Renton brought hardship and difficult times for most local people. However, Rentonians also managed to develop their own way of challenging the difficult times whether individually, as expressed by Drain in her poem, or collectively through organised struggles for improved working and general living conditions. Exploitation in the workplace, poor housing and general dismal living conditions stimulated many Rentonians to engage in the struggle for their rights as workers, citizens and human beings.

The end of the First World War saw unemployment soar to unforeseen levels; 20% of Renton's workforce was unemployed (Murphy, 2007). The Cordale works did not open after the war and with the closure of other sources of employment in Bonhill and the Clydeside, jobs were scarce. Few people found work in the Clydeside shipyards and Singers manufacturing company in Clydebank and many took to hunting for rabbits on land and fishing for salmon in the river in order to survive (Murphy, 2007).

During the 1920s local government underwent restructuring and Renton was included in the Vale of Leven District Council cutting its links with Cardross. Rentonians embraced this new government restructuring by presenting their own candidates for election. From 1929 until 1974 Renton continued to re-elect two Labour councillors and two Communist councillors, expressions of

Rentonians' discontent over their living and working conditions and of their desire for another society built on a different basis. As one local resident said:

“at wan time here they had a real radical political movement in the Renton, a mean they were aw Communists, if ye were a Catholic ye used tae vote Communist and then go tae the Church and say sorry a voted Communist” (RHP, 1988, 99).

The UK Government imposed a 10% wage reduction after the war and the Renton textile company United Turkey Red took this further and imposed greater reductions. This resulted in a strike which lasted weeks and even although the agreement finally reached was much in favour of the employer, Renton became a reference for the National Unemployed Workers Movement. Many workers and local councillors were made redundant due to their political activism in the strike but local people came together in solidarity to support their leaders:

“There wiz a guy, Dan O’Hare, he wiz a member of the Communist Party, he sat on the Vale of Leven District Council, he couldnae get a job anywhere so the people awe clubbed the gether an bought him a wee horse an kert, and that wiz how he made his living, selling fruit aff the horse and kert because he wiz blacklisted right up the Clydeside” (RHP, 1988, 105).

The struggle for better living conditions and general human dignity pervades Renton's history. In 1934 workers from Renton came out on strike for better conditions and together with unemployed workers across Scotland they marched from the Vale of Leven to London as part of the “Hunger Marchers” (RHP, 1988, 84). More recently, in 1972, twenty of Renton's young socialists marched to London, part of the work-deprived young peoples' march (McGhee & Melvin in RHP, 1988, 85).

The spirit of defiance, solidarity and the struggle to make Renton a better place to live acquired different characteristics and manifestations in each historical period. More recently, from the early 1990s to date, this struggle has focused around creating an active and vibrant community through the regeneration of local housing under community control, regarded as “a model for Scotland to follow” (Clark, 2012, West Dunbartonshire Council Social Work & Health Director).

5.4 The People of Renton take Control

The textile and print work industries created a considerable work force in the village and as a result the population grew at such a rate that housing proved to be inadequate. Overcrowding with consequent illnesses such as typhoid in 1891 and smallpox in 1901 caused serious problems for local authorities. A series of Acts were passed in Parliament after a condemning report around private landlords' housing conditions. From the first housing act in 1919 up until 1938, completing a total of six housing acts, council housing estates sprung up all over the country. In Renton the first estates were Hillfoot and Tontine. Later in the 1930s Cordale housing estate was built but still failed to attend to the needs and demands of the population.

New Council houses were eventually built in 1928 close to the red sandstone houses at the foot of Carman Hill, and the estate was called Hillfoot. In 1929 another Council estate was built at Tontine Park but houses were given to families who had not previously lived in Renton, which contributed to increasing the already severe social problems in the village caused by poverty. The population of Renton began to modify and Renton was at the centre of considerable anti-social behaviour. In 1930, the Council purchased the Cordale estate and built more houses which were occupied by a number of workers from the torpedo factory in Alexandria (Murphy, 2007).

At the end of the Second World War a new industrial estate was created at Strathleven, adjacent to the River Leven, creating new jobs mainly for

Rentonians. A footbridge was erected, still visible today, which facilitated the workers' access to the factories. Many shops flourished in Renton catering for a wide range of local needs from food to clothing. However, the houses available were insufficient to cope with the increase of population in the village and this provoked an exodus of some families to new housing estates nearby. Many of the old slums in the village were demolished leaving empty stretches of land and some of the shops closed as the population diminished.



Figure 10 Foot bridge across the River Leven

Serious social problems became widespread in the village due to hardship and poverty made worse by years of war and subsequent unemployment. By the 1970s Renton was considered “a major problem area in need of drastic action” (Murphy, 2007). The Council built more houses and renamed Cordale as Kirkland due to the memory of Dr. John Kirk who had served the community for over forty years. However, the houses at Kirkland did not solve the serious social problems that the village encountered and Kirkland was eventually flattened. Similar attempts to solve social problems were made by the Local Council in other areas of West Dunbartonshire but with little or no effect.

The Council's strategy of building houses to alleviate poverty during the 1970s and 80s did not work and Rentonians decided that they would take the lead to recover their village. In 1993 the people of Renton created the Cordale Housing Association (CHA) under local control and its mission statement declared that "we won't build a better standard of housing for people to enjoy their poverty in" (CHA Mission Statement).



Figure 11 Cordale Housing Association Office

With funding from Communities Scotland, the government housing agency, and support from West Dunbartonshire Council, CHA conducted a ballot which gave it overwhelming support from the local community to undertake a stock transfer from West Dunbartonshire Council and manage its own homes. Since then CHA has built 370 homes, 40 flats for sheltered accommodation and recently added on a further 280 mixed rental/for sale homes in the Dalquhurn estate.



Figure 12 Waterside Special Care Housing Complex built by Cordale

In line with the initial objective of CHA, not to build houses for people to live their poverty in, the Renton community created other organisations to support local people. The Carman Centre, a building which belonged to the Council and was used sporadically by few people to play badminton, was handed over to the local community on the basis of a 99 year lease. Since then the local community has installed in the Centre a community café, a library, offices, an IT centre, all attended by a wide range of community groups. The Centre is an SVQ accredited learning centre which supports local people to enhance their employability skills and improve their personal development.



Figure 13 Carman Centre

In 2009 the Carman Centre merged into the Renton Community Development Trust (RCDT) and created three trading subsidiaries, Carman Care, Carman Education and Training and Carman Catering and Domestic Assistants; all three subsidiaries donate their profits into the charity which is the RCDT. At the time of writing the RCDT was considering the creation of a fourth subsidiary which would provide ground maintenance and landscaping services throughout the central belt in Scotland. Recently the RCDT acquired the Ma Centre, previously a community education centre belonging to the Council. The Ma Centre delivers courses and a wide range of sports activities mainly for young people in the village and is the physical base of RCDT.



Figure 14 Ma Centre & physical base of Renton Community Development Trust

The RCDT, Carman Centre, Ma Centre and CHA all work in close association with one another. CHA has a steady income flow from rent and the services generated by CHA are shared with the other local organisations that together generate employment and wealth in the village. The current context of local control in the village is a consequence of the historical

engagement of local people in the struggle to make Renton a better place to live and work.

The community-based organisations have encountered numerous obstacles in their struggle to guarantee local control over service delivery in the village. However, these obstacles have not dampened in any way local peoples' determination to continue in the struggle to make Renton a healthy and prosperous place to live. The CHA 2012 AGM was attended by over 100 community members and elected the new management committee comprised of local people. The Carman Centre continues to promote courses investing in local people. The RCDT and Ma Centre also continue to offer activities which involve people of all ages in the village. All four community-based organisations continue to engage in the task of steering the community's struggle to create and control their future through the development of the village and its people.

The research background, comprised of the first four chapters of this thesis, discussed the importance of creating new forms of societal organisation which could challenge the unjust class division in society generated by the current socio-economic model. Ever since its inception the village of Renton has been a reference for the oppressed, the poor, and the disenfranchised in the struggle to create a new societal organisation based on an alternative socio-economic model. Rentonians' historical spirit of solidarity and defiance generated amidst inhuman working and living conditions has served as a solid basis on which, over the past twenty years, the people of Renton have created four community-based organisations to take control over their socio-economic development. This historical process produced challenges, contradictions, victories and defeats which this thesis now proceeds to discuss.

Chapter 6: Research Approach

This chapter presents the research approach I adopted to undertake an investigation of the struggle for social change in the village of Renton, West Dunbartonshire, Scotland. I adopted a case study methodology, and I describe the influences upon my choice of methodology, sampling, research setting and data analysis within the context of a critical research paradigm. My stance is that of a critical social-educational researcher who links critical research with active participation in processes of change.

6.1 A Critical Paradigm

During the past twenty years governments have argued that class-divided society has come to an end (Blair, 2001; Cameron, 2009). These same governments have claimed for themselves the discourse of people who resisted and dedicated their lives to the struggle against oppression (Martin, 1995). In this context of class denial and discourse manipulation a critical research paradigm is both challenging and necessary. It is challenging because it goes against the general trend of government rhetoric which incorporates historical terms of struggle attempting to nullify their class and transformative significance (Collins, 1997). A critical paradigm is necessary because it is a contribution to unveiling the hidden agendas (Pilger 1999) entwined in the “Davos class” ideology and policies which aim at controlling and subduing any form of dissidence or opposition (George, 2010).

It could be argued that the “Davos class” discourse is reflected in both the positivist and interpretive paradigm. Both paradigms offer a contribution to research, however from a critical stance they present limitations. Cohen et al (2007) argued that the positivist and interpretive paradigms are incomplete because they do not critically analyse the political and ideological contexts in which the research is conducted and do not promote any form of social change.

An emerging paradigm in educational research is critical social-educational research which has a clear political focus on social justice through the emancipation of individuals and groups in their struggle to build an egalitarian society (Cohen et al, 2007). Critical social-educational research is focused on contributing to the emancipation of those who are poor, excluded and disempowered as a result of the unjust oppressive structures in society (McLaren, 2007). To support the disempowered and their struggles for emancipation, critical social-educational research looks beyond given reality and delves deeper into the causes of poverty and disempowerment.

Critical social-educational research is supported by critical theory and seeks to uncover the hidden agendas in a wide range of socio-economic and cultural settings (Freire, 1972; Griffiths, 1998; Pilger 1999). Consequently researchers who identify with this paradigm will discuss “repression, voice, ideology, power, participation, representation” (Cohen et al, 2007, 26) among many other emerging themes. In all of these themes neutrality is not possible (Freire, 1970; Thompson, 2007) hence the insufficiency of a positivist or interpretive paradigm and the need for a critical social-educational paradigm in this research.

Habermas, cited in Cohen et al (2007), analysed the positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms in research which he aligned to “technical, practical and emancipatory interests” (2007, 27) respectively. He argued that the technical interests fitted well with a positivist approach to research where the emphasis is on “laws, rules, prediction and control of behaviour, with passive research objects” (2007, 27). An interpretive research paradigm emphasises practical interests where researchers seek to “clarify, understand and interpret the communications of ‘speaking and acting subjects’” (2007, 27). In the third case of the critical paradigm the focus is on emancipatory interests described as “praxis which is action that is informed by reflection with the aim to emancipate” (Cohen et al, 2007, 27).

For Habermas (2007) the critical paradigm subsumes the positivist and interpretive paradigms. The critical paradigm may incorporate methods and techniques applied also by the positivist and interpretive paradigms but the final objective of critical research is “to expose the operation of power and to bring about social justice” (2007, 27). According to Habermas (2007) the subjects of the critical paradigm in research are the oppressed and the objective is the creation of really useful knowledge which provokes social change (Thompson, 2007). Habermas (2007) argued that the objective of critical research was “to restore to consciousness those suppressed, repressed and submerged determinants of unfree behaviour with a view to their dissolution” (Cohen et al, 2007, 27).

The critical researcher cannot be satisfied with mere observation or description, but will always need to also ask ‘why’, because “if we assume that we can neutrally observe and describe the social world we shall simply reproduce the assumptions and stereotypes of everyday actions and conventions. Facts do not speak for themselves” (May, 2001, 31). In critical social-educational research the taken-for-granted is continually under scrutiny to uncover the causes of poverty, injustice and oppression and to unveil the unjust relations in society, sustained at times in a subtle and camouflaged manner (Griffiths, 1998).

6.2 Methodology

The aim of my research was to examine to what extent participation in grassroots struggles leads to effective social change, empowers people and constitutes a popular education experience in which participants acquire really useful knowledge.

A wide range of research methodologies offered the possibility to discuss the researched participants’ stories. In subscribing to popular education as the theoretical perspective, action research seemed to be a more appropriate methodology because it “aims to help people recover and

unshackle themselves from the constraints of irrational, unproductive, unjust and unsatisfying social structures which limit their self-development and self-determination” (Atweh et al, 1998, 23). Action research relates to peoples’ practice, challenging and proposing changes in that practice. From a theoretical perspective, action research fitted well with this research project because “the focus of inquiry arises out of, and its results feed back into, the activity concerned” (Hammersley, 2004, 165). Kemmis (1998) argued that

“action research is a learning process whose fruits are real material changes in: what people do, how they interact with the world and others, what they mean and what they value, the discourses in which they understand and interpret their world” (1998, 24)

The local community development worker (CDW) in Renton argued that “change needed tae come fae the people in Renton” (Archie Thomson, CDW) which indicated that any activity focused on social change in the village would necessarily require active participation of the local community. However, the RCBO were already engaged in a series of activities and it became clear that they would not have sufficient time to engage in a new action research project. I was also aware of my own limitations of working full time and not living in the village which would entail a considerable amount of travelling in order to engage in action research activities. Aware of time limitations on my part and an intense degree of involvement in community activities on the part of the community it became evident that action research would not be possible.

However, recognising the importance and relevance of research which “helps people investigate reality in order to change it” (Atweh et al, 1998, 21), I wanted to conduct research which would be useful for the Renton Community-based Organisations. Consequently, with this objective in mind I opted to use case study methodology to examine the Renton community-based experience which would give me the possibility to analyse the

community experience of the past twenty years and present my analysis to the community for further discussion about their practice in the village.

Stake (1995) distinguished between two types of case studies; the intrinsic case study where “we need to learn more about that particular case” (1995, 3) and the instrumental case study where we want “to understand something else” (1995, 3). This research examined the Renton Community-based Organisations not solely to learn more about the struggle and the organisations, but mainly to discover if local people were empowered and if the organisations’ activities led to effective social change and contributed to creating really useful knowledge, which is more akin to Stake’s intrinsic form of case study.

The researcher “is interested in how a told story offers clues about the teller” (Stake, 1995, 143) and this is relevant in particular to the group of people I define as ‘the core group’; those who led the development of the Renton organisations over the past twenty years together with others who have now taken on a role of leadership. The core group members intertwine their own personal engagement with the community experience in which they are actively involved indicating that their individual life stories and the community activities are crosscutting.

According to Stake (1995) “the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization” (1995, 85) and that the generalization is left to the readers who can “add the case study to others and thus modify old generalizations” (1995, 85). However, by presenting a critical analysis and their own opinion, critical social-educational researchers can question the reader’s stance and contribute to modifying the reader’s generalizations. Stake (1995) also argued that researchers are “privileged to assert what they find meaningful as a result of their inquiries” (1995, 12). From a popular education perspective which challenges neutrality through critical social-educational research, critical researchers have not only the privilege but also the duty to express their opinion on the issues in

discussion. In agreement with Stake (1995), in this research I declare what I find meaningful as a result of my inquiries.

6.3 Data Collection Methods

The data collection focused on local peoples' perception of the process of social change which the Renton Community-based Organisations claimed had occurred over the past twenty years in the village, and was based on four main questions:

1. What social change had occurred in Renton in the last 20 years?
2. How had the community participated in the social change of the last 20 years in the village?
3. Had community participation generated empowerment in local people?
4. Which educational processes supported this apparently successful grassroots experience of the past 20 years in the village?

For the purpose of collecting data a wide range of methods were considered among which were interviews, focus groups, life histories, archive research and analysis of institutional documents. Some interviewees feel more at ease in an individual interview setting which can at times stimulate sharing the interviewees' life story. Others prefer a collective setting where they can engage in discussion about emerging themes. Focus groups offer the opportunity to delve deeper into the main themes of the research due to their characteristic of fomenting debate (Kizinger, 1999). However, focus groups require active involvement of the research participants and in this case study, opting for focus groups discussions would also depend on local peoples' willingness and availability to engage in this research method.

The participants in these focus groups would include local activists, community representatives, the local councillor, and the chairpersons of the Community Trust, Cordale Housing Association and the Carman Centre.

Three initial questions would serve the purpose of stimulating the debate in each focus group:

- How does the community guarantee local participation?
- Apart from the physical regeneration of Renton in terms of buildings what other changes can be detected in peoples lives?
- What are the residents in Renton learning from the community's struggle to make Renton a good place to live?

Aware of time constraints on my part and on the part of the community I opted for individual interviews and a focus group discussion. Each interview and the focus group discussion were recorded with due consent from the interviewees. Subsequently each interview transcript was forwarded to the relevant interviewee for verification.

Two electronic programmes were used to record and store the generated data, Endnote and NVivo. Endnote stores the researcher's reading material enabling quick access to bibliographic references. Nvivo stores the data generated from the empirical research and also offers the possibility of structuring the data according to themes chosen by the researcher. Both programmes are useful for facilitating storage and analysis of the data however, they are basically instruments that facilitate the structuring of the data. The final decision regarding the analysis of the data rests with the researcher and this cannot be substituted by a computer or software (Hanna, 1997).

6.4 Data Sampling and Setting

Initially, two possible geographical areas were considered for this research, East Balornock in the North of Glasgow and the village of Renton in West Dunbartonshire. In East Balornock I was a community worker directly involved with the community. Having previous knowledge of the community could be regarded as an asset in the sense that it could facilitate data

generation in a more informal context agreeing with May's (2001) argument that "the backstage language consists of reciprocal first naming, co-operative decision making, profanity; the front-stage behaviour can be taken as the absence (and in some sense the opposite) of this" (2001, 162). Generating data in East Balornock would give access to "backstage information" because of my engagement with the local community.

However, in order to conduct the research in East Balornock I would have to combine my work remit with the research aim. This would require acknowledging that I was a community worker-cum-researcher and in reflexivity would have the opportunity to 'problematise' this relationship. My manager at work alerted to a possible conflict of interest in the case of East Balornock as it would perhaps entail a critique of the housing association where I was employed.

Choosing the second possibility, the village of Renton, meant that I would engage in the research as a university researcher from Glasgow University, although I had come into contact with the village through my previous employment. The political stance of the Renton community was also an attraction in the sense that local community leaders portrayed the understanding of their experience as part of a wider struggle for democracy and community empowerment.

In opting for Renton I would examine the educational processes that contributed to creating the community-based organisations. I would question the community's participation in social change in the village during the last twenty years and to what extent participatory democracy existed. Renton would also offer the possibility to analyse the community's activities from a popular education stance, verifying if social change actually occurred and if really useful knowledge was generated in the process.

Both experiences offered the possibility of tackling the research aim and questions albeit from different perspectives; East Balornock still at an initial stage of creating a community-based organisation under local control, and

Renton with already established community-based organisations under local control.

After a series of meetings with supervisors, my manager at work, community members in both initiatives, family and friends, I opted for the Renton Community-based Organisations. This choice also presented the opportunity to share with a wider audience what would seem to be a progressive grassroots experience. It created the possibility of revisiting many of the terms incorporated into government rhetoric (Pilger, 1999) in a continuum that ranged from community to empowerment (Collins, 1997; Cameron 2009). At the same time, opting for the Renton Community-based Organisations (RCBO) presented the opportunity to critique the Renton experience so that both the community and similar experiences could learn from it (Harvey, 1990).

I decided to accompany and observe the RCBO during a one year period and composed a list of possible sites where I would be able to

- participate appropriately in main community events, whether political, social, cultural or recreational to observe how residents actively took part and which social groups were most active,
- participate in community planning and strategy meetings to observe how representative these meetings were and how decisions were made,
- observe residents' use of the community café to find out who most used the café; if it met residents' needs and why people preferred it to other alternatives,
- meet with community representatives to discuss how the planning and strategies were implemented in practice,
- photograph historical landmarks and events with consent in order to have visual support for the data generated about Renton and its people,

- compile field notes on all aspects of the study to keep track of the different observation activities,
- discuss my research at different stages, providing opportunities to debate and critique my findings.

To begin the process of data collection I scheduled an initial meeting with the community development worker (CDW) at the Carman Centre. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange some ideas and enquire about how to initiate the research in the village. After a brief presentation of the research aim the CDW suggested that the research proposal should be presented to the Cordale Housing Association's director. I wrote a letter to the CHA director explaining my research and he presented the research proposal at a meeting of a group of local community leaders, representatives of Cordale Housing Association and the Renton Community Development Trust. The proposal met with their approval and they confirmed their willingness to assist with and participate in the research

A date and venue were agreed to discuss with a group of local community leaders, the community's participation in the research but the meeting was cancelled on the eve of the agreed date. Further dates were suggested but unfortunately this meeting did not come to fruition due to other activities in the village that always involved at least one of the group members. This brief narrative illustrates how research activities planned and agreed with the research participants can fail due to different circumstances.

While aware of competing priorities of this group of local leaders, their active participation in the research was crucial in order to capture the different stages of the development of the experience in the village. At the same time the broader community, whether as a recipient of the benefits of the Renton Community-based Organisations' (RCBO) activities or as active participant of the RCBO, had a right to participate. In order to initiate the process of generating empirical data I adopted a snowball sampling method which entailed interviewing the leaders of the community-based

organisations individually and from there contacting other possible interviewees whose names emerged in the interviews.

Various potential interviewees emerged through the snowball sampling method, some who participated in the Renton Community-based Organisations during the past twenty years and others who continue to be actively involved to date. These included community leaders, an elected member, local residents and people who engaged with the RCBO but who did not necessarily live in the village. I conducted nineteen semi-structured interviews, each of approximately 45 to 60 minutes. This timescale was sufficient to engage in a dialogue with the interviewee based on the three questions while remaining alert to possible unforeseen avenues of discussion that might emerge during the interviews.

The following table lists the 19 participants in the semi-structured interviews:

Interviewee	Role
Anonymous	Former worker at Carman Centre
Ann Neeson	Resident / Renton History Project participant
Archie Thomson	Community Development Worker / CHA Committee Chair / Activist
Bernie Kelly	Resident / Former CHA Committee Member / Activist
Collette Sibley	CHA tenant
Drew McEoghainn	Renton Community Development Trust (RCDT) CEO / CHA tenant
Duncan Kane	Former West Dunbartonshire Social Inclusion Partnership worker
Eileen McEoghainn	CHA tenant
Fr. McKelvie	Current RC Parish Priest
George Gillespie	Former Chair of West Dunbartonshire

	Community Planning Partnership
Iain McLelland	Manager of Education & Training Service at Carman Centre
Jean Conway	Resident / RC Pastoral Council Member
Jeanette Cowan	Former Support Worker at Carman Centre
Jim Bollan	Local Councillor / RCDT Board Member
Jim Simcox	Former RC Parish Priest
John Chalmers	Former Church of Scotland Parish Minister
Stephen Gibson	Cordale Housing Association Director
Susan Gunn	Manager of Housing Support Service employed by Carman Centre
Susan Thomson	Community Activist

The three questions which helped facilitate the dialogue with each interviewee were:

- To what extent did the people of Renton take part in deciding about the future of the village?
- What have you learned during the years you spent in the Renton whether as a resident or as a worker?
- How does the community experience in the village contribute to social change on a wider scale?

Each interviewee decided upon a time and place to be interviewed and signed a consent form once they had read the plain language statement (see appendices 1 & 2). It was agreed that each interviewee would receive a written copy of their interview to confirm or adjust the content. All interviewees were asked if extracts from their interviews could be

attributed to the source, and with the exception of one participant, all agreed.

The community development worker was mentioned in all but one of the interviews with mixed perceptions about his role as leader and required an in-depth interview. A number of issues emerged from the interviews which required further clarification and a focus group was organised to ascertain precise details.

The in-depth interviewee and focus group participants were:

In-depth Interviewee	Role
Archie Thomson	Community Development Worker / CHA Committee Chair / Activist

Focus Group Participants	Role
Drew McEoghainn	RCDT CEO / CHA tenant
Jim Bollan	Local Councillor/RCDT Board Member
Stephen Gibson	CHA Director

In the initial research plan I envisaged more than one focus group in order to discuss in more depth the different issues which emerged in the individual interviews. It was an opportunity to challenge the core group about their practice in relation to participatory democracy, social change and popular education. However, the quantity of data generated would be difficult to manage and one focus group with the core group was agreed.

The deliberate sampling of three of the four members of the core group to participate in the focus group was because they had been referred to in some interviews as the leaders of the community-based organisations in the village. The exclusion of the community development worker from the focus group was intentional because he had already participated in an in-depth interview.

The focus group followed the same pattern as the in-depth interview with the community development worker which included interviewees' quotes, a quote from my reading and a question for debate. In the focus group setting the interviewees' quotes and quotes from my reading together with the research questions were displayed on posters so as to visualise the discussion and help the group perceive any possible link between the different issues (see appendix 3).

Each interviewee understandably presented different opinions about their experience with the community-based organisations and the services and activities delivered in the village over the last twenty years. Consequently, the data generated opened up new understandings of the experiences and perspectives of the people of Renton and offered sufficient data to respond to the research aim and questions.

6.5 Data Analysis

I analysed the data against a backdrop of the oppressive structures in society (Harvey, 1990) that I discussed in part one of this thesis under the heading of research foundations. The data analysis was an iterative process which began during the interviews themselves as each interviewee brought to light different themes for discussion. Each interview and the focus group discussion were recorded so that I had the opportunity to capture and revisit issues which might have gone unperceived during the data collection, due to engaging in dialogue with the interviewee at the same time as continuing to focus on the research questions. I personally transcribed each interview in order to analyse in more depth the content discussed with each interviewee and become familiar with the data.

According to Kairuz et al (2007) transcribing the generated data is the first step in content analysis because it gives the researcher the opportunity to "read and reread the text so as to identify significant strands" (2007, 372). In using popular education as the theoretical perspective I analysed the data

from a deductive stance where the researcher “sets out to test whether data are consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypotheses identified or constructed by the investigator” (Thomas, 2006, 238). I already had decided upon three general themes which I wanted to investigate, expressed in the thesis title: social change, participatory democracy and popular education but remained open to other themes or subthemes which might emerge. The choice of the three general themes came from my personal interest in collective processes which promote social change and my experience of working in the field of popular education in Brazil. In my analysis, several sub themes emerged from the findings among which were empowerment, participation, community ownership, local issues and business focus, all of which I organised under the three original themes, as well as a new theme of leadership.

In the findings chapter I use a considerable amount of quotes from the interview material to illustrate the key points within my analysis. I have selected to use the West of Scotland vernacular that was used by many of my interviewees. This was agreed and appreciated by the interviewees perhaps because it was perceived as an authentic reproduction of how they described the struggle for social change in their own community. These quotes expressed the aspirations and perceptions of local people about the community experience of the past twenty years in the village. My data analysis entailed reading and re-reading the data, testing and re-testing the ideas in relation to the research foundations. My writing accompanied this process of analysis to the extent that writing and analysis occurred simultaneously.

In the process of analysing the data and writing I was aware of the potential for causing damage to individual interviewees or indeed to the community as a whole due to contrasting opinions about the RCBO and their activities in the village. Consequently I anonymised some quotes which I thought could cause harm to the community and discarded others which I considered might cause unnecessary friction among community members.

My research was conducted over a period of six years and required a continual process of reflexivity to maintain a focus on the research aim and questions. The use of reflexivity entails constantly reflecting upon the research process as a whole and writing up about it (Shacklock & Smith, 1998). Reflexivity includes questioning the methodology adopted, the researcher's principles and values, the different surprises which emerge from the research, and how all of these influence the researcher's aims and makes the research process more complete. To support my data analysis I kept a diary of events and changes that occurred in the Renton community, in my own workplace, and at national and international level, all of which contributed to a more complete analysis of the data. The monthly meetings with my two supervisors were instances of reflexivity and analysis of the research process and helped focus on the research aim and questions. After each meeting I submitted a report to both supervisors of the decisions made and the tasks to be undertaken over the next period in order to guarantee continuity in the research process.

Harvey (1990) argued that the critical social educational researcher is "fundamentally dedicated to revealing and opposing oppression" (Harvey, 1990, 212) which fits well with popular education, the overall theoretical perspective of my research, discussed in part one. In my data analysis I critically examine the data to reveal and oppose oppression experienced in the Renton community's struggle to eradicate poverty in the village.

As part of my data collection I used two computer programmes, Endnote and Nvivo. However, while recognising the importance of storing data in computer programmes I agree with Hanna (1997) who argued that "the computer cannot take the place of the thinking and decision making that are at the heart of qualitative analysis, and it is up to the researcher to establish meaning and significance" (1997,3:61). The final analysis of the data is my responsibility and is discussed in more detail in chapters eight and nine of the thesis.

6.6 Research Limitations

According to Cousin (2009) a case study in the field of critical social-educational research can become “a messy business that involves a nose for an emerging focus, supportive theoretical literature, exemplary stories and vignettes, appropriate methods to use, analytical moves to make, data to shed or to keep and write-up flair” (Cousin, 2009, 137). In this research I encountered almost all of these aspects referred to by Cousin. The literature on popular education, participatory democracy and social change offered a wide range of possible reading which required a defined political focus in order to prioritise appropriate authors identified with a critical perception of these themes. The meeting planned with the core group to present the research proposal did not take place which then required revisiting the data collection process. The unforeseen theme of leadership emerged during the interviews and created the need for an in-depth interview with the community development worker. Stories from local Rentonians were available in abundance and generated a considerable amount of data, some of which had to be discarded as they did not respond to the research aim and questions. These issues emerged as part of the “messy business” of qualitative case study research and required re-adaptation on several occasions in order to respond to the research aim and questions.

In the process of collecting data the Renton community could have felt that it was being observed by an outsider, someone who did not identify with it and who could even manipulate or propagate its experience in a distorted fashion. The community could feel used for a purpose that did not contribute to its present or future practice. To counteract these possibilities I used an iterative approach to data collection which guaranteed open dialogue with the interviewees with subsequent feedback of the interview transcript for verification and possible questioning.

Critical social-educational research poses many questions both for the researched community and the researcher. Underlying ideological and political interests can constrain researchers, their research sources and the situations where research is conducted. Consequently the researcher engaged in critical social-educational research should continually reflect upon the research process as it evolves. Through reflexivity it is possible to perceive how these constraints influence the researcher's engagement in the research process and the possibility of contributing to social change.

My monthly supervision meeting fitted well with the issue of reflexivity. It was a useful resource which helped maintain the focus on the research aim and questions. Research supervisors play a key role in the research process and while understanding the importance of technical academic support, critical social-educational research from the perspective of popular education requires a degree of political affinity between the researcher and the supervisors to the extent that the supervisors become with the researcher "active participants in the development of knowledge" (Harvey, 1990).

In referring to an empirical study on racism Harvey (1990) wrote that "the authors propose a dissolution of the distinction between researchers and activists as the knowledge gained from research is constructed out of political practice, for which there is no substitute" (1990, 180). I approached this research project as a researcher-activist identified with a critical analysis of the oppressive structures in society. While conducting the research activities I had the opportunity to clarify with the community my researcher-activist stance which, I believe, compensated for a limited personal presence in the village.

Research in the field of critical social-educational research is a "messy business" (Cousin, 2009). The popular saying that "practice makes perfect" does not necessarily apply according to Batchelor (2009). On the contrary, she argued that in critical social-educational research "practice doesn't

make perfect. The perfect process doesn't exist" (Batchelor, 2009, 443). In spite of the challenges encountered in conducting this research, it remains a contribution to the field of critical social-educational research identified with the struggle for social change.

6.7 The Researcher's Stance - A Critical Social Researcher

Cohen et al (2007) argued that in certain research circles there was "an antiseptic view of research as uncontaminated by everyday life" (2007, 38). This view of research denies the social and historical context within which both the researcher and the researched subject are situated. Researchers' life experiences and analyses of the socio-economic context will influence their interpretation of data. To assume that the social world can be neutrally observed is "naïve and simplistic because it ignores the social context of educational inquiry, it is, in short, an asocial and ahistorical account" (Cohen et al, 2007, 38). It is therefore important both for the researched community and any reader to have clarity about the researcher's perspective.

According to Griffiths (1998) "meanings and interpretations are developed in social groups which are themselves structured by socio-political power relations" (1998, 57). In agreement with Griffiths I argue that all forms of research incorporate, whether consciously or unconsciously, values, ideologies and political stances. Griffiths (1998) also argued that "there are doubts about developing a 'God's eye view' of the world, because all knowledge is perspectival and situated" (1998, 72). In subscribing to the perspective of popular education this research overtly challenges the current socio-economic context regarded as the main cause of oppression and injustice in the world (Crowther et al, 2005; George, 2010).

May (2001) argued that "neutrality claims that it is the only possible representation of the truth and knowledge, just because it is (it claims)

neutral. But bias comes precisely from that representation, because it has the effect of hiding, not eliminating, partiality” (2001, 134). By subscribing to the theoretical perspective of popular education I openly declare my stance and eliminate any possibility of hiding partiality. This research project is situated in the body of knowledge identified with critical social-educational research and analyses educational processes for social change from the perspective of popular education which requires taking sides (Crowther et al, 2005). Creswell (2007) argued that “researchers need to discuss the participant’s stories as well as be reflective about their own personal and political background” (2007, 57). This research is an opportunity for both the researched participants and the researcher to revisit and question their personal and political stance.

Chapter 7: Research Findings

This chapter presents the research findings under three headings; social change, participatory democracy and popular education, each incorporating subthemes that emerged from the empirical data which are examined later in the discussion chapters. The data collected in nineteen interviews, one in-depth interview and a focus group activity conducted in the period 2009-2011 express the wealth of knowledge, skills and experience that the Renton Community-based Organisations have developed over the past twenty years.

7.1 Social Change

In exploring social change in Renton, five key themes emerged from the data: community ownership; community structure; commerciality and community development; physical and social regeneration; vision and strategy. These themes are presented along with quotations which illustrate the key points in discussion. The table below explains the meaning of different acronyms and organisations mentioned in this chapter.

Acronym or Organisation	Meaning
Carman Centre	Social Enterprise under local control
CDW	Community Development Worker
CHA	Cordale Housing Association
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
Ma Centre	Physical base of Renton Community Development Trust
RCBO	Renton Community-based Organisations (CHA, Carman Centre & RCDT)
RCDT	Renton Community Development

	Trust
RCDT CEO	Renton Community Development Trust Chief Executive Officer
RHP	Renton History Project
SIP	Social Inclusion Partnership

7.1.1. Community Ownership

The Renton community-based experience of the past twenty years focused on improving poor housing and reducing high indices of anti-social behaviour registered in the village: “Renton was an area of deprivation, extreme deprivation and it was run down badly” (George Gillespie, Community Planning Partnership - CPP). Yet another interviewee reported: “we got in there people with no respect for anybody, people who perhaps would be anti-social to use a word and as a result people and the properties were brought down” (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest). The nineteen interviewees and focus group participants express different opinions about Renton but all agree that positive aspects of social change are visible in improved housing and anti-social behaviour reduction: “I think it looks great and it is a vast improvement from the past” (Ann Neeson, resident). Above all, the interviewees also agree that social change occurred in Renton because local people took control over the socio-economic development of the village:

“they’ve turned that whole area around completely, that’s purely because the people there were active, stood their ground, challenged and defended what they were doin’ an’ they’ve achieved that” (George Gillespie, CPP).

Since the end of the Second World War, local government agencies had introduced a variety of projects to tackle the problems in the village, few of which made any real impact (Renton History Project - RHP, 1988). Prior to local community ownership, different groups attempted to tackle poor housing and anti-social behaviour in the village, but with little success. The reason for lack of success, according to most interviewees, was because

local people were not involved and “change needed tae come fae the people in Renton” (Archie Thomson, Community Development Worker - CDW).

Local people decided to take ownership of their own socio-economic development because “people in the village were fed up being told by authorities what was good for them and there were all these individuals and groups in the village saying ‘no this is not what we need’” (Jim Bolland, Councillor). To engage in the struggle for local control local people had to invest in their self-belief and courage because as one interviewee said: “before a widgeon get aw mixed up wae the people in suits; I widgeon freeze in thur company cause they think they knew everythin’ they don’t” (Susan Thomson, Community Activist). The research findings indicate that the people of Renton overcame a series of obstacles in their struggles for local control during the past twenty years and to support that local control an appropriate community structure was deemed necessary.

7.1.2 Community Structure

In 1993 the local community took control over part of the housing in the village and created Cordale Housing Association (CHA) which, according to one interviewee, had a significant impact on the physical regeneration of the village and “transformed Renton” (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest). The choice of the name Cordale, according to one interviewee, was also a political decision to identify with the poorest area of the village at the time: “they didn’t want to call it Renton Housing Association because within Renton there was Cordale, and Cordale was the worst part of Renton” (Anon). CHA is currently one of the main sources of income in the village together with West Dunbartonshire Council.

CHA has developed as a business, under local community control, sustained by rent income and Housing Association Grants (HAG) from Scottish Government. The creation and development of CHA was based on a new

understanding of the significance of a community-based housing association among the people in the village: “it wisnae a tenant-landlord relationship it wis much maer a relationship between equals” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The relationship between equals extended to people who came from outside the village who wanted to be part of CHA: “we have people fae outside Renton as well, as part ae wur management committee” (Archie Thomson, CDW). At the time of writing CHA had over 600 members, a management committee with a mixture of CHA tenants, non-CHA local residents and members from outside the village.

The community later acquired the Carman Centre, a building in the village previously owned by the Council, used sporadically by a badminton club, and transformed it into a social enterprise. According to a local community activist working together was key to the success of the community experience: “it wid av failed if we never hud Cordale. If we wurnae workin’ taegether the centre wid av failed” (Susan Thomson, Community Activist). The CHA director also confirmed the importance of the organisations in the village working together because the village needed “more than a housing association and we can’t do what we do unless we work hand in glove with the Carman Centre” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director).

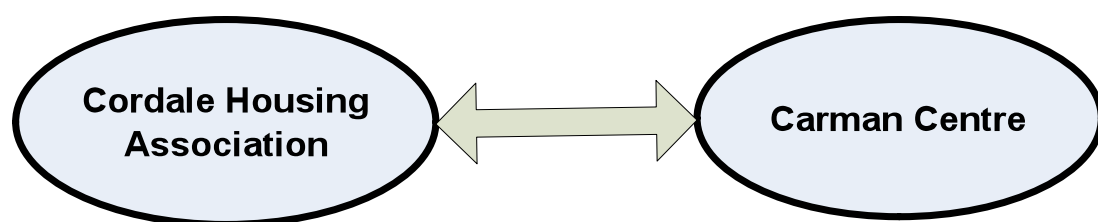


Figure 15 CHA and the Carman Centre - hand in glove relationship

One respondent reported that the process of setting up the current structure under local control has helped regenerate the community: “I think the getting together of the community through our meetings, setting up the Renton Regeneration, which has become really Carman and the Cordale, has built up a very good relationship among the people” (Jim Simcox, Parish

Priest). In terms of community organisation, prior to the creation of the Carman Centre as a social enterprise, the community had created a Community Trust. In 2009, the Centre and the Trust merged and created The Renton Community Development Trust (RCDT) recognised as the overarching community organisation with charitable status steered by a board of directors, all of whom are local residents.

In August 2011 the RCDT acquired another physical asset in the village which was previously a Community Education Centre owned by West Dunbartonshire Council. The Council closed the centre but the local community took control over the building and re-opened it as “Ma Centre”. The Centre has a particular focus on activities for young people and is part of the community structure under control of the local community.

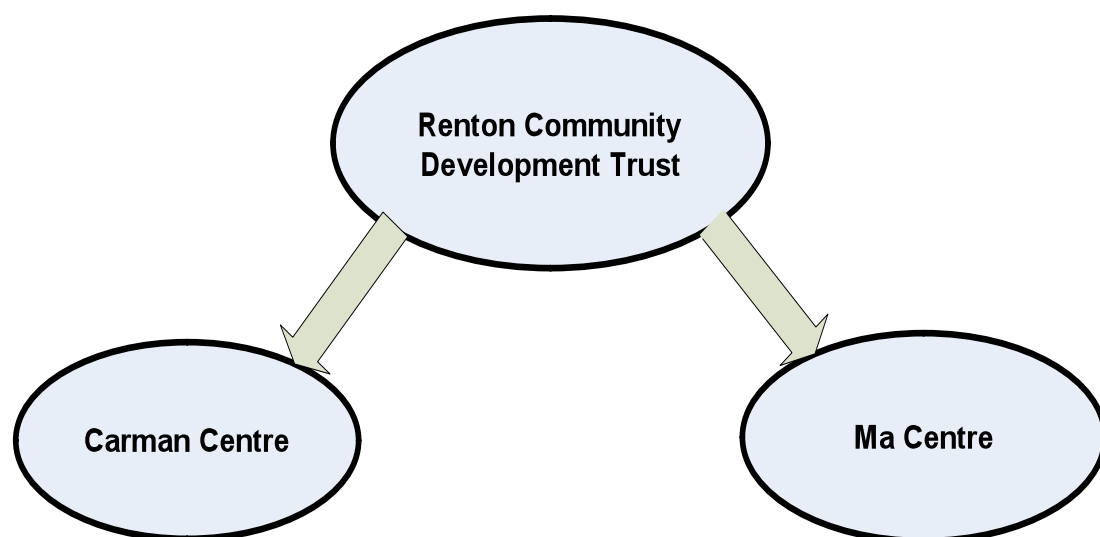


Figure 16 Renton Community Development Trust - physical assets

RCDT is sustained through surplus money generated by its three subsidiaries; Carman Care, Carman Education and Carman Catering and Domestic Assistants.

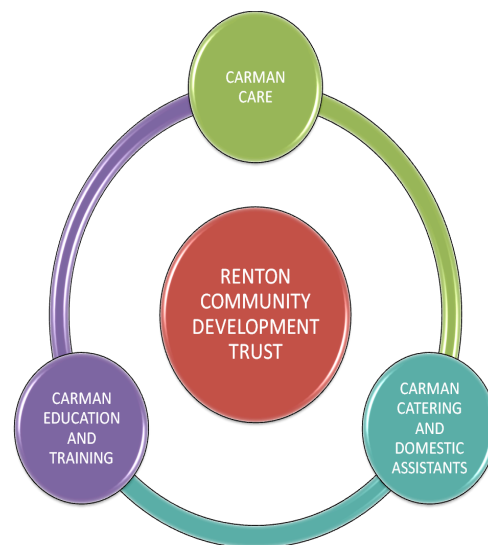


Figure 17 Three subsidiaries of RCDT
(Diagram extracted, with permission, from RCDT explanatory booklet)

For the purpose of this research I refer to the CHA and RCDT, which incorporates the Carman Centre and Ma Centre, as the Renton Community-based Organizations or RCBO.

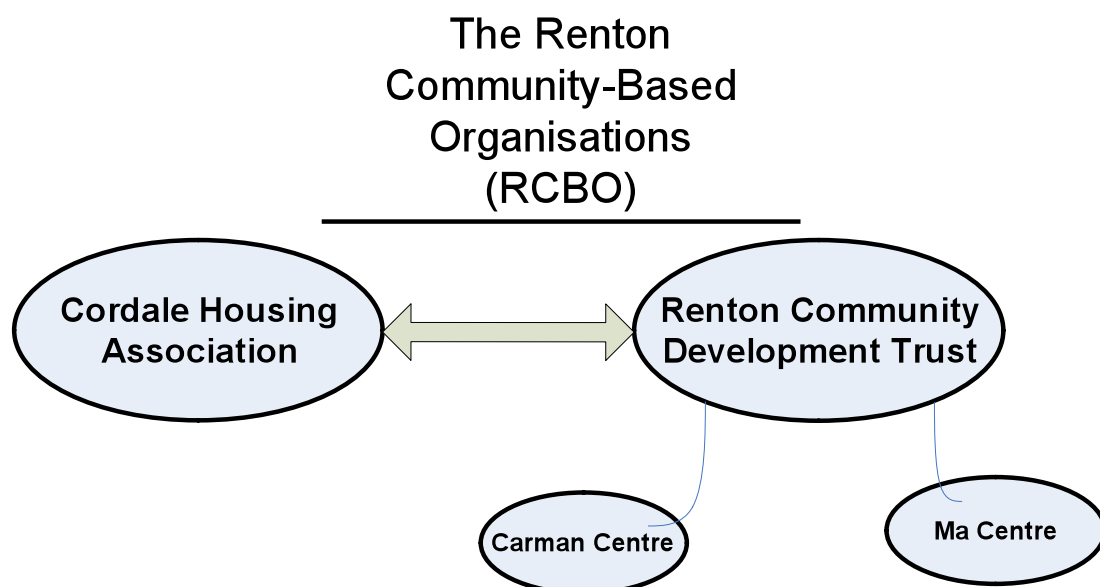


Figure 18 The Renton Community-based Organizations in 2011

The research findings indicate that there is a group who lead and sustain the community-based organizations, comprised of the CHA director, RCDT Chief Executive Officer - CEO, a local councilor and a community development worker: “we always knew there’d be a hard core of at least 10 activists who would see this fae beginin’ tae end, wherever that end is” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

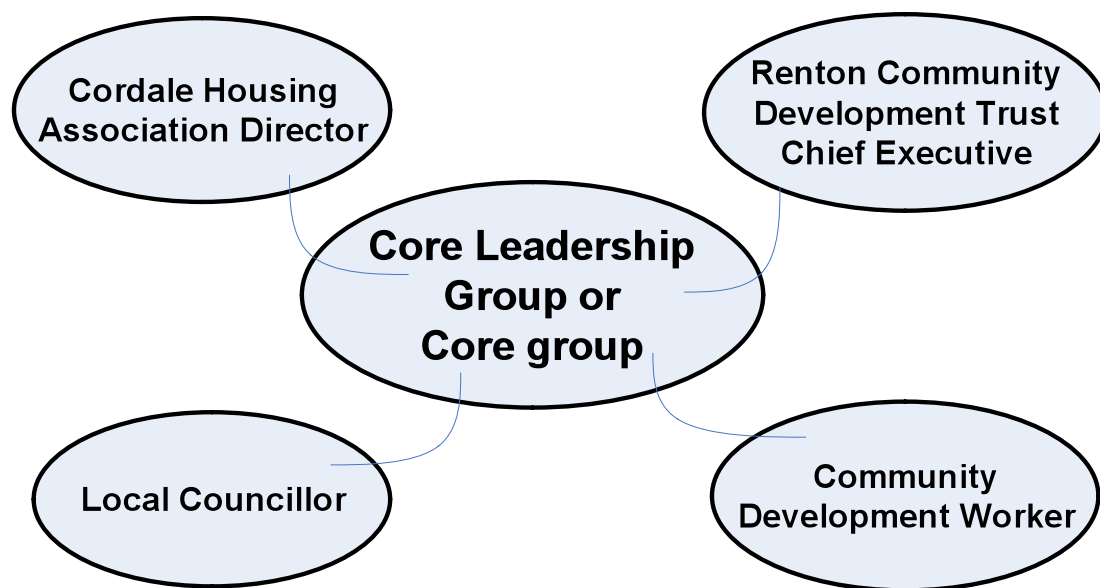


Figure 19 The Core Leadership Group

This group, whom I refer to as the core group, accepted my invitation to engage in a focus group activity, which helped develop a clearer picture of the challenges facing the community.

7.1.3 Commerciality and Community Development

One of these challenges was commercial. The community had to generate income: “we grow, expand, and diversify as we introduce new subsidiary companies; all of these will trade to make a profit, and unashamedly make a profit. It’s what we do with this profit that makes a difference” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director). Other members of the core group, who have a more explicit political focus identified with socialism, seem to accept this

commercial aspect and are convinced that they are responding to what the community wants and needs. The core group members use the terms commerciality and community development to define what they mean by generating profit in the community-based organisations while focusing on the long term strategy of socialism.

The generation and accumulation of profit is a fundamental element for the sustainability of the capitalist system (Allman, 2001). Nevertheless the local councillor, who is the only socialist councillor in Scotland, declared that the Renton community-based experience is “socialism at street level” (Jim Bolland, Councillor). This seems contradictory, but also reflects the different understandings of the experience. On the one hand the CHA director emphasises the commercial business focus of housing development, while on the other hand the socialist councillor, RCDT CEO and the community development worker perceive the housing development as part of a broader agenda for social change: “an’ of course housing wis only wan element, a very important element, bit wan element” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

“CHA has been the drivin’ force along wae other community-based groups in the village tae try and no jist build new houses but tae try an’ effect social change” (Jim Bolland, Councillor).

The creation of CHA and RCDT was a result of and an integral part of the struggle for local control of socio-economic development of the village: “the community really have, if ye like, led the regeneration in Renton, which is again a unique situation” (George Gillespie, CPP). The core group adopted a proactive model of social change, as opposed to waiting for “Council gurus” to come with their “top-down” projects that have “left nothing but garbage for the community to clean up” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). The RCDT CEO argued that the local Council was top-heavy and in the village the community organisations delivered better services with less cost. He reported that local councillors were in favour of transferring the delivery of public services to local communities: “best value for service provision,

they're telling us, it's got tae go tae the voluntary sector; they're the best people tae do it" (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO).

Financial independence, mainly from the Council, is high on the community organisations' agenda, evidenced on one occasion by the Carman Centre returning surplus funding to the Council (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). On the one hand this could be interpreted as a gesture of solidarity with other communities that might have more need of funds. On the other hand the people of Renton have a right to funding generated through taxes, which could have been used as an investment, in line with the core group's understanding of funding as an investment in the community, to improve some of the services within the village.

The interviewees' focus on independence could be perceived as part of a broader agenda for social change: "we had tae change to stop becoming so dependant on the state an' state outcomes" (Archie Thomson, CDW). We could question whether the independence referred to by the interviewees is solely financial, or whether there is an attempt to build an alternative form of societal organisation, where the local community is the conduit through which all public resources and services are channelled. The local councillor said that the physical change was the basis for further improving local peoples' lives: "it's all about the redistribution of wealth, and I like to think that's what the groups in the Renton are trying to achieve, in a small sense" (Jim Bolland, Councillor).

7.1.4 Physical & Social Regeneration

The community development worker reported that "aw the national newspapers carried the story that the Renton wiz the maest depressin' village centre anywhere tae be found in Scotland, which wiz probably aboot accurate when ye considered the actual state ae the place" (Archie Thomson, CDW). Yet another interviewee reported that "it became a dumping ground for problem families in Dumbarton and Alexandria; they were sent packed off to the Renton" (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest). However,

without exception, all interviewees commented on the physical change that has taken place in the village over the last twenty years: “the new housing through the Cordale Housing has given a whole new image to the village” (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest).

It would also seem that the renewed physical appearance of the village has had a positive effect on the social environment: “to be perfectly honest there are no incidents or trouble at night; there’s never anything like that. You’ll notice there’s no graffiti in the village, none whatsoever; there’s not many places like that” (Eileen McEoghainn, CHA tenant). This external physical improvement has created a degree of security in local people to the extent that the same interviewee reported: “tae be perfectly honest, it wouldn’t bother me at all tae walk through the village at night not that ah do but ah wouldn’t be afraid” (Eileen McEoghainn, CHA tenant). Likewise another interviewee said: “ma niece says the same thing: ‘it’s the one place ah feel safe an’ ah would walk through the Renton anytime’” (Jean Conway, Pastoral Council/resident). As a result of the physical and social regeneration one interviewee said that “the people are more aware now of their own status that they can hold their heads high and they’re not regarded as a dumping place for problem families” (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest).

The CHA director reported that social change in the village had taken place noticeably in the areas of housing, job creation and community organisation:

“the level of poverty we had before when 95% of tenants were on full or partial housing benefit, that’s gone down to close to 40%; even levels of housing related debt have fallen as well; between the Carman Centre, the Trust and the Cordale, we’ve created easily 300 jobs, created social businesses, and things have really turned on their head” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director).

In terms of housing one Cordale tenant reported: “I’m a very happy Cordale tenant because they are really really good to their tenants” (Collette Sibley, CHA tenant). The same interviewee said that “all the yucky stuff’s gone now ‘cause the houses were really full ae damp an’ issues an’ stuff like that” (Collette Sibley, CHA tenant). Yet another CHA tenant reported: “ah think they’re next tae none wae the service they give ye; ah think they are very very good, absolutely a terrific housing association” (Eileen McEoghainn, CHA tenant).

One interviewee observed “it’s just a lovely place, an’ they’ve got a lovely green area, an’ obviously they look after their pensioners an’ things like that” (Jeanette Cowan, Support Worker). Another interviewee said “you certainly notice a lot of structural changes than when I first started. The actual infra-structure of the village was a lot poorer; there’s been a lot of building” (Duncan Kane, Social Inclusion Partnership - SIP). The local councillor argued that not only housing but also public services had become more accessible to local people through the community organisations:

“the reason it’s been so successful is because the organisations have been reflecting what people saw as their priorities, and they’ve delivered them: the new health centre, the chemist, the shop, the new housing, the Carman Centre, the elderly care stuff” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).



Figure 20 New Local chemist

Yet another interviewee reported: “they’ve certainly transformed the Renton in a massive way, they’ve extended, an’ it’s a totally different area now from what it was” (George Gillespie, CPP). The CHA director declared that as a result of these physical changes people now see the village in another light:

“people in neighbouring communities previously looked at Renton and thought, ‘that’s Renton’; now they want Cordale Housing Association to come and solve their problems, and it’s not just houses; but it will be for local people to decide for themselves what they want, not us” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director).

Requests for the Renton Community-based Organisations to enter other towns and housing estates would indicate that the community experience of the past twenty years has regenerated the village and as the CHA director commented ‘its not just houses’. Not focusing solely on houses would also indicate that the community experience has generated other changes which go beyond the physical development: “ah think the people were quite happy wae the way the area was getting regenerated. Ah think it kinda gave them that sense ae empowerment” (Jeanette Cowan, Support Worker).



Figure 21 The New Health Centre

The Chairperson of Community Planning Partnership said:

“people from all over Scotland went along tae Renton, had a meetin’ in the Carman Centre an’ couldn’t believe the transformation that was there and how they achieved that, the housing and the Cordale Housing Association” (George Gillespie, CPP).

When CHA was created its founders declared that “it would not build houses for people to live their poverty in” (CHA mission statement, 1993). This declaration indicates that the community perceived the need to tackle wider socio-economic issues relating to poverty: “we would tackle the other social ills that wur affectin’ Renton an’ Cordale in particular at that time an’ that wuz the drug takin’, the lack ae educational attainment, the high teenage pregnancies, the post code stigmatisation in terms o’ job opportunities and further education” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The core group seemed to understand that social change was not solely about building houses and that the community-based organisations were engaged in “a pattern o’ delivery much broader than jist bricks an’ mortar” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

While recognising that the village has undergone significant change, the local councillor argued that “there is still relative poverty in relation to how wealthy our country is. There are still people living in this village who live below the recognised levels in terms of what they require to live on” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The Carman Centre and Renton Community Development Trust - RCDT were created with the intention of tackling poverty and the other social ills in the village but at the CHA Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2012 the CHA chair’s report did not mention RCDT or any local community initiatives (CHA, 2012). The report focused on the number of houses built, CHA accounts and the election of the new management committee. If CHA, RCDT and the Carman Centre are intrinsically linked in their objectives, then

some mention should have been made about CHA's contribution in further advancing the struggles of the people of Renton in partnership with RCDT and the Carman Centre. By focusing solely on housing issues and not mentioning how the CHA contributed to tackling wider issues of poverty in the village would indicate that the broader struggle to tackle poverty, which is "not just houses" (Stephen Gibson), has not been grasped by all of the CHA committee members.

There is a clear focus on physical change in the village but not necessarily linked to a defined broader strategy for change at national or international level. The core group seems to function in a coordinated manner: "to my mind it's all one organisation" (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest). However, the coordination experienced by the core group does not seem to reflect a coordinated strategy between the organisations in the village as evidenced at the CHA AGM in 2012 where no mention was made of the Carman Centre and the RCDT.

7.1.5 Vision and Strategy

The task of combining long term vision and strategy with short and medium term success is a constant challenge for any group involved in social change (Allman, 2001; Borg, 2002). A more long term vision is evidenced in some statements from the core group, as for example: "ah think that's a part ae us aw, that we've aw got they dreams, they hopes an' aspirations" (Archie Thomson, CDW). The same interviewee continued: "we need long term solutions wae the community engaged in it; we want tae engage in that process" (Archie Thomson, CDW). This vision is not necessarily shared by most interviewees, one of whom said "ye know somebody says, 'ye only want the power,' an' ah says 'ah don't want power, ye can keep the power, aw am interested in is the community and how it's getting affected'" (Bernie Kelly, resident).

The local councillor argued that social change occurred in the village not because of external input but as a result of the work delivered by the

community organisations, the groups and individual people in the village. The Carman Centre is a physical expression of social change and has become a reference point in the village. It is a place where local people go to meet friends in the cafe, use the library and IT suite, and also access advice on individual problems. The councillor believes that a combination of the attention dispensed by the staff in the Carman Centre and the size of the village make individual support more viable and effective: “it’s that ethos about recognising issues in a community, being able to help people and point them towards assistance and support, and you can’t create that, I think, in a huge organisation like a Council or a Health Board, but you can in a village setting” (Jim Bolland, Councillor). Another interviewee confirmed the councillor’s view of support for local people through the community organisations: “they’re really really helpful that way, and they understand that some people have problems” (Collette Sibley, CHA tenant).

The community-based organisations have also focused on employment to improve local peoples’ lives and to generate the financial support required to sustain the different community projects: “a consequence o’ the physical building wur economic opportunities” (Archie Thomson, CDW). With the intention of developing economic opportunities, the community, with support from CHA, acquired the post office and from there developed further projects to generate employment. The Carman Centre developed as a social enterprise and offered employment in the area of catering along with a wide range of social projects. By merging the Carman Centre and the Community Trust to create RCDT the community organisations could offer employment in the three subsidiaries, catering, education and training, and care.

The employment part of the experience proved to be a huge challenge because in many cases “we had people here who’d come out o’ unemployment and who had been maybe long term unemployed” (RCDT CEO). The community-controlled businesses offered apprenticeships which combined both study and practice “ye’ll no get aw the usual stuff where ye

get an apprentice where ye kid 'm on fur 9 months; he or she will be able tae go out an' deliver the job" (RCDT CEO). The community offered the possibility of work at the newly built special care housing complex, Waterside View, where the apprentices could experience "work on site, hands on stuff at Waterside View or in the community" (RCDT CEO). As a result of taking control over the socio-economic development of the village and in response to the national context of the lack of work "the social economy business is now one ae the biggest employers in the village; a think we employ about 17 or 18 people wae 22 volunteers" (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

However, unemployment was widespread nationally and the community-based organisations could not absorb all the work force in the village: "unemployment in the area disnae help either when it comes to buildin' community spirit "(Eileen McEoghainn, CHA tenant). Another interviewee said "there is so little work in the area that people are commuting more" (Jean Conway, Pastoral Council/resident). However, with support from the Carman Centre local people were "walkin in tae low paid menial jobs but still managing tae pay whatever contribution they could tae thur rent" (Archie Thomson, CDW). Even although local people were moving into low paid jobs, with the advent of the community-based organisations "people were maer economically active in terms ae bein confident enough tae go an' look fur jobs and wur no discriminated against in post code any maer" (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO).

From a political-economic perspective the core group seem to be aware of the contradictions in the employment context: "while we've got the capitalist system, which we disagree with, am afraid wur gonnae huv tae put money intae peoples' pockets, wur gonnae huv tae live wae that" (Jim Bollan, Councillor). Allman (2001) argued that "people need to experience and feel the difference, rather than just hear or read about it, if their consciousness is to undergo an authentic change" (2001,163). The people of Renton have experienced social change in the village over the past twenty

years, delivered through better housing and improved service delivery. One interviewee reported: “I think everything that has been done in Renton has been for the better” (Ann Neeson, resident).

The Renton community-based experience is an attempt at tackling poverty by focusing on local issues: “an’ we’ve done that wae tremendous success in Renton wae building shops an’ the doctor’s surgery an’ things like that but above all creatin’ subsidiaries that capture that wealth an’ then the boards reinvest that directly intae community activity” (Archie Thomson, CDW). However, the core group seem to have an understanding that social change experienced in the village is not reflected at national level: “this country’s got richer while the poor’s got poorer; that’s been done wae a whole plethora ae government programmes allegedly tae alleviate poverty an’ yet the poor huv got poorer” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

Allman (2001) argued that people needed to experience social change if their consciousness was to undergo an authentic change. While recognising that social change has occurred in Renton through the community-based organisations it is not clear if this social change has raised the level of awareness about the causes of poverty and oppression which the people of Renton continue to experience.

7.2. Participatory Democracy

The title of this thesis is “Popular Education, Participatory Democracy and Social Change: The Renton - A Case Study”. The first section of this chapter presented the interviewees’ perception of social change which occurred in the village over the past twenty years. The second section presents the findings in relation to local peoples’ participation and how they perceived their involvement in the process of social change in the village.

Seven themes emerged from the data that relate to local peoples’ participation under the heading of participatory democracy: local peoples’

participation; focus on local issues; local ownership and control; authoritarian control; Archie Thomson, Community Development Worker, Activist and Leader; community-based participation and political perspective. The themes are presented along with quotations from the data that illustrate the key points discussed by the interviewees.

7.2.1 Local Peoples' Participation

A recurring theme that emerged in the interviews was local peoples' participation. The number of people who wanted to participate in the Cordale Housing Association (CHA) management committee exceeded the places available: "they just wanted to get involved. People like interacting with one another in the Renton" (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director). The local councillor argued that when people acquire ownership of local assets, it stimulates the desire for more participation: "people in the association feel they've got real ownership as the process, then that excites them, and that's why a lot of people want to get involved" (Jim Bolland, Councillor).

Many residents had lost faith in any possible recovery from "the poor housing, anti-social behaviour and dismal living conditions experienced in the village since the Second World War" (Archie Thomson, CDW). However, over the past twenty years, local community activists and leaders have engaged village residents in a variety of activities, ranging from recreational events to public consultations. According to some interviewees, this has resulted in increased participation in the struggle to improve the socio-economic development of the village.

Several interviewees commented on the issue of participation; a support worker reported that the Carman Centre was constantly used by local people of all ages: "it was never lackin' people comin' in and it was always runnin' something for somebody, and it kinda spread out from a very young age to elderly people" (Jeanette Cowan, Support Worker). The community organisations' insistence on guaranteeing local peoples' participation was reflected at the CHA AGM of 2012 which was attended by 116 people with

11 candidates nominated for 10 places on the committee. The focus on participation was confirmed by another interviewee: “they involved the community and listened to the community and consulted with them in every way; they really did involve the community in the decision process” (George Gillespie, CPP).

The active involvement of local people in the community-based organisations influenced other organisations in the village including local churches. Typically, their physical assets were used only by their congregations, but with the upsurge in resident participation, they opened their doors to meetings that promoted the general well-being of the people of Renton: “I broke down all that and the hall was open to everybody” (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest).



Figure 22 St. Martin's RC Church, Renton



Figure 23 Local Church of Scotland, Renton

When local community activists decided to take control over part of the housing stock in the village and create the CHA, they immediately contracted a community development worker to help “reinvent a culture of participation, basically where people had a real say in what was happening in their community” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The community development worker post continues to encourage local people’s participation because “community development in the village is so important, so that people get an opportunity to develop themselves, and begin to look at the issues in their community, and to play a part and try to develop services that they need” (Jim Bolland, Councillor).

7.2.2 Focus on Local Issues

Most socio-economic problems in the village, - whether poor housing, anti-social behaviour or unemployment - are experienced in other parts of West Dunbartonshire and Scotland (SIMD, 2009). However, according to one interviewee the Renton community-based experience did not seem to go beyond the boundaries of the village and narrowly focused its attention on local issues: “certainly I never felt that the representatives from Renton were that interested in regeneration in West Dunbartonshire as a whole, but the interest was very very specific, about Renton” (Duncan Kane, SIP). This tendency towards a closed focus on local issues in the village is also evidenced in the relationship between CHA and other housing associations according to the same interviewee: “the Cordale Housing Association withdrew itself from most collective organisations of housing associations in West Dunbartonshire” (Duncan Kane, SIP).

However, the focus on local issues also seems to have generated a strong sense of identity among the people of Renton. Several interviewees defined themselves as ‘Rentonians’ (Bernie Kelly, resident) without necessarily identifying with the community-based organisations. Another interviewee said that “Renton is not Alexandria, neither is it Dumbarton, it’s very much a unique little place in itself” and the same interviewee continued: “the people of Renton are very enthusiastic about the new status of the village.

They're so delighted that the new housing through Cordale Housing has given a whole new image to the village" (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest)

Some authors argue that when people establish a local identity it can create strong communities and stimulate solidarity and democracy as well as other values (Mouffe, 1992; Ledwith, 2011) and this could be evidenced by some of the statements: "we're very proud tae come fae the Renton irrespective ae the physical conditions or the social conditions, because we come fae this wee piece ae land called the Renton, we're inherently proud ae that" (Archie Thomson, CDW).

On the other hand creating a local identity can become a source of separation and isolation, as expressed by two interviewees who found through experience that it is difficult for people from outside Renton to become part of the community: "what ah most learned is that it's a very very tight community, they look after their own, an' as ah said they don't like outsiders" (Jeanette Cowan, Support Worker). A second interviewee commented on the difficulty for 'non-Rentonians' to become part of the community but at the same time "found local people very friendly" (Collette Sibley, CHA tenant).

The Education and Training Manager and the Housing Care and Support Manager who work in the Carman Centre came from outside the village and were employed by the community. They commented that their appointment must have caused considerable discussion as there is a strong focus on employing local people. The CEO of the Renton Community Development Trust (RCDT) advocates in favour of local people taking on the jobs in the village. He explained that currently the community needed to engage with lawyers and accountants from outside Renton, however in the future, "once there are lawyers and accountants from Renton, the community will not need to contract people from outside the village" (RCDT CEO). This is indicative of how, on the one hand, the community experience is focused on helping improve local peoples' lives through generating employment, but on

the other hand, this strong focus on local people can lend itself to possible isolation, in the belief that solutions to all the problems in the village lie solely within the village and only with the people who live there.

Arguably, this local inward-looking focus could indicate a short-sighted perception of the extent of the problems facing the local community, generating an authoritarian form of self-sufficiency. Several interviewees expressed concern around this issue: “they [the community leaders] think they have the only shining path towards some kind of community regeneration” (Duncan Kane, SIP). However, the core group seemed to be looking out for others to support and join the organisations: “we don’t want tae be seen as being isolated. We’re sayin’ ‘look come along’ tae the council, the health board, ‘put yur name next tae us, put the resources in and we’ll certainly let ye share in our experience’. But the key thing has always got tae be that local people are in control” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The RCDT CEO argued that the community is capable of reaching out beyond its own geographical boundaries. Even though Renton might be considered a deprived area (SIMD, 2009), the Renton Community-based Organisations supported the construction of a school in Africa, generating the necessary funds locally and actively involving local people in going to Africa to help build the school. The RCDT CEO viewed this as a gesture of solidarity with people living in poverty in the Majority World: “you see people who are in need and maybe a bit more in need than us and we need to help people” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). It is not clear to what extent the support for the construction of a school in Africa was a gesture of solidarity or charity, or perhaps even a mixture of both.

In terms of Scotland the core group argued that the Renton community-based experience had, perhaps unintentionally, reached out beyond the village boundaries. It had become “part ae the collective decision making process noo, that’s heavily influencin’ central government; we didnae set out tae dae that” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The CHA director argued that as

a result of the participatory processes created in the village, the four organisations meet the needs of local people and are portrayed throughout Scotland as a model of good practice: “we’re reflecting what local people are saying and that’s being reflected now at a West Dunbartonshire level and also at a national level” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director).

7.2.3 Local Ownership and Control

According to the CHA Director, the community experience of the past twenty years led by the community-based organisations is a success because it has guaranteed what people in the village initially wanted and has created new possibilities, all of which came from peoples’ participation: “it all came from participation; we cracked the shops, we were on our way to cracking the housing, the environment was improving, then something new came along, which was specialised housing for older people” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director).

Prior to local community ownership of physical assets in the village different Local Authorities imposed projects on the community that were conceived and planned outside the village, with little or no community participation. This is confirmed by five interviewees, one of whom declared:

“we were sick to the teeth of the government and Strathclyde Region coming in with these projects, ye know, the suits coming in on a Monday morning; ‘look at this we’ve got money from Europe, look at this lovely project we’ve got for you,’ all singing, all dancing and then two years later they would shut the briefcases and go away and nothing had changed” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The community development worker confirmed that it has been difficult to work with government agencies in general because the Renton Community-based Organisations were “always seen as radical always on the outside, no people tae be really workin wae, workin towards or learnin anything from an’ ah talk mainly about the establishment, local government an’ their

agents” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The relationship between the Renton community-based experience and local government over the past twenty years has been tense: “a lot of it has been very fractious, our relationship with the Council” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). The RCDT CEO said that “regarding West Dunbartonshire Council, it’s in spite of some of the barriers that they have put in front of us that we’ve managed to get to where we are today” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO).

Jim Bollan is a socialist councillor and a member of the core group since the Renton community-based experience began. He is a link with local government, but in terms of Political Party representation at West Dunbartonshire Council sessions, he is the only councillor from the Scottish Socialist Party. In order to pass any proposal he has to negotiate and establish alliances with councillors from other Parties. This does not seem to be a hurdle because “the Council, the administration in the Council, for me, doesn’t have the solution” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). Nevertheless, the core group still envisage a role for the Council, distinct from that of the local community: “the difference in the Renton model has been that we’ve consciously tried to acknowledge the role that the state, through the Council, has got to play and there have been a lot of attempts at dialogue” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The RCDT CEO argued that there is a need for a local Council but he also argued that the Local Authority budget should be distributed according to the contribution from the different areas and it should be controlled and spent by local communities. This fits well with the community-based organisations’ position that not only should the community own and control local assets but it should also have sufficient funds in order to deliver services.

The Renton community owns and controls the CHA, the Carman Centre and the Ma Centre. The two Centres constitute the physical structure of the Renton Community Development Trust (RCDT). As a result of community

ownership of these physical assets the core group argues that the community has more power and control over what takes place in the village to the extent that “the Council cannot come in and say: ‘right, now we’re going to do this and you’ll need to do that’ because they don’t have any say in it any longer, and I think that’s crucial” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). To reach this level of community ownership and control has required many years of struggle “an’ they’ve had opposition but they’ve jist challenged an’ it’s jist as ah say, that’s how they’ve got to where they are now” (George Gillespie, CPP).

7.2.4 Leadership & Control

While community ownership of physical assets gave local people the opportunity to take control over the delivery of public services in the village, a number of interviewees commented that the Renton Community-based Organisations seemed to be controlled by a closed group of people: “it is the same family and friend members in the community who have been involved and I think it puts people off” (Ann Neeson, resident). One interviewee said that if someone did not agree with members of the core group, that person was excluded from participating to the extent that “if your name is Thomson you’ll do alright, that’s what a lot o’ people think” (Duncan Kane, SIP).

On the issue of people being excluded another interviewee reported that “there were people who were willing to pitch in their lot and weren’t made to feel welcome, so they backed out” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister). Yet another respondent expressed concern with control of the organisations by a small group: “ah don’t know whether it’s a clique, or like it is wae maest things, jist wee kinda cliques controlling things, but maybe that’s me jist bein’ paranoid or something” (Bernie Kelly, resident). One interviewee declared that “as the organisation grew it became overly reliant on Archie Thomson” (Anon).

The desire to secure the local peoples' control of the community organisations, to steer them in the agreed direction and protect them from disruptive and adverse external influences, can result in a form of authoritarianism, with a closed select group grabbing power (Peloso, 2001). The RCDT CEO explicitly declared that "we actually know what this community wants; naebody else can tell us. Nobody from outside can come in here an' tell us what the community wants" (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). This declaration gives the impression that only local people in the village have the ability to define what they need as if Renton existed outside the context of the current socio-economic model which affects every community in the world (Allman, 2001; Pilger, 2003; Klein, 2007). However, the RCDT CEO's declaration could also be a response to the projects imposed on the community by various Local Authorities during the years prior to the creation of the community-based organisations. According to the core group, these projects had no local participation and did not benefit the community. For the RCDT CEO, social change "disnae come from any kinda centralisation at all, it's better tae go out intae the communities 'cause communities know what they need" (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO).

The core group seem to be aware of the danger of developing an authoritarian form of leadership. One member of the core group declared that he might have abused his position as a leader in the community and openly expressed his difficulty in dealing with it:

"an' ah hope, an' sometimes ah pray, that av no abused ma position ae power, although am sure ah huv, as anybody that's hud or ever dealt wae power, am sure abused it, bae jookin' the queue, or getting' a free ride here or there, or ye know, sorta adjustin' the system tae suit therself" (Archie Thomson, CDW).

According to one interviewee, the community development worker did abuse his position of power and used the community experience for his own personal interests. The same interviewee reported that at the Carman

Centre there was a high turnover of managers because “basically you had to do what Archie said, and if you didn’t, he really went for you big time” and as a result “half of Renton likes him and what’s been done, and half of Renton hates him and despises what’s been done” (Anon). According to the CPP Chair varied expressions of individual and collective tight control over communities were apparent in several areas in West Dunbartonshire and: “that’s something ah think that needs tae be looked at, needs tae be watched, that these areas don’t jist become someone’s possession” (George Gillespie, CPP).

Some interviewees expressed concern and doubt as to whether the creation of the CHA and RCDT, together with the acquisition of the Carman Centre, involved all the people of Renton: “it wasn’t a hugely popular initiative in the sense that it involved everybody across the whole community, but grassroots, yeah” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister). Another interviewee reported that the community experience was tightly controlled: “av heard people say that they’re not happy with the way things have gone; they feel that it’s been sort of hijacked by certain people and these people are obviously taking control of it” (George Gillespie, CPP). One of the interviewees suggested that control is concentrated in one person: “Archie takes control over it, I don’t think the community takes control over it and other people felt the same and they were then marginalised and excluded” (Anon). One interviewee suggested that perhaps due to some of the leaders’ previous lifestyles “there was a wee bit of intimidation around that would have left you saying ‘how democratic is this?’” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister).

One respondent expressed concern about how workers from outside Renton were treated: “I’d actually began tae believe that the Renton people, maybe not all of them, maybe the ones that ah worked with, weren’t very welcomin’ tae outsiders” (Jeanette Cowan, Support Worker). The same interviewee’s experience led her to declare that “if there was a position that I would have liked tae take noo, a job or anything in the Renton, a

wouldnae go near it” (Jeanette Cowan, Support Worker). Another interviewee reported that many people did not agree with the way in which the community experience developed and felt excluded to the extent that “they wouldn’t go near it, they wouldn’t touch it with a barge pole because of who was involved and how they had been treated by them in the past and so forth” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister). Yet another interviewee said: “there are people who won’t go even near the Carman Centre because of how it’s run and who runs it” (Duncan Kane, SIP).

In spite of comments about a closed group securing control, all of the interviewees agreed that the Renton Community-based Organisations engaged with local people: “it was a grassroots initiative and it was probably done by people who were more politically aware than I was and were able to marshal the forces” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister). However, one interviewee reported that the community-based experience was a source of division in the village: “ah can’t see how there could be a tremendous moving forward of a community that’s so divided” (Duncan Kane, SIP).

All four community controlled organisations, CHA, RCDT, the Carman Centre and the Ma Centre, have policies and structures in place which guarantee local peoples’ participation (CHA & RCDT mission statement and structure). Nevertheless, the issue of participation divided the interviewees. The core group argue that the organisations are participatory and democratic: “it’s this continual engagement wae people tae understand yur community, tae know an’ consult yur community constantly, aboot what its needs ur, what its hopes an’ aspirations ur” (Archie Thomson, CDW). Another interviewee reported that participation seemed more a declaration of intent rather than practice: “ye need to look at how authentically democratic those organisations are. I’m willin tae bet they’re not, an’ that’s the problem. Ye’ve got tae be authentic about it” (Duncan Kane, SIP).

7.2.5 Archie Thomson - Community Development Worker, Activist & Leader

The reason for dedicating a section of this thesis to discuss Archie Thomson's leadership is because he was mentioned by all but one of the nineteen interviewees. He was employed by the Renton Community Development Trust as a paid community development worker and was also the chair of the Cordale Housing Association Management Committee. Archie Thomson has spent most of his life in the village and has been actively involved in the development of the community-based organisations since their inception in 1993, emerging as one of the leaders of the core group.

The Renton Community-based Organisations developed under the leadership of local people. Several interviewees commented that different members of the community had influenced the changes in the village: "Archie Thomson was one and the representative of the RC Church, Bernard Kelly. Archie had the pulse of the area very much and Jim Bollan was very enthusiastic about developing the village" (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest). Local church leaders themselves were involved from the beginning: "Jimmy Diamond and then the new minister John Chalmers were both involved" (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest). Another interviewee commented on the commitment of the RCDT CEO: "av always found Drew McEoghainn tae be so up beat about the things that they are doin' and tryin' tae do" (Jean Conway, resident).

A community development worker has been an integral part of the community experience from its inception. The worker has a pivotal role in supporting local peoples' participation because "community development needs tae happen, tae make sure that what we've established at the moment is sustainable and is delivered intae the future fur generations tae come" (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

A wide range of attributes were required of the Renton community development worker among which were knowledge of local issues and the

ability to engage with local people to tackle these issues. One interviewee reported that “it needs people who have got the ability tae do that and I think a name that comes tae mind is obviously Archie Thomson. He took a lead role and ah think he’s achieved what he set out tae achieve in that area” (George Gillespie, CPP).

Archie became recognised as a leader for different reasons, one of which he described as his steadfastness in expressing his opinion about what happens in the village:

“So anytime that issues have been raised, av no been feart tae express an opinion. Av no been feart tae put maself forward. An’ no sae much expressin’ an opinion, but expressin’ an opposite opinion fae what’s been fed tae us. An’ I think that’s what’s made me look or feel like a leader, because ma opinions huvnae always ran wae the grain” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

He also commented that his leadership was forged through struggle:

“So av emerged as a leader as opposed tae ah was born a leader. When ah look back at things, ah wis in a ‘Right Tae Work’ March in 1972 where we walked fae Glesgae tae London an’ ah emerged through that process as a leader” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

The involvement of the community development worker in the Renton Community-based Organisations is also rooted in his personal identification with the struggle against oppression: “ah don’t like tae see the wee man bein’ beat for some reason, it’s jist somethin’ that’s always personally hit me” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

He is aware of his leadership role but also that he is not the only person responsible for the development of the community-based experience: “what a would refute is that it’s solely been doon tae me, it wouldnae be possible”

(Archie Thomson, CDW). He said that new leaders have emerged in the struggle that created CHA and RCDT: “we’ve had a lot ae new people come tae the Renton, through the endeavours of no jist me, but other people, noo within the collective leadership, which is Cordale Housing Association an’ the Development Trust” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

A range of social theorists identified with revolutionary social practice have influenced the community development worker’s leadership: “Marx still influences me, so does Trotsky and Engels and some ae the great leaders and of course some ae the great teachers like Freire and Guevara” (Archie Thomson, CDW). As a result of his identification with these revolutionary social theorists his aspiration was much more than improving social housing conditions in the village: “ma aspiration wiz control an’ change, an’ social upheaval, am much maer forward thinking” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

The community development worker’s forward thinking together with that of the other members of the core group has pushed the community experience well beyond a community-based housing association. The community-based organisations have grown in line with the CHA mission statement “not to build houses for people to live their poverty in” (CHA mission statement). The CHA, the Carman Centre, the Community Trust and more recently the Ma Centre are all an integral part of efforts to support local people in their struggle to eradicate poverty. This struggle has generated a sense of responsibility at community level and in particular for the community leaders: “so even some ae us who ur maer experienced, jist don’t quite unerston the consequences o’ whit we’ve done, the ramifications fae that “(Archie Thomson, CDW).

Archie Thomson’s leadership has provoked a wide range of mixed feelings: “there are contradictions, I mean, I am also saying underneath it all that actually I quite liked Archie; Archie’s a challenging kinda guy” (Anon 1)). Another interviewee reported that “it’s tremendous credit to Thomson. He’s

a good organiser, has a good brain, he has a good overview of the needs of the village” (Anon 2).

In spite of the differences of opinion regarding Archie Thomson’s leadership, most interviewees agreed that the community experience had remained under local control. One interviewee said that the local community had to be actively participating in every stage of the community experience otherwise local people would not have grasped what it represents for the village: “I can see now why me driving it, or folk like me driving it, would have left these people equally disenfranchised and distant from it” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister).

Another interviewee gave more credit to the local councillor Jim Bolla, and Archie Thomson’s father, known as Archie Thomson senior, as the main leaders in the creation and development of the community experience: “the whole idea for a housing association at that stage was being led by Jim Bolla, who was the local councillor and Archie Thomson senior; those two had a ragtail of supporters, some of whom still take part in the housing association” (Anon 3).

The data show that there are divided opinions regarding the current community development worker’s leadership, but according to one interviewee this is an inherent characteristic of any political leader: “to have a very strong community activist, I’d always seen as something very positive, but anything that’s political has the potential for divisiveness” (Anon 1).

7.2.6 Community-based Participation

It would seem, in theory at least, that all three community controlled organisations have a strong concern with local peoples’ participation: “we can’t just make our own decisions, its got tae be about participation at all levels” (Iain McLelland & Susan Gunn, Education & Care Managers). Perhaps for this reason one interviewee said: “I can see why my sort of attempts to

push it through on much more of a private investment initiative wouldn't sit well with them, but I was young at the time, I just wanted to get it done" (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister).

The core group argue that community-controlled organisations like the Carman Centre, the Ma Centre, RCDT and CHA, must constantly consult local people on issues affecting their village and guarantee their participation in the decision-making. Consultation with local people is crucial because "too many people have come in, parachuted in, took the money, set up projects that were there to fail, never consulted the community, and then went away again" (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). It is through creating the necessary channels for participation that "there's an opportunity fur people tae begin tae talk through their needs and tae come up wae solutions" (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

Amidst the diverse perceptions of participation, 'top-down' intervention in the village by any agency or organisation was challenged: "that's the difference fae how the big agencies approach deliverin' services, it's top doon, but in the Renton it's fae the bottom up, an' ah think that that's wan ae the reasons it's been successful" (Jim Bollan, Councillor). One of the interviewees questioned the core group's view that most agencies and government organisations were against the community: "not every official that worked for the Council or the Partnership was a bad person" (Duncan Kane, SIP).

According to the core group the approach adopted by the community-based organisations was in direct contrast to what local government and other government agencies proposed: "we need tae trust people and sadly a lot ae the external agencies don't trust people, they still believe in this old patronisin' attitude that because they're the big organisation wae the professionals, they know the solutions tae peoples' problems" (Jim Bollan, Councillor). The core group embraced an alternative perspective based on a relationship of trust in local people. This perspective was rooted in the

conviction that local people must be actively involved in discussing and delivering solutions to their needs: “we knew that the solutions were in the community itself and it was a question of how we could then get the tools to implement the solutions to the problems” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

All core group members agreed that social change through new housing, reduction in anti-social behaviour, the creation of CHA and RCDT, the acquisition of the Carman Centre and the Ma Centre and above all control over services delivered in the village, did not take place only because of them. Local people were actively involved at each stage: “whit’s happened didnae come aboot by two or three people sittin’ doon an’ decidin’ that wis whit they wur gonnae try and do. It came aboot because we got as many people as possible tae participate” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). It has also taken approximately twenty years for the community of Renton to reach this stage of ownership and control. During this time the core group argue that the community organisations have continually encouraged local peoples’ participation: “that’s been done over a long period ae time through public meetings an’ surveys; we’ve done surveys till there comin’ oot ae peoples’ ears; they were at wan stage sick wae so many surveys” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The idea that people had participated almost to the point of fatigue was nevertheless crucial in order to guarantee local peoples’ ownership of social change in the village “because if we didnae do that then we would be no better than the external organisations” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). These external organisations came to the village to impose ‘top-down’ solutions to the problems that they, and not local people, had decided were priority.

The core group argue that community participation has permeated the Renton community experience since its inception. A community-based structure is in place which supports local ownership of physical assets and control over the socio-economic development of the village. The interviewees express different opinions as regards to how participatory the

community experience has been, however, the community-based organisations exist and are an opportunity for local people to become actively involved in the different decision-making processes which the organisations promote, regarding the socio-economic development of the village.

7.2.7 Political Perspective

The core group was adamant about the need for local control over the delivery of public services in the village in order to guarantee the social change that the community-based organisations aspired to: “the key is that local people need tae be the drivin’ force, they need tae own the assets and they need tae be in control of the services that get delivered in their communities” (Jim Bolland, Councillor). Community control in Renton has not come without struggle, as one interviewee reported: “they’re in opposition tae everyone else, they’ve jist challenged, they’ve had that opposition an’ that’s how they’ve got to where they are” (George Gillespie, Community Planning Partnership). The same interviewee reported that when local communities start to take control over their socio-economic development some Local Governments see this as a threat to their authority and label the communities as activists: “when people get involved in their community they’re all activists and they’re all branded the same way and they [government agencies] don’t like this ‘activist business’ they keep sayin’ that they need new people” (George Gillespie, CPP).

The Renton Community Development Trust CEO linked the Renton community-based experience to a broader context and argued that “capitalism fundamentally cannot work; we need tae look after other people, an’ ah think that the only way forward fur that is fur society, community, tae get taegether an’ for us tae get the power” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). He argued that “whatever we’ve got here, we’ve got tae start speakin’ tae people, empower them tae say, ‘look go an’ take the reigns, take it away fae them’” (RCDT CEO). The community development worker also argued in favour of local peoples’ active

involvement in society: “we need a lot mair participant democracy where people get involved in things” (Archie Thomson, Community Development Worker).

These two interviewees linked the community experience focused on local issues in the village to a broader context. The involvement in society that both interviewees referred to seemed to indicate that local communities had a role to play in the struggle for radical social change at a global level: “ah think we’re gonnae need the true revolution tae overcome the injustice ae this world” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The RCDT CEO argued in favour of supporting other communities to encourage change: “we could go tae other places, an’ try an’ get the people an’ say, ‘look ye kin dae this, ye can fight against that system and ye can win’” (RCDT CEO). He advised that the challenge for other communities is not to reproduce the Renton experience, even less to promote individual people, but to adopt the underlying ethos of the initiative: “an’ ah think that’s whit we need tae go an’ say tae people that it’s not dependent on a person, it’s dependent on an ethos” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO).

The RCDT CEO was aware that the community experience was political but in comparing the Renton experience to the political context at national level he argued:

“We dae politics, not all of us agree on politics, but we don’t dae personalities, we try an’ keep that as far away fae it as possible, ‘cause as soon as that comes in, we end up wi’ Blair and Brown, that kinda stuff, that’s purely personalities” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO).

One interviewee expressed the opposite view, that the community experience cannot be separated from the personalities involved: “in the case of Renton, it would be almost impossible to have any kind of accurate understanding of the situation without taking into account the personalities involved” (Duncan Kane, SIP). The same interviewee argued that “people

who are at the forefront of some of the changes, especially the kinda building construction ones, are divisive characters and I would question it all because there is an exceedingly high amount of personality stuff in Renton” (Duncan Kane, SIP). This view is shared by another interviewee who reported: “ah think a lot of it is personalities; an’ ah think a lot ae the problems ye have in any group are personalities” (Jean Conway, Pastoral Council/resident).

The Renton Community-based Organisations generate wealth which is distributed among poor people and the RCDT CEO claims that the generation and distribution of wealth in the village is aligned to a political perspective: “the whole background to RCDT is that you’re empowering people to get the wealth captured in that area redistributed to the poorer people, that’s socialism” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). He was also in favour of linking up with other countries: “we believe that there’s nae point in us, in our community, tryin’ tae make our community a bit better an’ then no lookin’ at that tae try an’ go tae every other country” (RCDT CEO). It would seem that this perception of communities in other countries who are less fortunate led the community-based organisations to make a contribution in Africa by helping to build a school and also support a project in India.

The RCDT CEO also highlighted the village’s participation in the broader struggle for justice and freedom referring to the contribution made by the people of Renton in the Spanish civil war: “we quite recently wur lookin’ tae get a war memorial erected tae the fallen heroes fae the village who fought Fascism an’ Franco in Spain” (RCDT CEO). A memorial in the form of a Spanish bull was publicly unveiled in 2011 in front of the Ma Centre to commemorate the participation of the village in the fight against Fascism in Spain.

The local councillor argued that the difference between the Renton community experience and other communities is that the community-based organisations have taken ownership and control over local assets (Jim

Bollan, Councillor). Control over the assets does not seem to be an end in itself but is linked to a broader agenda for radical change: “what we are doing this for all comes back to a socialist ethos, a socialist ethos for the greater good, that’s what it’s about” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). Historically the village of Renton identified with radical change in society: “we’ve always had the revolutionary thing here in Renton, with people who have gone against the system, who stood up and went for Parties that were not part of the norm as such” (RCDT CEO). This stance continues to date according to the RCDT CEO: “an’ it is a breath o’ fresh air tae come here an’ have people surroundin ye that have the same basic ethos an’ it’s very much a socialist point o’ view” (RCDT CEO).

The CHA director agreed that “this [the community experience] is for the greater good, when you say greater good, that’s socialism” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director). However, he also argued that the experience could be perceived from another perspective: “I think from our take it’s more about commerciality than politics” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director). He questioned whether the community organisations had to identify with a socialist ethos referred to by other members of the core group: “Why does it need to be socialism, why does it need to be political, why can it not just be business development?” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director). From this point of view he argued that “it’s not radical anymore, it’s normal” and continued “I don’t think that we’re radical, I think we’re commercial, we’re business like and we make a difference with the money we generate” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director).

Three of the core group identify the community organisations’ political perspective with socialism. The CHA director seems to distance himself from the other three members of the core group and emphasises more a commercial-business development perspective. However, this difference as regards to the political perspective of the organisations does not seem to create a problem as the CHA director accepts that while the community

experience is a commercial business it is focused on the greater good of the people of Renton which the core group identify as socialism.

The other three members of the core group agreed that the community experience had a commercial-business dimension and generated financial resources which were used for the benefit of the entire community. However, the Renton Community-based Organisations are not merely commercial businesses focused solely on generating finance to distribute in the community. The commercial-business dimension has evolved and financial resources have been generated through active involvement of the community where people have acquired the ability to stand up and fight for their rights: “we’ve had that empowerment and people feel a kind of, ‘well, I’ve got a right to say no to this’” (Drew McEoghainn RCDT CEO).

One interviewee reported that the struggle for social change can be challenging in certain areas of Scotland: “you learn that these places really do have to fight hard to stand up for themselves” (Anon). The struggles that local communities embrace can be complex and contradictory, but in the case of the people involved in the Renton experience one interviewee reported: “they are very minded with regards to how tae fight and tackle oppression” (Anon). The same interviewee said that “it requires a kind of mindset change from something from part of Renton, from Cordale, to something which is quite bigger” (Anon). Another interviewee also commented that it will always be difficult for everyone to agree with the political stance of the community-based organisations but in terms of social change the physical aspect is apparent: “maybe people don’t like it, but they’ve got tae acknowledge that it’s there tae see, it is visually there” (George Gillespie, CPP).

Another interviewee argued that radical decisions were made in order to reach the current level of participation and ownership among which was the creation of a community-based housing association. The creation of CHA also forced local community leaders “to revisit their understanding of the

role of the Council and the local community in relation to social housing” (Anon). The same interviewee reported that “Archie Thomson junior and others in the group couldn’t necessarily get their heads round that initially, they weren’t very happy about having a housing association as it wasn’t what you did, you supported the Council” (Anon). However, having envisaged the possibility of ownership and control over the delivery of public services in the village combined with the need to confront the privatisation policy of the Thatcher Government regarding social housing “it seemed like a radical thing to do for Renton, because Renton historically had been a left wing village and Jim was a left wing councillor” (Anon).

Redefining the role of the Council and the local community was not an easy task as the community development worker reported: “an’ that wis a cultural change where people, ah think, through political indoctrination an’ through yur lack ae activity, had gied aw that responsibility away in the early 70s an’ early 80s” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The RCDT CEO suggested that perhaps in the 70s and 80s people believed that the Council would defend public services and care for the most vulnerable but in the current context “people get so disheartened ‘cause politicians jist dae whit they want tae dae” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO).

While the political perspective of the experience identifies with socialism the core group also argued that in order to survive in the current socio-economic context the organisations had to generate financial resources. These resources are reinvested in the community but also serve the purpose of supporting other communities through gestures of solidarity: “last year again, we donated 73.5K to charity through doing business” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO).

The community development worker agreed with the importance of owning local assets and generating financial resources, but most of all that local people were empowered in the process and argued “we urny jist about bricks an’ mortar, oor biggest asset in this community is the people that live

in it, that's the biggest asset we've got" (Archie Thomson, CDW). The RCDT CEO also confirmed that the success of the community experience was down to local people engaging and making change happen in the village: "whether you want to call it a socialist utopia or what, we're not here for our own finance, this is people working for each other; it's working well and bringing success" (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO).

The Renton Community-based Organisations have engaged in the struggle for social change in the village over the past twenty years and have promoted participatory activities to involve local people in the different decision-making instances. Some interviewees perceived in these activities an expression of a new role for education which was to promote a new perception of the poverty and injustice experienced in the village and involve more local people in the struggles for social change.

Guaranteeing local peoples' active participation, engaging in the struggle for social change, challenging the capitalist model of socio-economic development are all characteristics of popular education. Popular education promotes a critical analysis of the oppressive structures which sustain the current socio-economic model and situates local struggles in the broader context of the struggle for a just and equitable society. The political perspective of the Renton Community-based Organisations highlighted different aspects of popular education which I now turn to investigate in the findings on popular education.

7.3 Popular Education

The first and second sections of the research findings presented the interviewees' perception of the process of social change in the village and their participation in this process over the past twenty years. Some interviewees claimed that learning had occurred both individually and collectively in the struggle for social change and this third section presents the interviewees' perception of their learning under the heading of popular

education. Five themes emerged from the data generated under the heading of popular education: education - training for employment; a community school; a broader agenda; the political-ideological stance and a political-pedagogical process.

7.3.1 Education - Training for Employment

The CEO of the Renton Community Development Trust said that education should make local people employable as for example in relation to care work: “what we’re lookin at is a care apprenticeship and at the end o’ that they will be fit fur purpose” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). He argued that one of the flaws of the current educational system is that education is separated from everyday life, distant from the world of work; people come out of education with “the educational background but they’ve no got the hands-on stuff” (RCDT CEO). The community-based organisations link education to employment which consists of “two tiers; we’ll have people come through here who will get their education in the Carman Centre an’ they’ll get their hands-on experience in Waterside View” (RCDT CEO). Waterside View is a building complex of one-bedroom flats for local people who require a high level of care, built by CHA and managed by one of the RCDT subsidiaries.

Certificated SVQ training sessions are promoted at the Carman Centre with the intention of preparing people for employment. The focus on education as training for work is confirmed by another interviewee: “we’re currently settin’ up an’ workin’ on providin’ education an’ trainin’ fur young people, tae try an’ get intae the job market” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). The delivery of SVQ certificated training sessions is also a means of generating financial support for community education according to the Education and Training Manager. He reported that “social care training for different organisations is delivered in the hope that they would pay commercially for that training and those funds would then pay for community-based learning” (Iain McLelland, Education and Training Manager).

The training sessions are based on the SVQ curriculum. The Education and Training Manager and the Housing Support Service Manager who delivered the sessions envisaged their role as facilitators because “with vocational learning you really shouldn’t teach; it’s a case of assessing peoples’ skills in the job role that they’re doing” (Susan Gunn, Housing Support Service Manager). Both managers said that their task was to facilitate access to the content proposed on each certificated course: “rather than educators, my mindset has always been as a facilitator using the guidelines that are there and the units that are there to match the requirements of the award” (Iain McLelland, Education and Training Manager). Working in the community has also been a learning experience for both managers who reported on how they had grown in their knowledge of “the importance of working with people, understanding community issues that people are extremely passionate about” (Susan Gunn, Housing Support Service Manager).

Both managers agreed that the courses responded to local peoples’ requests, which were focused on employment: “they’re coming to a course that they want to do, that hopefully might get them a job” (Iain McLelland, Education and Training Manager). However, both managers also agreed that in spite of the strong focus on employment, other learning took place: “most people, if not all of the candidates I assessed, did learn be it codes of practice be it theories of human growth and development or whatever so there was a bit of learning going on” (Iain McLelland, Education and Training Manager).

7.3.2 A Community School

According to the CHA director local people wanted to have their own community school. He argued that the community organisations should build a community school which would be different from mainstream schools:

“I think it would be aspirational of us to look at a school out-with the traditional school, where people could learn and part of that learning will

be learning to be a bricklayer, it will be training, but they will learn broader skills as well (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director).

The local community development worker was also in favour of building a community school that would deliver education with a broader focus: “so if we develop this physical building into a learnin’ centre then that is the methodology we will propose tae people. Come here an’ learn in a way that you can understand and cope wae” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

The local councillor argued in favour of a community school because “the system that young people are given in terms ae thur education disnae fulfil the needs ae the individuals, it fulfils the needs of, fur want ae a better description, the capitalist system” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). The core group is aware that to install a new approach to education is a difficult task also because there are “people tryin’ tae suppress us tae keep us in wur position, that we don’t know wur place in life, we don’t know wur place in society; that popular education isnae a real tool, we need tae be university educated” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

The core group was challenged by other housing associations when it discussed the possibility of building a community school, to which the group replied: “But whit’s one ae the main basic building blocks ae the community- education?” (Archie Thomson, CDW). Not only did the core group want to build the school but also wanted to participate in the curriculum that the school would deliver to the community: “we can build the school cheaper fur the local council an’ by doin’ that we can reinvest in the fabric and in the content of the curriculum within that school” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The RCDT CEO referred to a basic principle of the community organisations which was to attend to local peoples’ needs and argued that one of these basic needs was access to education: “oor target is tae try and look at what needs there are in the village and in terms ae education we think that it would be totally different from what is currently taught in a normal primary school” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). The local

councillor argued that “we eventually see no reason why the community in Renton couldnae build and indeed partially staff a community school” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The core group perceived the community school as an expression of their educational stance. It would challenge the current educational system: “it definitely wid need tae be a different type of learning facility, different fae the wans that we currently have, which I think are quite frankly in a straightjacket” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). The community school would be a hub which would deliver a variety of activities: “it would be a real community school that would deliver a whole range ae different services through that building” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). The school would embrace a broader agenda and not only prepare local people for work; it would be “much maer a cultural experience o’ what’s roon about ye whits yur potential an’ that” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

7.3.3 Education - A Broader Agenda

For some interviewees, education is a means for preparing local people for the world of work while others see in education a possibility for creating a community school with an alternative curriculum. Whatever the focus it would seem that education plays an important part in the Renton community-based experience. However, other opinions emerged from the data about the role of education. The local councillor, for example, argued in favour of a broader agenda: “I think that we need to get away from the single issue of education as getting ready for work and it needs to become something a lot broader, both for the individual and for the collective” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The core group recognised the importance and relevance of local people’s knowledge acquired through life and that it should be considered as an integral part of their learning:

“we aw have a brain an’ we aw huv the capacity tae learn, so it’s about learnin’ in its true sense instead ae just bankin’ aw that knowledge oot ae wan book in tae wan brain.” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

The RCDT CEO also argued in favour of engaging proactively to establish a broader agenda for education: “we need to open peoples’ minds up as well” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). For this to occur he said that the community-based organisations should be open to new ideas and experiences that take place at national and international level: “so it’s important that we always keep looking round about the world to see things that are working really really well and to make sure that we are bringing that back to people” (RCDT CEO). All four members of the core group, albeit with different emphases, agreed that education should also help local people develop and broaden their vision of the world: “we should make sure that each individual has the opportunity to develop their mind in a whole range of things and not be curtailed as they are at the moment in the present system” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The local councillor argued that the main trend in the current educational system is to prepare people for the capitalist employment market. He proposed a different role for education among which was to help people understand what the current socio-economic model proposes and the alternatives that exist: “we can’t just say to people, your purpose in life is to go through the education system then go into a factory, no, there’s a lot more to life than that, definitely” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). He envisaged a role for education which not only prepared local people for work to guarantee their personal sustainability but also took advantage of the educational system to critically analyse the socio-economic context. Aware that capitalism has an interest in educating for the purpose of supporting and guaranteeing continuity of the present system he argued that

“it [education] is all geared to make sure that capitalism continues to tick over. And I’m not saying that it’s not important for people to get

employment, of course it is, it's fundamental, but there needs to be other things. We need to open up people's horizons a bit, about why do we have poverty and is it right?" (Jim Bolland, Councillor).

The community development worker agreed with this approach to education and confirmed that the aim of education was "to educate people to be aware of the circumstances that they're in and the power that they have to make that change" (Archie Thomson, CDW). It would seem that the core group perceived the importance of local people being adequately prepared to enter the world of work to guarantee their personal sustainability. However, it would also seem that they did not envisage education solely for this purpose.

All four members of the core group agree that education is crucial in order to guarantee the sustainability of the community experience. The core group criticise the current mainstream education system, accusing it of straight-jacketing people to accept the capitalist system, preparing people solely for employment. The education that the core group refers to is one that opens people's minds and helps them understand and challenge the socio-economic context in which they are situated. It is education that values local people's knowledge and builds on that knowledge to support people in their struggle to eradicate poverty. Education which challenges the current socio-economic context and engages in the struggle to eradicate poverty is intensely political and embraces a political-ideological stance focused on radical social change.

Chapter three discussed popular education as education from the perspective of the oppressed (Freire, 1972), with a clear political focus which is critical of the current socio-economic model (PEN/Crowther et al, 2005). Popular education proposes an alternative educational process which requires critically analysing society and engaging in the struggle for social change. This alternative educational process also challenges the ideological content which sustains the current socio-economic model (Galeano, 1987;

Boff, 2003). In order to analyse to what extent the Renton community experience identifies with popular education the political-ideological stance of the community organisations requires closer examination.

7.3.4 The Political-Ideological Stance of RCBO

The local councillor said that the Renton Community-based Organisations were created as a challenge to the Thatcher Government, whose proposals were geared towards introducing the private sector to social housing:

“the Thatcher government was on the brink of transferring large sections ae stock tae the private sector and people in the village knew that if we didnae make a move then, that could happen tae people in Renton” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The creation of Cordale Housing Association, according to the local councillor, confronted the dominant political tendency at the time: “we established a locally controlled housing association tae subvert whit the government wis up tae an’ that wis how Cordale was created” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). This political stance embraced community-based housing associations as a challenge to private sector intervention in the public sphere: “the decision was taken at that time fur political reasons tae go doon the road of establishin’ a housin’ association” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The decision to create Cordale Housing Association according to the RCDT CEO is “the perfect example of what happens when you have a socialist ethos an’ you empower people” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). The community development worker seemed not to identify with any particular political position when referring to the decision to create the housing association: “now ye can call that capitalism, ye can call that organised socialism, ye can call it whatever ye want tae, ah don’t really care” (Archie Thomson, CDW). However, one interviewee declared: “I don’t think there’s any question that Archie is left wing” (Duncan Kane, SIP), and yet another

interviewee confirmed: “I wouldn’t say Archie Thomson’s a communist, but I’d say he’s quite left wing in his politics” (Jim Simcox, Parish Priest).

The CHA director confirmed that the political stance of the village was clearly socialist: “it’s steeped in politics, politically aware, politically astute and leaning towards socialism; there’s absolutely no doubt about it, ideologically, people in Renton are different, politically and ideologically really different” (Stephen Gibson, CHA Director). The RCDT CEO was emphatic in declaring his position and argued that “500 years o’ capitalism hasnae worked an ah think it wis Marx that said ‘it’s all consuming’ the whole point o’ capitalism, it’s got tae be all consuming, ye’ve got tae cut throats tae make you bigger an’ better” (RCDT CEO).

The local councillor is a member of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and declared that the Renton community-based experience of the past twenty years is “socialism in action, that’s how I see it, aye at street level” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). He argued that in the village “it’s each accordin’ tae thur need; that’s the basic principle that’s used” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). His view was that the community experience proposed an alternative to the capitalist system: “fur me as a socialist, it’s a small experiment that’s worked very very well; it’s definitely an alternative tae the way the capitalist system works in wur country at the moment” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). This alternative, to which the councillor referred, was and continues to be part of the SSP’s policies at grassroots level:

“a lot ae the things that wur daen in the Renton are part an’ parcel ae how the Scottish Socialist Party sees itself, as a Party buildin’ fae the street upwards, as opposed tae some ae the other big capitalist Parties like the Labour Party, the SNP and the Conservatives” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

One interviewee commented on the political stance of the community experience and argued that “they wanted to have a situation where they were seen as being radical and progressive, but at the same time they were

desperately trying to get all the money for themselves” (Duncan Kane, SIP). However, another interviewee recognised that the community organisations required financial resources to implement their decisions and the community leaders were aware of this: “I think they did see the bigger picture; yes, I think they knew exactly where they were and how they could access funding” (Anon).

The Renton Community-based Organisations seem to have developed with a specific political stance which, according to some interviewees, was not embraced by the entire village. One interviewee reported that some local people felt excluded because they were considered “too right wing to be ‘on board our ship’ and that, from my perspective, left some of us feeling a bit disenfranchised from the machinery of change” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister). The same interviewee said that it might have been due to the fact that he did not come from Renton: “when it came to some of the more politically sharpened issues, I think there were elements of the community that were a bit suspicious of the outsider who’d come in” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister).

Apart from the ‘outsider’ factor, which may have contributed to some people being excluded, the minister argued that “there was a political doctrine behind it which didn’t sit comfortably with other people” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister). He defined the political doctrine as “a sharp division between mainstream Labour-Socialist politics and Communist-Marxist driven ideals” (John Chalmers, Church of Scotland Minister). In spite of the political doctrine which the minister refers to, both churches, through the physical presence of the minister and local priest, supported the community organisations: “they [local priest and minister] were always at the different meetings for anything” (Jean Conway, Pastoral Council/resident). Their participation would perhaps indicate that the community organisations managed to bring together people in the village with different political views in order to attain what most people wanted for the village.

According to the Renton History Project - RHP (1988), the people of Renton have been actively involved in the struggles of the oppressed over many years which have led the community to identify with a left wing political stance. One interviewee reported that “Renton wis always communist even when it wis voting Labour, it wis always communist” (Susan Thomson, Community Activist). The same interviewee concluded that “if communism’s done right, that’s the way the world should be” (Susan Thomson, Community Activist). The local councillor also commented on the historical link between the people of Renton and the struggle for change:

“historically speaking in the Renton, in the Vale of Leven area, there has always been a strong political will and it’s been called Little Moscow and likened to the Red Clydeside as well. During the 1926 strike there were a lot of incidents down in Renton, so that history has always been there” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

This historical identification with left wing politics and the struggles of the oppressed continues to date. The Renton Community-based Organisations identify with communities in the Majority World because “when it boils down to it, it’s about redistribution of wealth and power in the world and we’ve got a lot more in common with people in India who are in poverty than with the capitalists in California” (Jim Bollan, Councillor). One community activist referred to the financial support for a community in India: “we’re startin’ tae link up tae India as well” (Susan Thomson, Community Activist) confirming the community’s identification with people in poverty. The same interviewee said that the Renton community engaged with a community in India because “there shouldn’t be rich and poor, hungry people and people stuffed tae the gills, an’ ah jist don’t unerston that” (Susan Thomson, Community Activist).

The interviewees expressed different understandings regarding the political-ideological stance of the community organisations. However, one

interviewee reported that the organisations were clearly led by people who were politically left wing. The CHA director described the community experience as a successful community-based commercial business experience but also admitted that the village is immersed in socialist politics. The remaining three members of the core group, together with other interviewees, openly declared that the community experience was part of a socialist proposal for society. All four members of the core group insisted on the importance and the need for ownership of local assets as a basis for local peoples' empowerment because "with owning the assets comes control and that's the key to it" (Jim Bollan, Councillor). As a result of the organisations' political stance they have challenged institutional power structures mainly at a Local Authority level. This challenge has required conviction and firmness of opinion because "my experience is that once local people start to question and get the knowledge and are able to actively take part, the people in power are not too happy" (George Gillespie, CPP).

The Renton Community-based Organisations are actively engaged in the struggle to eradicate poverty. The core group seems to be aware that this struggle entails challenging the current socio-economic model because "capitalism can only survive by creating poverty and if we did away with poverty, capitalism would end as well" (Jim Bollan, Councillor). The core group identify this struggle with socialism: "if you're involved in a community and you're saying this isn't for personal gain, that's socialism and it's great" (Drew McEwan, RCDT CEO).

The community organisations identify with a political-ideological stance which is against capitalism and in favour of socialism. The core group express openly their identification with socialism, albeit in different degrees of intensity. All four members of the core group agree that the Renton community experience is for the greater good of all the people in the village and this is reflected by most interviewees who agree that the organisations have improved the socio-economic development of the village.

The community organisations have put in place a series of democratic participatory structures in order to improve the socio-economic environment in the village. These structures are linked to a political stance identified with socialism which, while improving the socio-economic environment in the village, should also open peoples' minds to the causes of poverty and inequality in society.

The Renton community-based experience could be considered a pedagogical experience in the sense that possibilities of individual and collective learning are engrained in the day-to-day delivery of its activities. At this stage it is relevant to verify in the findings if the possibilities of individual and collective learning are part of a political-pedagogical process where local people acquire really useful knowledge which sustains their engagement in the struggle for social change

7.3.5 RCBO - A Political-Pedagogical Process

According to the community development worker the current capitalist society tries to convince people, and mainly poor people, to accept the context within which they were born and live: "there are people tryin' tae suppress us tae keep us in wur position, tellin' us that we don't know wur place in life, we don't know wur place in society" (Archie Thomson, CDW). He envisaged popular education as a tool which could challenge the way society is organised. This challenge requires an alternative educational process which would contest the current educational system focused on the needs of the current socio-economic model. From the findings it seems that an alternative educational process in Renton would be supportive of and have considerable input from the community-based organisations.

To engage in the struggle for social change with local people is in itself an educational task, according to the community development worker: "an' certainly as a human being, am very conscious of the way ah teach an' how ah engage wae people so that ah can impart some knowledge an' learn something fae them at the same time" (Archie Thomson, CDW). His

methodology is based on knowledge sharing where both educator and learner create and acquire knowledge. This knowledge sharing has a political focus, which, as the councillor argued, challenges the capitalist system and was confirmed by the community development worker: “an’ a’ll always reel against this system ‘cause it’s an unequal and unjust system” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

The Renton Community-based Organisations claim to be engaged in helping local people understand more about their living conditions, according to the local councillor: “I think a lot of people are aware of the poverty levels in the community and when they get involved it’s an outlet for them to express their views” (Jim Bolland, Councillor). This view is shared by the community development worker who declared that “locally ah would hope that we were leadin’ tae a bigger awareness ae who we are an’ what we can contribute” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The same worker believes that this bigger awareness improves peoples’ skills, upgrades their living conditions and generates knowledge about the world around them because “if we understand it better we can manage it better, get a better return” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

It seems that the core group embrace a political-ideological stance identified with socialism expressed in a political-pedagogical process which perhaps is not perceived by everyone who participates in the activities promoted by the community-based organisations. The core group is aware that not everyone in the village has embraced the struggle for social change to the same degree but seems to be aware that

“it’s much maer a cultural thing about learnin’ an’ sometimes it’s conscious an’ sometimes it’s unconscious but strategically that’s something wur very very aware of, so whatever we dae an’ however we dae it we try tae get that doon tae its most understandable level” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

The struggles of the past twenty years have been a source of learning for those who participated in the community organisations. One interviewee said that she learned how to make her own decisions about what is best for the community through meetings with Local Authority representatives and architects: “ah said tae them, ‘ye don’t treat me like an idiot, an’ don’t treat us like we’re aw sittin’ here believing every word ye say. Ah’ll sort it oot fur masel whit ye say’” (Susan Thomson, Community Activist). To be able to take part in this research is also a result of the same interviewee’s participation as a community activist: “years ago a wid never huv been able tae sit here an’ talk wae you like this” (Susan Thomson, Community Activist). The community activist’s comments seem to fit well with the core group’s understanding of education: “locally ah would hope that we were leadin’ tae a bigger awareness ae who we are an’ what we can contribute” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

The community organisations respect local peoples’ different learning patterns: “education is fantastic for a percentage of the population but for other people it’s maybe no their time tae learn, no the subjects they want tae learn an’ formal education husnae got the flexibility that we have at Carman” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). The Carman Centre organises a variety of courses where local people have the opportunity to acquire skills for work but can also engage with a broader agenda as exemplified in a course about creating a local radio: “so after eleven months you’ll get yur qualification; you’ll sit in here, you’ll study radio, but ye’ll study the different stuff, the physics behind it, the maths, the engineerin” (RCDT CEO).

The community development worker said that stimulating education has been an integral part of his role as a leader in the community: “an’ tae get they people tae follow ye I think ye need tae educate” (Archie Thomson, CDW). He also declared that education in the Renton Community-based Organisations is closely linked to local people’s participation and

empowerment: “if ye cannae delegate, if ye cannae educate and if ye cannae empower then what’s the point ae it?” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

The core group perceive in education a possibility of contributing to the struggle for social change. This struggle also entails challenging historical and cultural perceptions which are relevant to people in the West of Scotland. One of these perceptions is the historical division between Catholics and Protestants: “in Scotland ye need tae go tae a Catholic school or tae a non-denominational wan, we want tae change that perception (Archie Thomson, CDW). The community school is an opportunity to tackle this issue: “we’re proposing tae build a single campus school that will encompass the opportunity fur religions fae aw the world tae support their faith an’ be religiously educated” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

Education proposed by the Renton Community-based Organisations entails sharing acquired knowledge and being open to new learning: “an’ it’s continually knowin’ that there is somethin’ oot there tae be learnt an’ it should be lifelong” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The community development worker criticised education that sees learners as mere recipients to be filled: “it’s about learnin’ in its true sense instead ae just bankin’ aw that knowledge oot ae wan book in tae wan brain” (Archie Thomson, CDW). Sharing acquired knowledge and being open to new learning will eventually benefit the entire community and create a better place to live: “an’ ah believe that if yur open an’ receptive an’ prepared tae be educated as well as lea’ some germs ae education lyin’ aboot for some people tae pick up then you’ll get that social cohesion that everybody seems tae be strivin’ fur” (Archie Thomson, CDW).

There seems to be a growing awareness of the importance of education among the core group members: “we’re only noo beginnin’ tae pick up the issue of education, but that’s becomin’ a central part ae what we’re tryin’ tae do” (Drew McEoghainn RCDT CEO). It would also seem that the type of

education that the community organisations propose directly challenges what the current education system has to offer:

“we should make sure that each individual has got a broader opportunity to develop their mind in a whole range of things and not be curtailed as they are at the moment into education to get a job, there’s a lot more out there. It is extremely difficult but it is something I think we should be trying to look at” (Jim Bollan, Councillor).

The community development worker summed up his stance on education when he declared: “education fur me noo is the tool that’ll take things forward an’ if that leads tae revolution so be it” (Archie Thomson, CDW). From the interview material, the CDW’s stance on education seems to reflect the core group’s stance but not necessarily that of the entire community. The discussion about the political-ideological stance of the community-based organisations and the role of education seem to be restricted to the core group. Further investigation would be required to verify to what extent the core group’s political-ideological vision for the community-based organisations and the perception of the role of education are shared by the wider community in the village.

This section presented the research findings under three main headings of the thesis title; social change, participatory democracy and popular education. The findings highlighted a wide range of issues which emerged under these three main headings. Based on the research foundations discussed in part one I now turn to discuss the issues which emerged from the findings and respond to the research questions.

Chapter 8: Four Emerging Themes

This chapter discusses four themes which emerged from the research findings: community ownership and control; the Renton Community-based Organisations and the State; leadership; and the political perspective of the Renton Community-based Organisations.

8.1 Community Ownership and Control

The Renton Community-based Organisations (RCBO) claim that effective social change occurred in the village when they took ownership of local physical assets to deliver public services. When communities take control over the delivery of public services it could be considered an act of agency which empowers them (Gaventa, 1998). However, it could also be considered a convenient means for governments to unload responsibility for the delivery of public services on to communities (Craig & Mayo, 1995; Shaw, 2010). The core group seem to be aware of the possibility of the government unloading its responsibilities: “we won’t fall into this trap of taking on services that the state should be providing (Jim Bollan, Councillor). From the findings it did not transpire which services the state should provide and which services local communities should provide. However, by taking control over the delivery of public services in the village the core group claim that the Renton community proved that communities were capable of delivering public services and in the process challenged private sector intervention in the public sphere.

In chapter one I argued that privatisation is one of the pillars which sustain the current socio-economic model and is part of a control mechanism at a global level implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) through Structural Adjustment Programmes - SAPs (Klein, 2007; George, 2010). The IMF and WB are controlled by the Minority World countries at the behest of business and focus their intervention mainly on the Majority World countries (Pilger, 2002). However, privatisation, both in

the Minority and Majority Worlds, reduces the presence of the state in peoples' lives and minimises the public sphere (Albert, 2008). Governments identified with privatisation sell public companies to private entities which transform them into sources of individual profit. In creating the Cordale Housing Association (CHA) the Renton community took a political stance that forms part of a global movement which opposes the privatisation of the public sphere (WSF, 2009).

The core group argued that through community ownership of physical assets and control of the socio-economic development in the village, local people had better access to services and those who delivered the services were more accountable to the local community. However, to exercise control in the village has required of the Renton Community-based Organisations an intense engagement with commercial-business and managerial activities. Chapter four discussed a possible pitfall of communities becoming involved in commercial-business activities and argued that engaging in these activities can generate a bureaucratisation of communities and can reduce community work to administrative-managerial issues, "depoliticising the air" (Shaw, 2010).

Since 1997, terminology such as 'team work', 'partnership', 'cohesion in society', 'social/financial inclusion' has become common discourse to impose the New Right's agenda (Britto, 2006; Thompson, 2007). This terminology coupled with declarations like "we are all in this together" (Cameron, 2009) all contribute to "depoliticising the air" (Shaw, 2010), blurring possible distinctions in gender, race and class. The transfer of public services from government to communities and the subsequent responsibility to deliver them occurs in this current political-ideological context.

The core group argued that, twenty years ago, taking on the responsibility to deliver public services in the village was a challenge to the privatisation policy of the Thatcher Government. Since then the political context has

changed and local community control over the delivery of public services is now an integral part of government policy implemented through community trusts, foundations and social enterprises, a model which the RCBO have adopted. Consequently, in the current context of transferring public service delivery to the private sector as well as to communities, the RCBO could be considered supportive of the New Right agenda (Craig & Mayo, 1995).

Cornwall & Gaventa (2001) argued that the main discourse in terms of the delivery of public services is consumerist where communities are invited to be “users and choosers” (2001, 5). However, the same authors argued that taking control of the delivery of public services could generate empowerment which they identify with communities becoming “makers and shapers” (2001, 5) of public services and policies. The “making and shaping” which the authors refer to would give communities the opportunity to adjust public services according to local needs and influence government policy. In order to continue focused on the wider struggle for social change, intense engagement in formulating public policy and delivering public services would have to be counter-balanced by the RCBO evidencing the limitations of this engagement through promoting a critical awareness of the socio-economic and ideological context within which this engagement occurs (Coare & Johnstone, 2003; Ledwith, 2011).

When communities accept the responsibility for the delivery of public services they also take on the responsibility of accessing the necessary funding to guarantee that delivery. This responsibility entails competing in tendering processes with other bidders who at times are similar community groups. Promoting competition among community groups in fund-bidding disputes can create division and weaken the wider collective struggle for social change.

In order to maintain control over the socio-economic development of the village all four members of the core group agreed that the RCBO must continually strive to become more independent of external funding. Six of

the nineteen interviewees reported that financial independence was one of the RCBO's main objectives in order to "cut the umbilical cord of government and grant dependency" (Renton Community Development Trust CEO). Focusing on financial independence could also be interpreted as colluding with government policy to reduce spending in public services and cut grants to communities. However, through striving for financial independence it would seem that the RCBO are attempting to establish a new relationship of power with local government. This new relationship increases community control and reduces the possibility of local government implementing its policies and practice in the village without first discussing them with the community.

The RCBO generate wealth through rent collection, Housing Association Grants from Scottish Government and the surplus from the services delivered by the Renton Community Development Trust (RCDT). The core group argue that funding awarded to the village is not seen as a grant but as investment because the four locally controlled organisations invest funding to generate further wealth. These financial resources benefit the community through investing in the physical regeneration of the village and in projects which support local people to improve their living conditions. The RCDT CEO reported that on one occasion the Community Trust returned funding to the Local Authority because it was not needed at the time and perhaps other communities might have more need for the funding. This was a noble gesture of solidarity with other communities and could indicate that the RCBO had the ability to see beyond the geographical boundaries of the village and want to promote a more just and equitable distribution of public funds.

The RCBO have developed in the struggle to maintain community control over the socio-economic development of the village. Different tensions emerged in this struggle, one of which was the difficult relationship between the RCBO and local government. By taking ownership of physical assets and control over the delivery of public services in the village the

RCBO question the role of the state as the body ultimately responsible for guaranteeing the delivery of public services to its citizens (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001) and also question the role of communities in relation to social change (Ledwith, 2011).

Chapter two discussed the fatalistic-pragmatic discourse of the New Right which argues that the world is the way it is and that is the only way it can be (Freire, 1994; Mayo, 1995). By focusing on local ownership and control over public service delivery the Renton Community-based Organisations could be perceived as substituting the state, facilitating a practical solution to local problems and as a result feeding into the New Right's fatalistic-pragmatic discourse focused on helping local people access a house, a job and solve immediate individual problems without questioning and challenging the underlying causes of these problems. In order to counter the fatalistic-pragmatic discourse of the New Right the Renton Community-based Organisations would have to continually evaluate the effectiveness of taking ownership and control over public service delivery and their relationship with the state while continuing to engage in the wider struggle for social change.

8.2 Renton Community-based Organisations & the State

Chapter four highlighted the participation of former trade union and community leaders in left and left-of-centre governments in some South American countries which has stimulated debate around the role of the state and organisations in civil society in relation to social change. Some authors describe former leaders' participation in governmental organisations as having one foot in the state and the other in popular movements (Gadotti, 2004; Kane, 2005). Having one foot in governmental organisations could be an opportunity to influence government policy and practice and bolster support for popular movements. However, participating in government organisations could weaken the struggle for radical social change if former community and union leaders become absorbed in the

delivery of government agendas and distance themselves from their communities of origin (Gadotti, 2004). If the former leaders are co-opted and embrace the political-ideological stance of the state, which on many occasions has proved to be opposed to that of communities, then participation in government organisations can become detrimental, causing tension and disagreement between former community leaders and communities.

Over the last twenty years the RCBO participated sporadically in the Social Inclusion Partnership - SIP and the Community Planning Partnership - CPP. In chapter four I discussed the issue of 'state-invited' and 'community-created' spaces (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001) and Ledwith (2011) argued that participation in state-invited spaces should only be for a short period of time because the state is generally interested in short-term actions of amelioration rather than a more profound transformation of society. In state-invited spaces the government controls the agenda and administers the resources to implement the agenda which from the outset creates an unequal relationship between communities and the government with the balance of power in favour of the government (Craig et al, 2011).

The RCBO seem to have developed awareness about the limitations of participating in 'state-invited' spaces. This awareness could stem from the community's past experience of local and national government projects which, it claims did not benefit the community because the community did not participate in the elaboration and execution of the projects. The political perspective of the RCBO, which according to the core group perceives the socio-economic activities in the village as part of a broader agenda for social change, also contributes to this awareness. Consequently, the RCBO have adopted a cautious approach to participation in 'state-invited' spaces.

Community participation in state-invited spaces should be grounded in robust community-based support with continual feedback to the community

to determine whether participation in these spaces is contributing to community empowerment or is merely a tokenistic gesture by the government claiming to involve communities in decision-making processes (Craig et al, 2011). The RCBO core group argues that local communities should create their own spaces based on local ownership and control which would give communities more power when negotiating with the state. According to the core group, the RCBO are better positioned than most communities to engage in negotiations with the Local Authority due to having acquired power by gaining ownership and control over the socio-economic development in the village. The RCBO are community-created spaces and claim to have gained a degree of autonomy and power. According to the core group any proposal or project that an external agency or organisation intended to implement with success in the village would have to count on the support of the community-based organisations.

The RCBO claim that they have the right to be actively involved in the decision-making process which affects the socio-economic development of the village. Chapter four discussed the possibility of communities participating at every level of the decision-making process which affects their socio-economic development (Atkinson & Cope, 1997). I argued that there is an unjust imbalance in the decision-making process also because the state employees have more time and resources available than community representatives who are volunteers. The Cordale Housing Association (CHA) has a staff of nine people and the Renton Community Development Trust (RCDT) employs a full-time CEO together with the community development worker supported by the local councillor. Due to the importance that the RCBO give to participating in decision-making processes which affect the village, different employees of the RCBO are delegated to participate in state-invited decision-making instances that the RCBO consider relevant to the improvement of the socio-economic development of the village.

Participation in state-invited spaces can be time-consuming and requires dedication and preparation. Community representatives have to be able to analyse the socio-economic context and elaborate proposals that can improve the everyday life of the community they represent. Continual feedback to the community is essential to guarantee that the community representatives are promoting the community's development. Through feedback to the communities, the community representatives can be monitored by the community and will be less likely to succumb to co-option by governments.

Engaging in partnership with government structures could be a means of improving the socio-economic condition of people in the village. However, this engagement would have to be part of a wider strategy for social change otherwise the RCBO could be perceived as simply facilitating the delivery of government agenda without questioning the underlying issues which generate poverty and injustice. Collins' (1998) analysis of partnership between the state and communities illustrates how the partnership discourse uses terms that are interpreted from distinct political-ideological positions. For communities identified with the struggle for social change, engaging in partnerships with public and private sectors requires that these communities continually revisit their role in these partnerships to ascertain what they can attain in terms of increasing community empowerment and social change.

8.3 Leadership

The research findings indicate that four people have formal leadership roles in the RCBO, defined in this research as the core group: the Cordale Housing Association Director, the Renton Community Development Trust Chief Executive Officer, the Community Development Worker and the Local Councillor. Each one of them is involved in one or more decision-making fora of the Renton Community-based Organisations (RCBO) and all four have a shared long-term vision of what the RCBO are trying to achieve.

All four core group members agree that the activities delivered by the RCBO respond to local peoples' aspirations, and their role as leaders is to guarantee that the organisations continue to respond to those aspirations. The core group also argue that part of its role is to protect the achievements gained over the past twenty years. However, some interviewees reported that, perhaps as a result of the core group's focus on protecting the community's achievements, the RCBO had become closed around a small group of people who took control.

It has taken twenty years of struggle to reach the level of community organisation that the RCBO have achieved and they seem to be aware that having established the community organisations does not mean that those who oppose them will not continue to attempt to undermine them. To maintain this level of organisation has required strong leadership skills and continual dialogue with local people which the core group argue, have been developed over the years. The RCBO are engaged in delivering public services which entails dealing with the exercise of power and the community development worker (CDW) recognised that some leaders used their power inappropriately, confirmed by several interviewees who said that the RCBO leadership had become a closed group. The desire to guarantee the sustainability of the community-based organisations coupled with the possibility of succumbing to oppressive forms of authority identified with the current socio-economic model could result in an authoritarian form of leadership (Freire, 1992). Striking a balance between protecting the community's achievements and continuing to invent new forms of community involvement and leadership is an opportunity for the RCBO to reinforce a process of democratisation of power (Peloso, 2001).

Social movements and community organisations like the RCBO who challenge the current socio-economic model require firm leadership to protect their achievements from people who attempt to undermine them. To counter authoritarianism in this process and guarantee effective democracy with authentic leadership is an ongoing challenge and requires submitting

leadership practice to regular evaluation processes. Freire (1994) argued that “those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly” (Freire, 1994, 42). This re-examination to which Freire refers reinforces the importance of monitoring the practice of leadership, even more so in organisations focused on participating in the creation of a new socio-economic model. Part of this creation is the reinvention of democratic leadership which will support communities in their struggle for social change (Freire, 1972, 1994; Peloso, 2001).

Peloso (2001) argued that leaders emerge through engaging in collective practice with the community confirmed by the CDW who said that he became a leader in the process of community participation in the village. Investing in community participation is crucial for the organisations to guarantee that new leaders emerge with the ability to lead the community. Local people have become leaders of the RCBO and their leadership has developed in the midst of challenges inherent to exercising leadership in initiatives identified with social change. One of these challenges has been to represent local peoples’ aspirations and guarantee ongoing feedback so that the whole community can grow in awareness about the significance of its struggle in a broader context. Leaders who do not invest in an iterative relationship with the community are at risk of isolating themselves from the community and community-based organisations can become fertile ground for those who oppose them to penetrate and co-opt for other purposes (Peloso, 2001).

Coben (1998) highlighted in her analysis of Gramsci’s and Freire’s educational practice that, in order to guarantee effective social change in society, movements of social change must generate organic intellectuals. For Gramsci the role of the organic intellectual was to support and promote the interests of the workers who were exploited by the capitalist system. This support entailed engaging in the workers’ struggles for radical change to create a new socio-economic order and a new critical perception of reality (Coben, 1998). It could be argued that, by promoting the interests of

those who suffer the consequences of the current socio-economic model and engaging in the struggle to create a new socio-economic order, the leaders of RCBO have become organic intellectuals.

Different and contrasting opinions emerged from the data about the RCBO leadership and authentic participation in the RCBO. The Renton Community-based Organisations all have in place structures which guarantee local peoples' participation; however, from the data it would seem that these structures have been used by the community leaders on some occasions to improve their personal status. In chapter four I presented Arnstein's ladder of participation which indicated that consultation in communities can be tokenistic and manipulated by government agencies. The same analysis can be applied to communities, and mainly to community leaders, who even although they have in place participatory mechanisms, could possibly use these mechanisms for personal benefit.

One of the possible pitfalls of leadership in organisations engaged in the struggle for social change is that the leaders can repeat the anti-democratic practice of those who control the society that the communities are attempting to change. Several interviewees perceived the RCBO leadership at times as anti-democratic, adverse to people from outside the village who might wish to participate and contribute to the community organisations. Particular reference was made in the interviews to the community development worker's controlling influence over the decisions made in the community. In his defence the CDW did recognise that at times he may have fallen into the pitfall of repeating anti-democratic practice and benefitted personally from his role as leader and that had to be challenged. Based on this recognition of possible limitations in the RCBO leadership it seems that the core group engaged in some form of self-evaluation of their leadership role which will always be an integral part of the struggle of any group that challenges the current socio-economic model and focuses on reinventing a new democratic practice of authentic community participation and leadership.

Leadership is an educational task which will require engaging with local peoples' knowledge and together with the leaders' critical knowledge promoting a critical consciousness (Freire, 1992). The development of a critical consciousness will also entail questioning the RCBO leadership so that the leaders, together with each participant in the community, become authentic subjects of change (Freire, 1972; Kane, 2011).

8.4 Political Perspective of the RCBO

My research analyses a process in the village of Renton which promotes social change through community ownership and control, engages with the State, develops new leadership and claims to challenge the current socio-economic model. This process is intensely political and several interviewees expressed different opinions about the political perspective which permeates the entire process. A deeper analysis is required of the RCBO's political perspective in taking control over the socio-economic development of the village, hence my option for this fourth theme which discusses the political perspective of the Renton Community-based Organisations' engagement with local people in the village.

Historically, the people of Renton have been involved in a wide range of struggles for social change which included support for the exploited workers in the Clydeside shipyards; participation in the movement against warrant sales and eviction of tenants from their homes in the village; active involvement in the march of the unemployed to London and participation in local elections, voting for councillors who were not members of the mainstream parties (Renton History Project, 1988). According to the local councillor the creation of Cordale Housing Association (CHA) in 1993 challenged the privatisation policy of the Thatcher Government and was part of this historical engagement of the people of Renton in the struggle for social change.

Some interviewees considered the creation of the community-based organisations as a contribution to a socio-economic model identified with socialism. The local councillor referred to the Renton community experience as “socialism at street level” (Jim Bollan, local councillor) and the Renton Community Development Trust CEO said that the RCBO are based on a “socialist ethos” (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). Socialism seems to be the long term objective of the RCBO, however, Allman (2001) argued that it is also important to experience “a glimpse of an authentic, humanized, democratic, socialist alternative” (2001, 104). From the findings it would seem that the RCBO regard the control over local assets and the delivery of public services in the village by the community, sustained by democratic decision-making instances, as a glimpse of a socialist alternative.

The CHA Director said that people in the village were “ideologically different, steeped in politics leaning towards socialism” (Stephen Gibson, CHA director). One interviewee said that “Renton was always communist even when local people voted for the Labour Party” (Susan Thomson, community activist). The local councillor declared that capitalism must be eliminated in order to eradicate poverty and argued that the Renton Community-based Organisations are “socialism in action at street level because they put into practice the socialist rule: from each according to their ability to each according to their need” (Jim Bollan, local councillor). The RCDT CEO argued that the RCBO have a socialist ethos which contests capitalism and that most of the workers currently employed in the community-based organisations identify with a socialist ethos.

Socialism is defined and expressed in a variety of forms in different parts of the world (Mandel, 1986; Youngman, 1986; Young, 1996; Allman, 2001; Joseph, 2006). In the case of the Renton Community-based Organisations socialism seems to involve certain characteristics and one of the most important is local peoples’ active participation in deciding upon the different stages of the socio-economic development of the village. Some interviewees expressed concern about the active participation of local

people in the decision-making processes but the core group argued that a democratic community-based structure was put in place to guarantee local peoples' participation and local peoples' needs were identified, discussed and decided in numerous community consultation events promoted by the RCBO.

The RCDT CEO argued that alongside the active participation of local people, the socialist ethos had also found expression in the village through the generation and redistribution of wealth to the poor. The grants and financial resources generated through the RCDT subsidiaries are invested in improving the lives of local people. For the local councillor the RCBO are an alternative to capitalism and part of the struggle to redistribute wealth and power. However, in order to redistribute wealth the RCBO have had to generate profit which is a pillar of capitalism and in direct conflict with the long term vision of socialism (Joseph, 2006; Albert, 2008). For community organisations focused on promoting social change and creating a new socio-economic model the generation of profit would have to be understood as a temporary measure solely with the intention of sustaining the organisations' activities in the current socio-economic context.

Allman (2001) argued that building an alternative socialist project takes place in the midst of contradictions because socialist relations do not develop naturally in the capitalist system. The RCBO operate in the midst of these contradictions and engage with capitalist mechanisms that generate profit in order to sustain its activities. From an economic point of view the RCBO have managed to sustain their activities and this economic success could divert the attention of the local community from the wider struggle to engage with other organisations to create a new socio-economic model. From the data it seems that three of the four core group members are aware of the possibility of becoming distracted from the RCBO's long term struggle to eradicate poverty in the village but insist that involvement in commercial-administrative-management activities is necessary in the

current socio-economic context in order to sustain the possibility of reaching the long term goal of socialism.

The RCDT CEO argued that the socialist ethos could also be perceived in people working for each other and not for individual financial improvement; the RCBO promote an ethos which aims at empowering people as a community. According to the community development worker, the Local Council has always regarded the community-based organisations as “a group of people not to engage with” (Archie Thomson, CDW). The reason for this difficulty could perhaps be found in the community-based organisations’ political perspective which challenges institutional representative democracy and promotes participatory democracy at a local level.

Over the past fifty years the Renton community has engaged in the struggles of the oppressed, the downtrodden, the poor, challenging injustice and defending the rights of the poor as citizens and human beings (RHP, 1988). These struggles have led to direct confrontation with the state because, whether through local or national government, the state has implemented policies and practices which, the core group claim, have not involved or benefitted most local people in the village. The struggles have been the opportunity for local people to learn about how society is divided and how the state operates in this divided society. However, from the data, division in society and the role of the state still seem confused for several interviewees. Some interviewees were content with improvements in the village and did not relate these improvements to any wider struggle for an alternative form of societal organisation. The data also indicated that not all of the interviewees embraced the core group’s long term vision of the need to implement a socialist model of society. The core group seem to be aware that further investment is needed to promote the long term vision of the RCBO and expressed the need for a community school which would also invest in creating awareness about the wider context of the struggle for social change. The community school could perhaps be a stimulus for further

participation of local people and an opportunity to advance in the creation of an alternative societal model.

Gramsci defined socialism as "an integrated vision of life with a philosophy, a mystique, a morality" (Coben, 1998, 32). Delving deeper into the philosophy, mystique and morality of socialism would be an opportunity for the RCBO to revisit their practice and evaluate to what extent it promotes an integrated vision of life. Mayo & Thomson (1995) argued that an ethos of radical social change should "challenge every form of oppression and the ideological praxes that legitimate them, e.g. patriarchy, racism, ageism" (1995: 32). These ideological praxes which legitimate and reinforce oppression do not transpire in the core group's definition of socialism. The RCBO's engagement in the struggle for radical change in society should tackle every form of oppression which can manifest itself in the community's practice. Issues relating to patriarchy, racism and ageism are not reported in the data but would have to be challenged in the RCBO's practice so as to guarantee a radical change not only of the socio-economic development in the village but also of the cultural and ideological background which would sustain an alternative model of society identified with socialism.

Allman (2001) argued that "the idea that a period of preparation or pre-figuration is necessary to revolutionary struggle is central to both Gramsci and Freire" (2001, 116). This period of preparation or pre-figuration implies that "socialism will have to become 'good sense' of the vast majority of people prior to the revolutionary moment of taking power" (2001, 119). The RCBO claim to identify with socialism and in line with Allman's analysis the Renton Community-based Organisations could be considered part of a broader social movement of preparation or pre-figuration of an alternative to the current socio-economic model.

Chapter 9: Social Change, Participatory Democracy and Popular Education

I now turn to discuss the findings in relation to the three headings of this thesis: social change, participatory democracy and popular education with a particular focus on popular education as it is also the theoretical perspective underpinning my research. These three headings summarise the aim of the research which is to examine to what extent participation in grassroots struggles leads to effective social change, empowers people and constitutes a popular education experience.

9.1 Social Change

To discuss the findings which emerged from the data under the heading of social change this section is divided into three themes: environmental change and personal development; local issues and a new socio-economic model.

9.1.1 Environmental Change and Personal Development

All interviewees reported that the village was a much better place to live in now than it was twenty years ago. Many said that there was a stronger sense of community and general wellbeing among local residents resulting from the physical improvement of the environment. The Renton Community-based Organisations claim to have improved local peoples' living conditions and offer a variety of services among which are SVQ certificated courses focused on employability skills and personal development around issues relating to confidence and self-esteem.

Chapter two argued that Government programmes focused on courses around confidence building and self-esteem “tend to reduce public issues of social conflict to individual pathological problems of personal development” (Martin & Shaw, 2008) reinforcing a culture of individualism and self-help

where the onus of success is totally dependent on each individual person (Allman & Wallis, 1995). The RCBO promote SVQ courses to help local people find employment in the current socio-economic context, even although employment is generally synonymous with taking on low paid jobs (Harris, Guardian, 19th November, 2011, 32). However, the data also indicate that through employment local people can access money and can contribute to paying their rent which helps sustain the community-based organisations. The SVQ courses also help long-term unemployed people in the village to acquire basic skills which can be useful in the community and generate a sense of worth in people.

Chapter two also discussed how Government-promoted courses around confidence building and self-esteem tend to skew major social issues of inequality and injustice. Through promoting courses on confidence building and self-esteem, the RCBO could be perceived as supportive of government agenda which tends to skew major social issues and focuses on increasing peoples' employability skills to enter the world of work where most jobs are low paid.

Mixed opinions emerged from the data regarding the final objective of promoting SVQ courses in the RCBO. The Education and Training Manager, responsible for coordinating these courses, described his role as that of a facilitator and not an educator. The Renton Community Development Trust CEO saw the courses as making local people fit for purpose but also as an opportunity to develop further their social skills while the local councillor saw the courses as an opportunity to open people's minds. All of these opinions seem to agree that the SVQ courses promoted by the RCBO have been an opportunity for local people to improve their lives and general well being. However, from the RCBO's political perspective, promoting SVQ courses could be an opportunity to develop further local people's awareness about the meaning of work in the current socio-economic context. The courses could also be an opportunity to discuss issues of poverty, inequality

and injustice as opposed to focusing solely on individual personal development and employability (Craig et al. 2011).

Chapter two discussed how the promotion of courses on self-esteem, confidence building and self-help can distract communities from their original purpose of engaging in the collective struggle for radical social change (Ledwith, 2011). It could be argued that by taking on responsibility for improving the physical environment and local peoples' personal development the RCBO act as a buffer between those who sustain and profit from the current socio-economic system and those who challenge it. The community-based organisations could also be perceived as neutralising any form of community engagement which would collectively challenge the current socio-economic system. However, the core group argued that by taking on the responsibility of delivering public services the RCBO challenged the private sector and questioned the role of the Local Authority in relation to public service delivery indicating that the RCBO have no intention of neutralising the challenge to the current system. From the data it seems that through the delivery of public services and promoting SVQ courses, the core group believe that not only are local people better attended to, but the community is also empowered in the struggle for social change.

The improvement in the physical environment and the promotion of SVQ certificated courses by the RCBO are an opportunity for the RCBO to galvanise support for the community-based organisations and consequently increase participation in the collective struggle for a just and equitable society. However, from the data it seems that further discussion is required between the core group and the wider community in the village about how to combine upgrading local peoples' employability skills in the short term while supporting the course participants to delve deeper into the long term vision of the RCBO for social change.

9.1.2 Local Issues

The Renton Community-based Organisations were created to respond to local people's needs for housing, health, employment and education. The core group argued that the community knew what its needs were and once it had the resources the community could deliver the solutions. One of the possible pitfalls in community-based initiatives which consider the community to be the sole bearer of the solutions is described by some authors in Portuguese as "basismo" (Freire, 1992; Peloso, 2001) translated in English as "grassrootsism" (Kane, 2012). Grassrootsism means that everything which grassroots groups decide or produce is correct and must be enhanced. It is an issue relevant to the RCBO because, while the core group claimed to be open to establishing the necessary partnerships with external organisations to attend to local peoples' needs, it also claimed that the community knew what its needs were and given the necessary resources the community-owned organisations would deliver the solutions.

Grassrootsism is an authoritarian form of community participation because communities develop an inward-looking self-centred analysis of their reality and do not perceive that their vision of reality is conditioned by a number of factors, many of which are outside of the physical-geographical space of the community (Freire, 1992; Allman, 2001; Peloso, 2001; Brookfield, 2005). The data indicate a possible contradiction in the RCBO because while they insist on the local community solving its problems by itself they also express the need to establish partnerships with the NHS, Local Authority and Scottish Government. According to the core group the stumbling block in establishing these partnerships seems to be more on the side of the NHS and the Local Authority who have difficulty in accepting that the local community has control over the delivery of public services in the village.

Several interviewees reported that up until the community took control over the delivery of public services in the village through the RCBO, government projects had failed to attend to local peoples' needs and that effective social change in the village could only come from the people in the village.

It could be argued that as a result of failed government intervention in the village, coupled with the belief that social change would occur only through local people, the RCBO embraced a practice of local control which has become characterised as grassrootsism.

Unemployment, poor housing, lack of access to education and environmental degradation do not occur only in Renton. Alternative solutions to socio-economic problems similar to those experienced in Renton are being implemented in other villages, towns, cities and indeed countries (WSF, 2009; Craig et al, 2011). These are opportunities for the Renton Community-based Organisations to learn from and improve their practice, while sharing the knowledge and experience that the RCBO have acquired over the past twenty years. From the data it does not seem that the RCBO have developed a strong linkage with similar initiatives whether in Scotland or throughout the world. However, the RCBO supported communities in Africa and India which suggests that they are aware of the need to network with other communities throughout the world. It is not clear from the data if the support given to the communities in Africa and India is in solidarity, which would suggest that the RCBO understand the need for networking or if support to communities in Africa and India is an expression of charity, which is important, but does not necessarily indicate political identification with the need to network with similar organisations engaged in the struggle for social change.

Chapter one discussed the need for the creation of a new economic model intrinsically linked to a new social model with new forms of community participation based on the principles of cooperation and solidarity, firmly rooted in community-based organisations identified with struggles for social change (Schugurensky, 1998; Albert, 2008; WSF, 2009; Craig et al, 2011). In some South American countries community-based participation has found expression in a wide range of activities from defining how to allocate local government budgets in Brazil (Schugurensky, 1998) to the outsourcing of public services to cooperatives in Venezuela (Duffy, 2012). As a result of

these new forms of community-based participation different networks have emerged which are an opportunity to bolster the RCBO's struggle at local level while linking it to a broader agenda for social change.

While recognising the importance of communities experiencing social change in some form at local level, focusing narrowly on their own locality will have a limited impact on poverty and injustice and will reduce considerably the possibility of implementing an effective challenge to the current socio-economic model (Allman, 2001; Craig et al, 2011). The RCBO claim to have created an impact in the village by improving the general well being of local people; however, from the data it is not clear to what extent local people understand improvement in the village as part of a wider struggle to create a new socio-economic model based on cooperation, justice and solidarity (Allman (2001).

9.1.3 A New Socio-Economic Model

Chapter one discussed the creation of a new socio-economic model based on the principle of subsidiarity (Bello, 2010) which claims that the production of goods and delivery of services is more efficient when decentralised to local communities (Joseph, 2006; Bello, 2010). The success of subsidiarity is directly linked to the active involvement of local people in the creation of an alternative socio-economic model which benefits the community where those people live. The Renton Community-based Organisations seem to have embraced the principle of subsidiarity in the delivery of public services through the creation of the Cordale Housing Association and the three subsidiaries of the Renton Community Development Trust: Education, Care and Catering. The RCBO claim that they deliver public services more efficiently than the private sector and they involve local people in the different decision-making instances, both of which are characteristics of subsidiarity and part of a new socio-economic model.

Chapter one of this research also discussed Parecon (Albert, 2008), a new form of organising the economy supported by a new form of organisation in

society which actively engages local people in governance and politics. Parecon is based on the principles of equity, solidarity, diversity, ecological balance and self-management. Parecon is focused on the creation of a classless society with balanced job complexes which means that each worker engages in a mixture of both mechanical and coordinating tasks so that no particular group would have more power than any other in society.

In Renton local people engage at different levels in the RCBO however, it seems that the core group exercises more directive control over the organisations. The core group claims that it involves local people in the different decision-making instances but some interviewees raised doubts about the authenticity of these instances suggesting that they were at times tokenistic and the core group eventually made the final decisions. From the data it seems that the RCBO promote a democratic and participatory form of self-management, a characteristic of Parecon, through taking control over the socio-economic development of the village. The core group seem to perceive in the RCBO an opportunity to exercise agency through practice (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2001). However, based on the interviewees' different perceptions about the authenticity of the decision-making processes, in order to situate the struggle in the village within the struggle to create a classless society as proposed by Parecon, further discussion seems to be required.

In the section on leadership I highlighted Coben's (1998) discussion about Gramsci's concept of 'war of position' which entails the implementation of a revolutionary strategy through institutions in civil society with the intention of preparing the working class in the exercise of power. The Renton core group claims that the RCBO provide the opportunity for local people to exercise power in their village through taking control over their socio-economic development. For the core group members this exercise in power is part of a new socio-economic model based on a long term vision of radical change in society. However, not all the interviewees shared the long term vision of the core group with some even denying that they were

interested in having more power in the village. Several interviewees perceived the delivery of public services by the RCBO as a more convenient way of accessing public services which improved peoples' lives but did not link this delivery to the creation of a new socio-economic model. From the data it is possible to interpret several interviewees' perception of the delivery of public services by the RCBO as a convenient transfer of state responsibilities to a successful community business as opposed to outsourcing these services to a private company.

Chapter one examined the concept of 'deglobalisation' (Bello, 2010) which is rooted in each community having control over its development and being respected in its sovereignty. The RCBO claim to have gained control over development in the village and created a community structure which reinforces local agency and could therefore be considered part of a broader struggle of 'deglobalisation'. However, the Local Authority has had difficulty in accepting the RCBO as the legitimate representative of the village because according to the core group, the Local Authority perceive in the RCBO a threat to representative democracy in favour of a new form of participatory democracy. The RCBO seem to have identified with the concept of 'deglobalisation' in the sense that part of their struggle is to guarantee the sovereignty of local people in the village taking control over their socio-economic development channelled through their own organisations.

Similarities can be drawn between the Renton Community-based Organisations, subsidiarity, Parecon and deglobalisation (Albert, 2008; Bello, 2010). The RCBO reinforced the public sphere through taking control over part of the local housing stock and the delivery of public services in the community. The community-based organisations generated wealth through delivering these services and redistributed this wealth through the creation of jobs and the delivery of new services for local people. The community organisations also claim to have confronted the individualistic-consumerist approach to socio-economic development through promoting collective

control over the development in the village with active participation of the community in a wide range of democratic participatory instances.

The interviewees show different perceptions of the motivation which sustains the RCBO, however, all agree that local peoples' lives have improved and the community-based organisations have brought a degree of sovereignty to the village. The core group is focused on a long term objective of radical change in society and channel that objective through the RCBO which they claim provide an opportunity to show how a new socio-economic model focused on the production and distribution of wealth can be implemented at local level and benefit most people who live in the village.

9.2 Participatory Democracy

To discuss the findings which emerged from the data under the heading of participatory democracy, this section is divided into two themes: local peoples' participation and community empowerment.

9.2.1 Local Peoples' Participation

The Renton Community-based Organisations claim that they involved local people in every stage of the socio-economic development of the village. Local people engaged with architects, councillors, political parties and representatives from government agencies and structures among which were the Social Inclusion Partnership and Community Planning Partnership. Each of the community-based organisations claims to have in place policies and procedures that guarantee active participation of local people. In the particular case of Cordale Housing Association, participation is open to any person in Scotland who identifies with its objectives. However, some interviewees said that while recognising that the RCBO were grassroots organisations they did not reach out to the entire community; others said

that the RCBO seemed to have privileged a certain group in the community causing division and distancing some people from participating.

The Renton Community-based Organisations are steered through locally elected boards; however, some interviewees said that these boards did not necessarily guarantee local peoples' effective participation. Some expressed concern about the authenticity of the decision-making process claiming that decisions taken at board meetings and consultation events were then filtered through a small group of people who adapted the decisions according to what it considered appropriate for the community. Chapter four examined Arnstein's ladder of participation and argued that consultation can contribute to social change if linked to citizen power. For consultation processes to be regarded as instances of citizen power and linked to social change, participants in consultation events will have to feel confident that the decisions made through consultation will be implemented.

The relationship between leaders and the community can provoke tensions and in the case of the RCBO the data indicate that the relationship between the RCBO decision-making instances and the RCBO leaders is an ongoing challenge and part of the struggle to establish a more authentic democratisation of power. Peloso (2001) argued that one of the challenges for movements engaged in the struggle for social change is to establish mechanisms which guarantee the democratisation of power. In this process the role of leadership becomes crucial to guide the communities, aware of the possibility of repeating practices which these same communities and their leaders propose to challenge.

Chapter four discussed how communities engaged in the struggle for social change should be aware of the possible pitfall of repeating practices inherent to the current socio-economic model (Peloso, 2001). The community-based organisations claim to have challenged this possible pitfall by continually developing a broad community base which attempts to involve as many local people as possible. According to the core group the

broad community base has been the foundation for the democratisation of power which is shared between the leaders and the community. The core group argues that it has attempted to promote a new vision and practice of leadership as an integral part of the democratisation of power but the data shows that this new vision and practice is not perceived by all of the interviewees. However, the core group members claim that they emerged as leaders of RCBO in the process of struggle which has not been without its challenges and contradictions. The community development worker admitted that at times the core group may have taken advantage of its position for personal benefit but in recognising this fact would also indicate that the core group is aware of deficiencies in the democratisation of power in the village and is attempting to challenge them.

Chapter two highlighted how the Chartist movement actively involved the working class in decisions regarding its future. The Chartists had their own educational network which helped create a political awareness in the working class expressed in “disciplined action and adherence to principle” (Silver, 1965, 76). Similar to the Chartists, the RCBO encourage active participation of people in deciding about their future. However, it is not clear whether the RCBO have in place an educational process which, similar to the educational network of the Chartist movement, sustains local peoples’ participation.

Some interviewees reported about tiredness experienced by people in the village as a result of intense participation at local level. Participation exhaustion could indicate that local people did not feel sufficiently motivated to continually engage in participatory processes promoted by the RCBO or that their participation was controlled by a small group of people and hence feel that their participation was insignificant. Whatever the reason, based on the long term vision of the core group and its awareness of deficiencies in its leadership, the RCBO have the opportunity to invest in an educational process similar to the one promoted by the Chartists, to sustain local peoples’ participation and bolster the RCBO leadership.

When local people take control over the delivery of public services they engage with the issue of power (Gaventa, 1998) which will entail working with government institutions who have the ultimate responsibility for guaranteeing the delivery of public services. Engaging with West Dunbartonshire Council has always been a problem for the RCBO mainly because of the Local Authority's pre-established agendas, policies and institutional practices which, according to several interviewees, did not involve local people. The Community Planning Partnership Chair reported that West Dunbartonshire Council referred to the Renton community as a "group of activists" (George Gillespie, CPP chair) with negative connotations, in an attempt to downplay and isolate the RCBO. By taking control over the delivery of public services in the village the Local Authority seems to have felt challenged by the RCBO. This suggests that the RCBO are inventing a new form of involving local people, of democratising power through active participation of local people in decisions which affect their daily lives. This new form of local peoples' participation causes discomfort to the Local Authority hence its attempts to demoralise the RCBO.

As a result of this contentious relationship between the RCBO and the Local Authority, the latter might attempt to take advantage of the delivery of public services by the RCBO for its own benefit. Chapter four presented Gates & Stout's (1996) illustration of how communities must be attentive to governments taking advantage of community participation. Craig et al (2011) argue that engaging with Local Authority is an opportunity to expose the different agendas of both of the community and the Local Authority so that local people can perceive possible manipulations which could jeopardise the struggle for social change.

The delivery of public services by communities continues to foment the debate around the role of the state and communities (Craig et al, 2011). These roles mingle and can become confused when dealing with partnership between the state and communities (Collins, 1998). Arnstein (1969) defined partnership as a form of participation which, she argued, can be an expression of citizen power. However, as discussed in this chapter,

partnership between communities and the state is subject to different interpretations which range from exercising citizen power to tokenistic gestures by government agencies (Collins, 1998).

In chapter four I argued that community empowerment derives from the collective struggles of people and communities engaged in building a just and equitable society (Crowther et al, 1999; Martin, 2005; Shaw, 2008). The Renton Community-based Organisations claim to have generated empowerment in the community by taking control over the delivery of public services in the village. The core group see the struggle in the village as part of the struggle for a just and equitable society which does not seem to be the case of the Local Authority who, according to the core group and some interviewees, continually attempts to undermine the RCBO.

White (2000) argued that focusing on local people's participation can be a source of learning and can generate community empowerment. Local people's participation is an opportunity for the RCBO to promote a political-pedagogical process which enables those who participate to develop a critical awareness of their social context and the interests of the different groups involved in the wider struggle for social change. The Renton core group claims to promote local peoples' participation as a form of empowerment because as the local councillor said "people become aware of poverty and this awareness makes them want to participate" (Jim Bolland, local councillor).

Chapter four discussed White's (2000) analysis of four types of community participation, the most important of which he identified as empowerment which leads to "greater consciousness of what makes and keeps people poor" (2000, 147). The struggle in the village is an opportunity to build on local peoples' awareness of poverty so that it can be a source of greater consciousness of what makes and keeps people poor and in the process the RCBO can galvanise support for the struggle for radical social change in society and generate community empowerment.

9.2.2 Community Empowerment

Most interviewees agreed that local people's living conditions and the physical environment of the village had improved as a result of the services and different activities delivered by the RCBO. However, it remains questionable as to whether the delivery of these services has reinforced the current government's agenda to transfer the delivery of public services to communities in order to reduce costs and responsibilities or if the delivery of these services has reinforced community empowerment.

Chapter four discussed possible ambiguities in the discourse which sustains community empowerment and how it is manipulated to identify with a wide range of community initiatives and absorbed in the official rhetoric of the New Right (Troyna, 1994; Collins, 1997; Martin, 2008). One of the ambiguous terms of this discourse is partnership. Collins' (1998) analysis of the Ferguslie Park Community Planning Partnership (CPP) in Paisley, Scotland, examined how both CPP and the local community had a different perception of the meaning of partnership. CPP embraced a concept of partnership which entailed that "the parties involved should act in harmony and should be seen to be doing so" (1998, 91). The local community engaged in partnership so that "people might awake to the recognition of their rights, have the fortitude to demand them, the fortune to obtain them and henceforth sufficient wisdom and vigour to defend them" (1998, 91). The Renton Community-based Organisations have shown that they have sufficient wisdom and vigour to defend the community's rights by creating and sustaining their own organisations. However, it is not clear from the findings if local people perceived the delivery of public services by the RCBO as an awakening to demand and defend their rights. If the wider community does not perceive the delivery of public services by the RCBO as part of the struggle to guarantee the recognition of their rights then local people could interpret the services delivered by the RCBO as "acting in harmony with local government" (Collins, 1998, 91).

In chapter four I discussed how community empowerment can be used as a possibility of integration into government agenda or as an opportunity for communities to engage in a practice of liberation. The UK Coalition Government's 'Big Society' project proposes "redistributing power to individuals and local communities" (Cameron, 2009). It could be argued that, perhaps unwittingly, the RCBO have embraced the UK Coalition Government's agenda and consequently their stance on community empowerment could be characterised as integration into Government agenda. A consequence of redistributing power to communities is that in terms of service delivery the onus is passed on to communities who are then subject to further government scrutiny (Taylor, 2011). Communities can become embroiled in government agendas to the extent that their discourse and practice shifts from challenging poverty and oppression in order to build a just and equitable society to discussing "an empty arsenal of business jargon and psycho-babble about targets and benchmarks, employability and skills, needs and goals and lessons learned" (Thompson, 2007, 89).

The UK Coalition Government's "Big Society" proposal (Cameron, 2009) uses terms similar to those used by communities: 'accountability', 'transparency', 'mutuality'. By taking on the delivery of public services the Renton Community-based Organisations claim not to be colluding with government policy but rather attempting to reclaim and re-signify these terms from the perspective of radical social change. From the data it seems that the RCBO continue in the struggle to extract these terms from a New Right ideological stance and resituate them in a collective context focused on empowering local communities to transform society (Thompson, 2007; Ledwith, 2011).

By taking on responsibility for the delivery of public services communities can be, wittingly or not, reinforcing New Right strategies of rolling back the state, cost cutting through promoting low paid or voluntary work and giving the state the opportunity to exercise more control over communities through scrutiny (Craig & Mayo, 1995) and eventually reducing democracy

(Shaw, 2008; Taylor, 2011). In her research on community participation in Venezuela Duffy (2012) argued that outsourcing public service delivery to communities, instead of decentralising and sharing power can be a form of de-concentrating public service delivery but with power remaining centralised. On the other hand Duffy (2012) also argued that if the state is engaged in a process of social change then outsourcing public service delivery can be a means for local communities to acquire power and control over these services, delivered according to their needs. Chapter four highlighted Patterson's analysis of different approaches to community engagement and how it is possible to take advantage of government initiatives to promote community empowerment. Patterson (2010) also argued that communities that engage with Local Authority initiatives and at the same time are focused on radical social change require a continual process of critical reflection about their practice which should be monitored by the wider community in an iterative learning process.

The core group argues that the RCBO have installed a new form of power based on local control of public services channelled through locally created organisations. In order to sustain this control the community has had to deal with government rules and regulations. It has entailed that members of the local community become involved in management issues, reports and inspections, together with tendering processes to guarantee economic sustainability of its activities. The core group argues that, while subject to government monitoring processes, the RCBO remain focused on radical change in society and that their current stage of ownership in the village and involvement with the Local Authority is a step in that direction. From the data it does not transpire that most interviewees perceive in the RCBOs involvement with Local Authority a step towards radical change in society. Further clarification is required for local people to perceive that the RCBO are not colluding with government policy but rather are establishing local control as part of a long term strategy for radical social change.

One of the possible consequences of intense involvement with government policy and service delivery is that community participation can become reduced to those community members who are directly involved. Participating in formulating government policy and delivering public services can reduce considerably the broad-based collective involvement in the socio-economic development of the village which then results in less community empowerment (Shaw, 2008).

Several authors argue that community empowerment cannot be handed down from government to communities but will only come to fruition as a result of organised struggle (Crowther et al, 1999; Martin, 2006; Shaw, 2008). Communities can be misled into thinking that they are empowered because they are involved in elaborating government policy and responsible for delivering public services (Taylor, 2011). The Renton Community-based Organisations claim to be involved at both levels arguing that it is not sufficient only to deliver public services but that they also have the right to influence and participate in the elaboration of public policy.

From the data most interviewees say that the RCBO have promoted a strong sense of community in the village and have generated a degree of pride in local people which has improved the living conditions and the general wellbeing of many people in the village. Several interviewees perceived in the services and activities delivered by the RCBO a political focus which challenged the Local Authority and generated community empowerment. All four core group members of the RCBO, albeit with different emphases, argue that the community organisations are an expression of community empowerment in the village and an essential part of the struggle for radical change in society moving towards socialism. Some interviewees agree while others disagree with the core group's vision of community empowerment. This suggests that further discussion is required to delve deeper into the significance of the services and activities delivered by the RCBO and how they promote community empowerment as part of a process focused on building a new form of societal organisation.

9.3 Popular Education

To discuss the findings which emerged from the data under popular education this section is divided into five themes: education for employment; a community school; the wider struggle for social change; a political-ideological stance and a political-pedagogical process.

9.3.1 Education for employment

Ever since the inception of the Renton Community-based Organisations (RCBO) the core group was aware that people in the village had to guarantee their livelihood. Consequently, the community organisations incorporated into their activities support for local people to acquire or upgrade their employability skills by delivering SVQ certificated courses in the Carman Centre. By promoting these courses the RCBO could fall into a pitfall which some Latin-American educators describe as ‘immediatismo’ - immediateness (Freire, 1992; Peloso, 2001; Gadotti, 2005). Immediateness means solving individual and collective problems as quickly as possible without analysing the root causes of these problems.

The delivery of employment-focused courses by the RCBO could be defined as immediateness, merely for the purpose of adapting local people to fit into the market without questioning the meaning of work in the current socio-economic context. The Community Development Worker reported that most local people moved into low paid jobs with no real career prospects. This seems to indicate that through promoting these courses the RCBO were, to a certain extent, helping to sustain the current socio-economic model, apparently without questioning it. However, the core group, and some interviewees, said that while the SVQ courses helped local people access money so that they could improve everyday life, these courses were also an opportunity for local people to become aware of the wider struggle embraced by the RCBO which, according to the core group, is to build an alternative form of societal organisation.

As discussed in chapter two, education can reinforce conformity to a socio-economic system or challenge it (Youngman, 1985; Martin, 2008). In a course promoted by the Carman Centre to set up a local radio station, the RCDT CEO claimed that the course did not focus solely on technical aspects but was extended for a one year period to include other related subjects from mathematics to engineering. This suggests that the Carman Centre perceived the importance of supporting local people to develop skills not strictly related to carrying out a specific job. Nevertheless, for an organisation identified with social change, courses for local people to develop their skills should also serve as a possibility for generating really useful knowledge. In the radio course already mentioned it could be argued that a discussion around the role of the media in guaranteeing or challenging the continuity and sustainability of the current socio-economic model should be included, but this did not transpire from the research findings.

Chapter two also discussed a prevailing trend to reduce education to training sessions, ie. the competency movement (Martin, 1995). This definition of education fits well with the RCDT CEO's initial comments on education where he described the role of education as "making people fit for purpose" (Drew McEoghainn, RCDT CEO). The local councillor described the delivery of SVQ courses at the Carman Centre as a means of "putting money into peoples' pockets to survive" (Jim Bolland, local councillor). This strictly functional use of education does not identify with any particular radical pedagogy and even less with the wider political philosophy underpinning the engagement of the RCBO with local people.

The Renton Community-based Organisations claim to be engaged in the struggle for social change and part of this struggle entails promoting employment-focused SVQ certificated courses for people to guarantee their livelihood. Through promoting these courses the RCBO can engage with local people to critically examine the meaning of work in the current socio-economic context. Promoting work-focused courses is an opportunity for the

RCBO to discuss a new understanding of work as the possibility of a meaningful activity within an alternative socio-economic model based on the socialist principle “from each according to their ability to each according to their need” (Jim Bollan, local councillor).

9.3.2 A Community School

The core group expressed a strong desire to create a community school which it claimed would be different from mainstream schools. According to the local councillor this school would adopt a new methodology which would challenge the current school model where learners are “straight-jacketed to serve the capitalist system” (Jim Bollan, local councillor). This vision of a community school seems to contradict the RCBOs investment in SVQ courses where the objective was to make people “fit for purpose” (RCDT CEO), that purpose being to be able to find work, or again to “put money into peoples’ pockets” even although at the cost of taking on low paid jobs.

The community development worker (CDW) said that the community school would be “an experience about what is happening with people in the community” (Archie Thomson, CDW). This suggests that the community school would be open to discuss not only local people’s immediate needs, to find work and earn a wage, but also wider issues relating to why the people of Renton are experiencing hardship and poverty. Gramsci argued that school should support the process of social change through “the transformation of the masses from spontaneous philosophers to philosophically as well as technically educated social actors” (Aronowitz, 2002, 115). Applying this idea to the CDW’s understanding of the proposed community school suggests that the core group perceive the community school as an opportunity to build on local peoples’ spontaneous knowledge about what is happening in the village so that they can become technically educated social actors.

Gramsci also argued that the dominant class did not use only force to control people but exercised its control also through “its ability to permeate

an entire society with its philosophies, values, tastes and so on" (Aronowitz, 2002, 6). In order to challenge this control over society, Gramsci envisaged education as a contribution to the "transformative power of ideas to construct a new order, an alternative world view" (2002, 6). The core group claims that the community school would be different from mainstream schools but does not explain with clarity what this difference would be; if for example it would be able to develop, within the constraints of the Scottish educational system, an alternative world view to that which is transmitted by those who sustain the current socio-economic model.

Borg et al (2002) argued that "Gramsci was convinced that despite the all pervasive power of ruling groups, which he called hegemony, education has an important part to play in challenging its ubiquity - especially adult education, which he regarded as political education" (2002, 15). Chapter two highlighted the importance of adult education in the struggles for social change, to "critically assess reality, name that reality and devise strategies to change that reality" (Cunningham, 2005, 2). The data which discusses the community school seems to focus more on a formal school setting, suggesting a primary school with some evening classes focused on developing skills for the world of work. There is no indication in the data that the proposed community school would embrace any radical agenda of adult education to support local people in an analysis of their reality and help devise strategies to change it.

Kane (2011) argued that "popular education recognises that all people have important knowledge derived from the particular experience in which they find themselves" (2011, 2). The core group recognises the importance of local people's knowledge and argues that the services delivered by the community organisations are a response to local people's needs and aspirations, based on their knowledge. However, Brookfield (2005) argued that all forms of knowledge have ideological connotations and can be used to sustain or challenge different socio-economic contexts. While the RCBO claim to respond to local people's needs and aspirations it is not clear from

the data how local people would delve deeper into the root causes that have provoked these needs, and perceive in the community experience in the village a challenge to the current socio-economic model.

Freire (1972) argued that in order to transform society “people’s empirical knowledge of reality, nourished by the leaders’ critical knowledge, gradually becomes transformed into knowledge of the causes (dialectical contradictions) of reality” (1972, 104). The core group recognises the importance of local people’s knowledge but also recognises that the core group members have acquired more critical knowledge as a result of their role as leaders of the RCBO. The local councillor said that as people become more involved in the struggles in the village their desire to participate in the RCBO increases. However, from the data it did not transpire that this participation had provoked an increase in the interviewees’ critical knowledge, which Freire (1972) argued, should result from a combination of peoples’ empirical knowledge and the leaders’ critical knowledge.

From the data it is not clear how the RCBO would implement the proposed community school. It is also not clear how the RCBO would combine the curriculum which is prescribed by Scottish Government and a curriculum which would support the community’s struggle for social change. From a popular education perspective people’s local knowledge must become ‘critical’ knowledge for effective social change to take place. A community school which promotes critical knowledge would require educators with a critical vision of society and it is not clear how much control the RCBO would have over training and preparing educators for the community school. However, from the data the core group seems to be aware of the need for some form of community school to promote a “radical educational process” (Allman, 2002, 210) starting from local people’s perception of their reality and engaging with people of all ages; how the RCBO intend to implement this proposal seems to require further discussion.

9.3.3 The Wider Struggle for Social Change

When the community created the Cordale Housing Association (CHA) under local control it declared that it would not build houses for people to live their poverty in, suggesting that a new house was not the sole solution to poverty in the village. Alongside housing other social issues like drug and alcohol misuse, unemployment, an increased ageing population, low educational achievement, serious health problems, all had to be challenged in order to fulfil the CHA mission statement. Consequently together with new houses, the RCBO also built a health centre, a chemist and specialised housing for older people, investing in local people's health and general wellbeing. The organisations created a social enterprise, the Carman Centre, which promotes community and personal development activities and more recently acquired the Ma Centre which promotes a wide range of activities for young people. Most interviewees agreed that the physical appearance of the village and local people's general living conditions had improved as a result of the RCBO's investment in the village.

Chapter two discussed the purpose of education and referred to a journal published in 1834 called 'The Poor Man's Guardian' which examined the role of education. The journal proposed a political role for education which entailed supporting those who are poor and exploited in their struggle to "get out of their troubles and confront the real causes of misery and distress" (Mayo, 1995, 97). It would seem that through improving the physical appearance of the village and promoting personal development activities the RCBO have supported local people to "get out of their troubles". However, as regards to confronting "the real causes of misery and distress" the core group reported that this aspect required further development and would be a long term process.

Allman & Wallis (1995) argued that education which identifies with the wider struggle for social change must "be part of the process of a regeneration of socialist ideas and practices which will surely come" (1995, 110). The core group claim that the RCBO have embraced a broader agenda

for social change in the village by promoting more than social housing. The core group also claim that the broader agenda is part of the struggle for socialism and that the struggles in the village are an expression of “socialism at street level” (Jim Bolland, local councillor). From the interview material the socialist perspective of the RCBO seems to be clear for the core group and also for most people who are employed in the community-based organisations. However, some interviewees directly opposed this perspective claiming that it excluded a considerable amount of people in the village and actually distanced some local people from participating.

From a popular education perspective, embracing the struggle for social change requires linking local issues to the root causes of oppression and injustice. The RCBO have invested in the physical regeneration of their surroundings and this is confirmed by all interviewees without exception. However, it does not transpire from the data that most interviewees perceived the physical regeneration of the village as being part of a wider agenda for radical social change in society. Some interviewees reported that the RCBO had not invested sufficiently to explain the link between the activities delivered by the RCBO at local level and the wider struggle for radical social change in society which they claim is part of socialism.

Popular education is learning which takes place in the struggles for social change (PEN, 2005). It is education focused on generating critical thinking “to unveil the oppressive nature of our current circumstances, to understand what is happening and why it is happening” (Mayo & Thompson, 1995, 18). It is education which delves deeper into the real causes of misery and distress. Popular education builds on collective struggles for social change and links local struggles to the wider struggle for radical social change (Crowther et al, 1999). The RCBO have invested considerably in improving local people’s general living standards and wellbeing and the core group has led this process understanding it as part of a wider agenda for social change. Most interviewees agree that there is an underlying political motivation in the activities delivered by the RCBO, but do not necessarily

identify or engage with this political motivation. Some interviewees preferred to remain at the level of improving the living conditions in the village and did not seem to link this improvement at local level to a wider struggle for social change.

It is not clear to what extent the transformation of the external physical environment has generated in local people a new critical perception of reality to become more aware of the causes of injustice and oppression which they continue to experience in their daily lives. The core group argue that a degree of awareness about the root causes of poverty and injustice has been generated through participation in the struggles in the village. However, several interviewees did not seem to perceive the underlying causes of poverty and injustice which would indicate that participation in the struggle for social change at a local level does not necessarily generate awareness about the broader struggle for social change or a deeper understanding of the causes of poverty and injustice.

It seems that most interviewees have grasped “what” is happening in the village and agree that the RCBO and local people’s participation have been the basis on which all of these improvements have taken place. As regards to “why” these improvements are taking place, it seems that it is mainly the core group and most of the RCBO employees who link the struggles in the village to a wider agenda of social change and socialism. Further investment seems required to link the improvements in the physical regeneration of the village to the causes of poverty and injustice and to a wider agenda of social change.

9.3.4 A Political-Ideological Stance

When the Renton community took ownership of the assets and control over the socio-economic development in the village it was considered a politically radical gesture because the people of Renton challenged the privatisation agenda of the Thatcher Government, took power from local government and elected members and reinforced participatory democracy.

However, the Cordale Housing Association (CHA) director said that the RCBO is no longer radical because “the radical dimension has now become normality” (Stephen Gibson, CHA director). It is not clear if the normality to which the CHA director referred meant that the community’s initial radical political stance had become accepted as a normal part of the RCBO agenda or if the activities delivered by the RCBO had been absorbed into government mainstream agenda to the extent that they were no longer a radical challenge to the current socio-economic model.

Steele (1999) argued that “according to contemporary ideological perspectives popular education signified alternatively political subversion, a means of democratic emancipation or class harmonization” (1999, 99). When the RCBO were created they represented political subversion because they confronted the dominant political tendency at the time which was to privatise social housing. During the past twenty years the RCBO claim to have promoted numerous consultation events and put in place democratic structures to guarantee local peoples’ participation, all of which have focused on democratic emancipation. However, by simply substituting for the state and the private sector in the delivery of public services, the RCBO could also be perceived as a source of class harmonization. From the data this does not seem to be the case. On the contrary the community-based organisations claim that they continue to challenge the Local Authority for more funding to deliver services in the village and continue to promote democratic and participatory decision-making processes, all of which create tension between the RCBO, the private sector and the Local Authority, rejecting any possibility of class harmonization.

Mayo (1995) argued that the “capitalist society, like any other society, must reproduce itself and that process of reproduction requires the reproduction of social relations and ideologies as well as material goods” (1995, 8). The material goods delivered by the RCBO are public services in the areas of social housing, care, catering and education. However, the political-ideological focus of the RCBO, according to the core group, has not changed since their inception and continues as part of the struggle for socialism. The

core group argue that the social relations promoted by the RCBO focus on solidarity, democracy and participation and that wealth generated locally is invested in the community, channelled mainly to those who are most in need, which directly opposes the individualist-consumerist social relations promoted by capitalism.

Arguably, from a certain stance the RCBO have helped the capitalist society reproduce itself because they have had to establish contracts and partnerships with Local and National Governments, builders, the NHS to deliver services and in the process generate profit both for these agencies and for the community-based organisations themselves to support their activities. The core group seems to be aware of this apparent contradiction between a capitalist practice and a socialist ideology but argues that the RCBO engage critically with these agencies and that the model implemented in the village challenges the current socio-economic model.

The RCBO engage in activities focused on taking control over the socio-economic development of the village which, they claim, are a challenge to the prevailing socio-economic order. However, some interviewees seemed more interested solely in the benefits which the RCBO had brought to the people of the village. This would indicate that engaging in activities focused on taking control over the socio-economic development of the village does not necessarily create awareness as regards to the ideology and underlying causes of oppression and injustice and the need for wider social change in society.

Marx discussed ideology as a “philosophy of practice” which he described as “an analysis of reality, a way of understanding the structure that would enable people to change it” (cited in Allman, 2002, 207). Gramsci elaborated on Marx’s definition of ideology and argued that groups engaged in the struggle for social change should “problematise peoples’ existing thought (common sense), so that all people can become philosophers of practice; this will require a radical educational process” (cited in Allman,

2002, 210). From a popular education perspective a radical educational process would entail a combination of action-reflection-action where learners acquire the ability to analyse and improve their practice. Since 1993 the RCBO have engaged in an intense practice of social change in the village. Several interviewees considered this practice as extremely positive but did not seem to have participated in any particular instance where their perception of reality was problematised. The data indicate that the understanding of the process of social change in the village has been left to each individual resident and that no collective process of analysis has been developed.

During the last twenty years the RCBO have had to dedicate a considerable amount of time to create the community organisations and the democratic structures necessary to sustain them. The relationship between the community organisations and the Local Authority has been difficult and consequently the RCBO have had to generate funds within the community as well as access funding from other sources. The community organisations have also had to support local people to help them access work so as to alleviate poverty in the village and also generate a source of income through rent. All of these activities have been time consuming and perhaps as a result a structured critical analysis of the context within which these activities took place has not been developed sufficiently. However, these activities in themselves have been and continue to be opportunities for local people to reflect upon the changes that have occurred in the village and learn more about the meaning of these changes, albeit in a spontaneous and individual way.

The political-ideological stance of any organisation in society is perceived and expressed in different ways. It can be a means for leaving society the way it is, or a possibility to challenge the oppressive structures which sustain the current socio-economic model in order to build a more equitable and just society (Allman, 2002). The local councillor reported that the RCBO “still have a long way to go to develop critical awareness in the village of

the unjust structures in the capitalist society” (Jim Bolland, local councillor). Some interviewees did not perceive any particular political-ideological strand in the social change promoted by the RCBO while others reported that the RCBO leadership is “definitely left-wing” (John Chalmers, 2010). This suggests that the political-ideological perspective of the RCBO does not necessarily transpire in the services that are delivered and consequently requires further discussion.

Marx, Gramsci and Freire all argued that one of the roles of education is to unveil the ideological manipulation behind the dominant, hegemonic ideology (Kane, 2005). Education can contribute to developing a critical awareness in people about the unjust structures in society. Popular education in particular, understood as a political-pedagogical process can be an opportunity for the RCBO to engage with local people to decipher and interpret the dominant hegemonic ideology imposed by the current socio-economic model and generate really useful knowledge (Thompson, 2007).

9.3.5 Popular Education - A Political-Pedagogical Process

Learning in popular education occurs in the context of the struggles of the oppressed to the extent that, in many cases, the struggle itself is the learning process (Kane, 2007). The struggle to create and develop the Renton Community-based Organisations has been and continues to be a learning process. It is a learning process rooted in the struggle to eradicate poverty in the village, which has challenged institutional power and reinforced local peoples’ control over their socio-economic development.

The Popular Education Programme - PEP (2012) created and delivered in Cape Town, South Africa, usefully described popular education as having four objectives which were: “assisting community members to question the status quo; arming them with analytical tools and insights to find the root causes of their problems; developing a critical consciousness towards understanding of the powers that dominate and drive the machinery of the local, national and global world; acting with others in the interests of social

justice and a sustainable future for all” (PEP, 2012,5). The first three objectives of PEP focused on creating a critical consciousness by reflecting upon reality, to investigate, through critical analysis, the underlying causes of the problems that affect people in their everyday lives. The fourth objective focused on action which according to PEP entailed linking into similar groups of people engaged in the struggle to build a future which includes everyone.

Similarities can be drawn between PEP and the Renton Community-based Organisations. The RCBO started by challenging the Thatcher Government’s policy to privatise social housing which is PEP’s first objective, to question the status quo. From there it would seem that the RCBO opted for PEP’s fourth objective which was to act with others in the interests of social justice by acquiring local assets and taking control over the socio-economic development of the village. Mixed opinions emerge from the data as regards to the RCBO engaging with PEP’s second and third objectives which were to arm local people with the tools to find the root causes of their problems and contribute to creating a critical consciousness.

While recognising that the four objectives defined by PEP would not necessarily have to follow a chronological order, the PEP definition indicates that in popular education a critical consciousness does not occur spontaneously, but requires arming people with the tools to analyse the root causes of their problems in the process of struggle. PEP confirms one of the basic characteristics of popular education which is to delve deeper into the underlying causes of the struggles for social change and stimulate a critical perception of reality (Kane, 2011). The RCBO have focused on responding rapidly to local people’s needs identifying more with ‘how’ to tackle the problems that affect local people and not so much with ‘why’ these problems exist. However, popular education considers that to start from where people are is also important so that appropriate links can be made between local struggles and the deeper causes of poverty and oppression. At the same time, if the link with deeper issues is not established then

communities can reduce their intervention to solving immediate problems leaving the underlying oppressive structures in society intact and unquestioned.

From the data it seems that a degree of critical learning has taken place in the process of responding to local peoples' needs in the village. Some interviewees reported that through the struggle for social change they learned to distinguish between organisations that were supportive of their struggle and those who opposed them. Another interviewee reported that she had developed the confidence and ability to challenge "the people in suits when they came to the village with their proposals and projects" (Susan Thomson, Community Activist). The local community learned how to create the community-based organisations that responded to local people's needs and put in place a structure to sustain these organisations. These examples of learning indicate that by taking control over the delivery of public services in the village the RCBO have created different learning opportunities, which according to the interviewees, have helped some local people develop a more critical perception of certain aspects of the socio-economic context in the village.

Popular education is problem-posing education which challenges people's perception of reality and stimulates engagement in the struggle to change that reality (Crowther, 2005). Learning in popular education can occur in a wide range of struggles, however, learning in these struggles should also generate in those who participate a radical shift in their perception of the oppressive structures within which they are situated (Crowther & Scandrett, 2011). The RCBO emerged as a result of local people questioning the political agenda to privatise social housing and challenging successive governments' pre-established proposals on how the village should develop to eradicate poverty. However, from the data it is not clear to what extent these actions have managed to generate a radical shift in local people's perception of the oppressive structures which provoked the need for engagement in the struggle for social change in the village.

The PEP (2012) declared that one of the objectives of popular education was to arm communities with analytical tools to find the root causes of their problems so as to develop a critical consciousness. The struggle to take control over local physical assets and the delivery of public services has been an opportunity for some local people to develop more awareness about the root causes of the problems in the village. All interviewees recognise that life in the village has improved as a result of the RCBO but the data does not indicate that local people have necessarily generated a critical consciousness about the root causes of their problems in the process. The core group seems to have a critical awareness of the powers that control society both locally and nationally but the core group's critical awareness does not seem to be shared by most interviewees.

The Renton Community-based Organisations are a result of local people coming together, focusing on their needs at a local level, making decisions and taking the necessary steps to solve their problems. In this process local people acquired knowledge based on the struggle to improve their village. People acquire knowledge in different contexts, from the individual struggles of everyday life to engagement in collective struggles for social change. The acquisition of critical knowledge generated in collective struggles for social change is part of a key characteristic of popular education which entails dialogue between local people's knowledge, the leaders' knowledge and systematised knowledge acquired through action-reflection-action (Freire, 1970; Kane, 2011).

The origin and nature of knowledge, the epistemology of the Renton Community-based Organisations is local people's perception of their socio-economic conditions in the village. When this knowledge is combined with the leaders' knowledge and knowledge systematised through a process of action-reflection-action (Freire, 1970) it can be transformed into critical knowledge and stimulate engagement in the struggle for social change. The core group openly declared that it is against the current socio-economic model but at the same time is aware that many people in the village are

satisfied with the RCBO delivering local services more efficiently and closer to their homes without having to engage in any further learning about the current socio-economic model.

Chapter three discussed education as a possibility of “limited-reproductive practice or as critical-revolutionary practice” (Allman, 2001, 25). The core group claims that the activities delivered by the RCBO are part of a socialist agenda and perceives the long term aim of the community’s engagement in the struggle for social change as part of a wider challenge to the current socio-economic model. It could be argued that the RCBO have engaged in some way in a political-pedagogical process by challenging the current socio-economic model, creating participatory instances in the community and establishing local organisations under local control. This political-pedagogical process suggests that, under the leadership of the current core group, the RCBO have developed with the intention of becoming implementers of a critical-revolutionary practice (Allman, 2002, 25). However, the core group seems to recognise that the RCBO have not been able to develop sufficiently the necessary educational support for the wider community in the village to perceive the struggle in the village as part of a critical-revolutionary practice.

Popular education is a political-pedagogical process which engages with those who are subjugated and oppressed by the current socio-economic model in their struggle for social change (Freire, 1972; Galeano, 1986; Allman, 2001; Crowther, 2002). It is a process which promotes the development of a critical consciousness focused on trying to create a new social, economic and cultural order “in the interests of social justice and a sustainable future for all” (PEP, 2012, 5). The RCBO have engaged with those who are subjugated and oppressed in the village in an attempt to create a new social, economic and cultural order through focusing on local issues. From the data mixed opinions emerge as regards to whether local people have acquired a critical consciousness in this process. However, it does seem that the intention of the RCBO to promote social justice and

contribute in the creation of a sustainable future for all, has generated some form of learning in all interviewees about the struggle for social change which is one of the main objectives of a political-pedagogical process of popular education.

Chapter 10: Conclusions & Recommendations

This chapter presents the research conclusions under the headings of social change, participatory democracy and popular education. The conclusions respond to the research aim and questions outlined in the methodology chapter.

10.1 Social Change

The first research question asked what social change occurred in Renton in the last twenty years. Different expressions of social change are reported in the research findings which have created a new sense of pride in the village and promoted the community's struggle beyond the physical boundaries of the village. All of these expressions occurred against the backdrop of new housing, the new health centre, improvement in the general physical environment and the services delivered in the Carman Centre. However, while claiming that social change has occurred over the past twenty years, poverty has not been eradicated from the village (SIMD, 2009). More local people have accessed employment but in low paid jobs, many of which are temporary. Serious health problems continue to exist in the village alongside the need to invest further in education. The financial sustainability of the RCBO is an ongoing challenge as funding for community controlled initiatives continues to dwindle in the current socio-economic context.

The adverse financial context and the social problems experienced by the Renton community are a reflection of a wider national and international context (Pilger, 2003; Klein, 2007). Responding to immediate problems in the village has been an essential part of the process of social change implemented by the RCBO. The discussion chapter highlighted the issue of immediateness which focuses on solving problems immediately without delving deeper into the causes of these problems and relating them to a

wider context (Freire, 1992; Peloso, 2001; Gadotti, 2005). The core group said that its vision for change in the village goes beyond simply attending to local needs but is part of a long term strategic vision of radical social change in society. For this vision to be perceived by the wider community will require that the RCBO establish participatory-educational instances to discuss the purpose of taking control over the delivery of public services in the village as part of a wider struggle at national and international levels.

In the current socio-economic context of financial constraints, local and national governments have channelled the delivery of public services through the private sector and communities. In chapter nine I discussed how the RCBO could be perceived as colluding with government agenda and substituting the state by taking control over public service delivery in the village. Further discussion is required between the RCBO leaders and local people about the roles and responsibilities of the state and communities. This discussion is also an opportunity for the RCBO to share the long term vision and strategy which underpins the delivery of public services in the village.

To promote social change the RCBO have focused on issues that affect local people in the village in their everyday life. This focus has entailed engaging in time-consuming, commercial-business activities. The RCBO incorporated these activities as part of the process of local people exercising power through control over the services delivered in the village (Gaventa, 2001). In chapter eight I argued that the community-based organisations would have to counter balance their engagement in commercial-business activities with continued engagement in the main purpose of communities which is to organise and involve the community in the struggle for radical change in society (Ledwith, 2011). If this main purpose of communities is not pursued by the RCBO, the delivery of public services in the community will have a reduced impact on the deeper issues which cause poverty and injustice.

The findings and discussion chapters highlighted the issue of grassrootsism defined as communities developing a narrow and short-sighted analysis of the problems that they face in their locality believing that the solutions of their problems lie solely within that locality and with the people who live there. To counter grassrootsism will require that the RCBO participate in networking activities with other organisations engaged in similar struggles. This participation is an opportunity for the RCBO to grow in their awareness of the wider context of their struggle and consequently bolster their struggle in the village. It is also an opportunity for the RCBO to share their knowledge and experience of the past twenty years with organisations who share their aims and objectives.

I conclude that social change has occurred in Renton over the past twenty years as a result of the community taking control over the socio-economic development of the village and creating its own community structure. However, I also conclude that the RCBO's engagement in the struggle for social change in the village is an opportunity to learn how to exercise political and economic power through control over the delivery of public services. The struggle for social change in the village is also an opportunity to participate in the creation of a new socio-economic model while continuing to engage in the struggle for a just and equitable society (Shaw, 2010).

From a popular education perspective the RCBO's experience of struggle in the village is an opportunity to invest in a political-pedagogical process which delves deeper into the causes of poverty and injustice experienced in the village. This process would require that the RCBO link the struggles in the village to similar struggles both nationally and internationally, rooted in a collective critical analysis of the current socio-economic model.

10.2 Participatory Democracy

The second research question asked how the community participated in the process of social change in the village over the past twenty years. A wide range of participatory fora was created by the RCBO for local people to become actively involved in the process of social change in the village. Local people participated in these fora in high numbers but the research data showed divided opinions as regards to the effectiveness of these fora, which raised doubts over their authenticity. These doubts indicate the need to further evaluate the effectiveness of the decision-making instances of the RCBO and question to what extent they are reinforcing an authentic practice of participatory democracy. This practice would entail listening to local people, discussing with leadership and implementing collective decisions made in the decision-making instances, accompanied by an ongoing monitoring process with periodic evaluations of the implementation of the decisions made in the participatory fora (Peloso, 2001).

In the discussion chapter I examined the RCBO's leadership and argued that the RCBO leaders had the responsibility to guarantee the implementation of the decisions made in the different decision-making fora. I also argued that the RCBO leaders should continually verify if their leadership practice responds to the decisions made in the community fora. Difficulties as regards to the RCBO leadership were highlighted and need to be challenged among which was the claim by some interviewees, of authoritarian control and that some leaders took advantage of the leadership role for personal benefit. Similar to the need for continual evaluation of the participatory fora, the RCBO leadership should also be open to evaluation (Freire, 1972; Peloso, 2001). The RCBO leadership could bolster its legitimacy and increase the community's trust by engaging in this evaluation and could also attract more local people to become involved in the activities promoted by the RCBO.

In chapter eight I highlighted how local communities, and in a special way local community leaders, must be attentive not to fall into practices which repeat or are similar to those that the communities oppose. Community leaders can concentrate power, become authoritarian and through time detach themselves from the wider community resulting in a lack of credibility as regards to their leadership. The RCBO argued that their organisations are bottom-up organisations in the sense that they come from the people, respond to peoples' need and are led by decisions made with local people (Patterson, 2010). Not all interviewees agreed that the RCBO were led by local people to the extent that some reported that the RCBO were led by a closed group of people. To counter any possible manipulation or control by a closed group over the RCBO, the leaders should invest in the bottom-up dimension of the organisations by reinforcing an iterative relationship with the different community groups and local people in general. By establishing this iterative relationship, together with increased participation and tighter control of local people over the organisations, combined with willingness on the part of the leaders to listen to local people and respect the decisions made in the participatory fora, the possibility of leaders falling into the pitfall of authoritarian control will be reduced considerably.

The third research question asked if community participation and social change generated empowerment in local people. The community has gained a degree of power by acquiring physical assets and taking control over part of the socio-economic development of the village. As a result, the core group claim that local people in the village have more power to negotiate with the Local Authority and other government agencies over the implementation of policies and projects in the village. The RCBO have created their own community spaces but have encountered difficulty in engaging with government-invited spaces (Gaventa, 2011). However, the RCBO seem to perceive the importance of participating in certain government-invited spaces to the extent that they participate through those who are employed in the community-based organisations. The RCBO can

take advantage of their position of power locally to engage in appropriate government-invited spaces while cultivating their own created spaces (Craig et al, 2011), both of which should be discussed with and approved in the different instances of community participation in the village.

All four core group members of the RCBO, albeit with different emphases, argue that the community organisations are an expression of community empowerment in the village. The core group also argues that community empowerment in the village is an essential part of the struggle for radical change in society moving towards socialism. The acquisition of power at local level is an opportunity for the RCBO to promote a deeper understanding of power which can challenge the current socio-economic context on a broader scale.

Chapter four discussed White's (2000) perception of empowerment which generates "greater consciousness of what makes and keeps people poor" (2000, 147). For this vision of community empowerment to be embraced by more people in the village a political-pedagogical process will be required. I conclude that the RCBO should invest further in local peoples' participation which generates empowerment so that it can become a source of critical awareness about "what makes and keeps people poor" (White, 2000).

10.3 Popular Education

The fourth research question asked which educational processes were involved in bringing about social change in this apparently successful grassroots experience. There seems to be an awareness of the importance of education among the RCBO core group members albeit with different perceptions as regards to its role. Chapter three discussed popular education as education which promotes a deeper understanding of the oppressive structures that sustain the current socio-economic model and situates local struggles in the broader context of the struggle for a just and

equitable society (Freire, 1970; Crowther, 2005). Popular education promotes the development of each person in the collective struggles for social change. The RCBO seem focused on collective processes to reinforce democracy, participation and the general wellbeing of each resident in the village. However, most interviewees did not seem to perceive that the RCBO were promoting the local struggle as part of a broader agenda for a just and equitable society. Freire (1992) argued that the poor or oppressed will understand the struggle for social change starting from “their 'here' and 'now' but as a stepping stone to getting beyond, critically, their naiveté” (1992, 36). From a popular education perspective through tackling local issues the RCBO have the opportunity to develop a critical awareness about the oppressive structures that sustain the current socio-economic model which in turn can stimulate further participation in the wider struggle for radical social change.

Popular education supports the poor and oppressed in the struggle at local level but also stimulates a link with other similar struggles which involve a wide range of communities and popular movements throughout the world (Scanlon, 2008; Crowther & Scandrett, 2011). This research highlighted how the RCBO have found difficulty in networking with similar organisations which contradicts local peoples’ historical identification with struggles outside the village; for example in the struggle against fascism in the Spanish Civil war when some local people participated in the International Brigades. However, more recently the RCBO have supported projects in Africa and India, albeit questioned by this research if the support was out of solidarity or a gesture of charity. Building on these gestures which go beyond the physical boundaries of the village is an opportunity to further develop local peoples’ perception of the link between the struggle in the village and the wider context of social change.

Chapter two discussed how education was denied to the poor because it was perceived by the dominant classes as a means of challenging the social divisions in society. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation,

West Dunbartonshire is the third poorest Local Authority in Scotland (SIMD, 2009). Renton is part of West Dunbartonshire and is comprised of predominantly poor people on low incomes or who are unemployed. By taking advantage of the activities promoted by the RCBO, the community-based organisations could delve deeper into local peoples' experience of poverty in the village. It is an opportunity for the RCBO to promote discussions about the causes of poverty and engage more local people in activities that challenge the social divisions in society caused by the current socio-economic model.

Guaranteeing local peoples' active participation, linking local struggles to a wider agenda for social change, challenging the social divisions in society caused by the current model of socio-economic development, are all characteristics of popular education. However, popular education requires that really useful knowledge should be generated in the process of struggle for social change (Thompson, 2007). To create really useful knowledge would entail combining a critical analysis of the current socio-economic model with the struggle for social change at local in the village linked to similar struggles at an international level which challenge this model. Really useful knowledge could be generated based on local peoples' experience of attempting to implement an alternative socio-economic model in the village focused on eliminating poverty and creating a society based on justice and solidarity (Freire, 1970; Cunningham, 1995; Thompson, 2007).

The RCBO have created a new form of social organisation in the village to sustain control over their socio-economic development as part of an agenda for radical social change. In order to guarantee sustainability of this new form of social organisation and increase participation of local people in the struggle for radical social change, further investment is required to support local people to develop a critical perception of reality. Developing new physical surroundings and new forms of organisation could become part of a political-pedagogical process which helps local people develop a new

critical perception of reality and eventually increase participation in the community-based organisations.

I conclude that the RCBO have a basis on which to engage in a political-pedagogical process of popular education. A conscious decision would have to be made by the RCBO to implement this process. By implementing a political-pedagogical process of popular education the RCBO would have the opportunity to galvanise more support for the community-based organisations and the struggle for social change. This popular education process could develop further local peoples' understanding of the significance of the struggles in the village as a fundamental contribution to the wider struggle for radical social change.

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Appendix 1: Consent Form



The University of Glasgow, charity number SC004401

CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project: Popular Education, Participatory Democracy and Social
Change: The Renton – A Case Study**

Name of Researcher: Thaddeus (Ted) Scanlon

Supervisors: Dr. Liam Kane & Dr. Catherine Bovill

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I consent to being interviewed for the above project and having the interview audio-taped.
4. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Signature</i>

Researcher _____

Appendix 2: Plain Language Statement



The University of Glasgow, charity number SC004401

Plain Language Statement

Title of Project: Popular Education, Participatory democracy and Social Change

Name of Researcher: Thaddeus (Ted) Scanlon

Student Registration Number: 0505217

Supervisors: Dr. Liam Kane & Dr. Catherine Bovill

I am inviting you to take part in my PhD research project. To do so I would like to ask you to read some information about it so that you know what the project is about and that you are comfortable in taking part. If there is anything you do not understand please feel free to ask and I will be more than willing to explain.

Project Information

This phase of the project will last until December 2010. The aim is to find out if participation in grassroots struggles leads to effective social change empowers people and constitutes a 'popular education' experience whereby people understand more about their own reality, learn to critically analyse it and engage to change it.

I will use a research method called participant observation which implies studying closely the Renton community from November 2009 until December 2010. It will entail participating in some of the community's activities, interviewing community members both individually and in groups and studying the community's history. To this end I will also engage with another research tool called the focus group. The aim of the focus group is to discuss topics of my research in a group setting, exchanging and debating ideas. I will then share my impressions with the community and listen to comments on what I have found.

I have asked you to take part because you are directly or indirectly involved with the Renton community and as such will be able to express an opinion. You are in no way obliged to take part. However if you do so, and I would be very grateful if you did, I will leave this form with you and ask you to sign a Consent Form showing that you agreed to participate. If at any time during the interview you wish to withdraw, you are fully entitled to do so.

I am asking you to take part in an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes at a time and place of your choice.

If you so wish, any information you disclose or opinion you express will be treated with absolute confidentiality.

I will transcribe the interviews and give you a copy. After having completed the research study I will offer you a copy should you so desire.

The research is self-funded and has been reviewed by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

Should you wish any further information I Ted Scanlon and my supervisor, Liam Kane at the Department of Adult & Continuing Education will be more than willing to oblige. Our contacts are

Ted Scanlon: 0141 583 7424 or ted.scanlon@hotmail.co.uk

Liam Kane: 0141 330 1854 or L.Kane@educ.gla.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the way the project is being carried out you can also contact the Faculty's Ethic Officer, Dr. Georgina Wardle at

Faculty Research Office
St. Andrews Building
11 Eldon Street
Glasgow G3 6NH

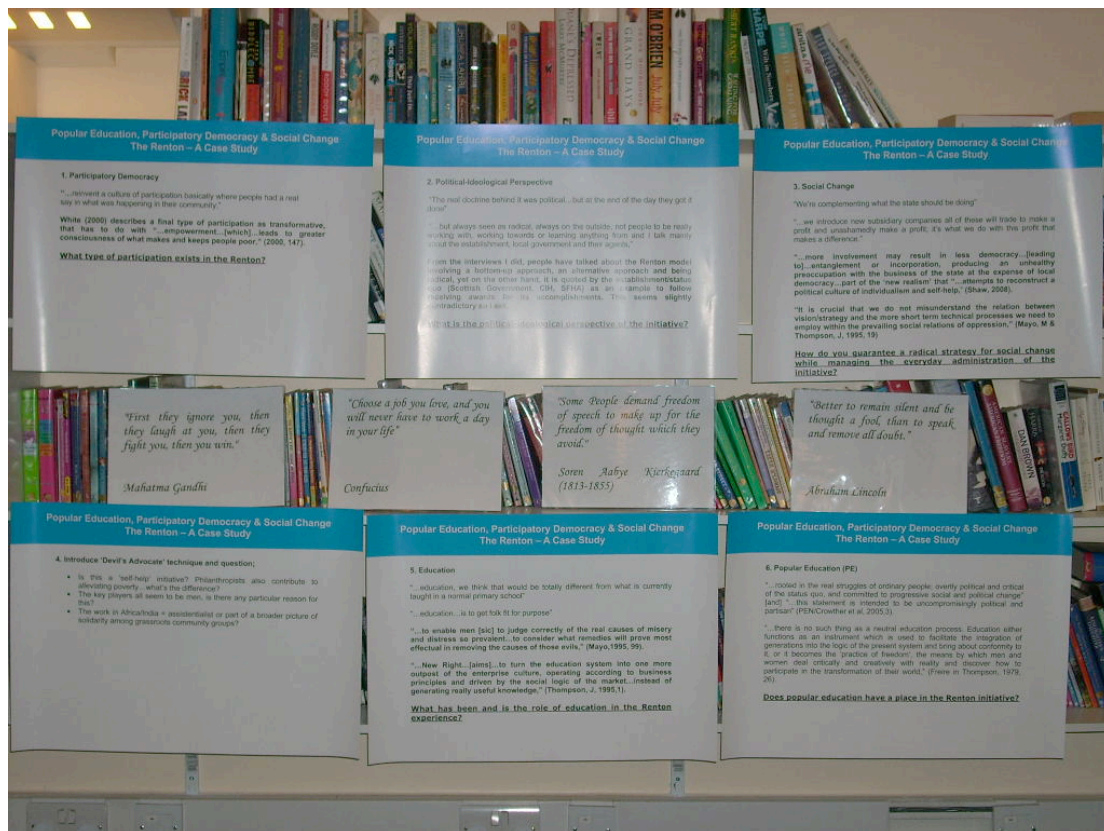
Tel: 0141 330 4101, or by email at

g.wardle@educ.gla.ac.uk

Once again I am grateful for your contribution.

Ted Scanlon

Appendix 3: Posters from focus group discussion



Posters with quotes and questions used during the focus group discussion