



## **In and Against Social Policy**

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**In and against social policy****Abstract**

In order to consider the potential relationships between community psychology and social policy it is necessary to consider the contradictory nature of social policy in the modern State. Following the tradition of critical social policy analysis established through the work of British writers on Critical Social Policy from the late 1970s onwards, social policies will be considered as a hybrid between the role of the State in the service of capital and the realisation of emancipatory struggles by a variety of subjects (workers, women, disabled people, ethnic minorities, and so on). Community psychology also reflects contradictions in the societies in which it is practised, with a similarly dual character both responding to emancipatory interests and at times transmitting the processes of control and recuperation by dominant social interests. Putting together these two critically constituted elements, 'social policy' and 'community psychology', implies a continual process of reflection where the interests of the disadvantaged are ('analectically') kept central. I will explore some opportunities and traps of the social policy process through the experience of leading a demonstration project that piloted changes in disability policy in the UK, and as an activist trying to influence city policies on climate change mitigation. The relative autonomy of system levels will be explored in relation to the scope for and limits to change. Some practical tools for maintaining an ethical clarity will be identified.

**Keywords:** *social policy, critical perspectives.*

**Resumen**

Al considerar las relaciones potenciales entre la psicología comunitaria y la política social, es necesario tener en cuenta la naturaleza contradictoria de la política social en el Estado moderno. Siguiendo la tradición del análisis de la política social en la obra de escritores británicos sobre la Política Social Crítica a partir de 1981, las políticas sociales se consideran como un híbrido entre el papel del Estado al servicio del capital y la realización de las luchas emancipatorias por parte de diversos sujetos (trabajadores, mujeres, personas con discapacidad, minorías étnicas, etc.). La psicología comunitaria también refleja las contradicciones de las sociedades donde se practica, teniendo un doble carácter similar, porque tanto responde a intereses emancipatorios, como en ocasiones transmite los procesos de control y recuperación por los intereses sociales dominantes. Unir estos dos elementos, la política social y la psicología comunitaria, ambos constituidos de manera crítica, implica un proceso constante de reflexión, donde los intereses de las personas afectadas son colocados 'analecticamente', en un lugar central. Voy a explorar algunas oportunidades y trampas del proceso de la política social a través del ejemplo de mi experiencia como líder de un proyecto piloto que puso a prueba cambios en la política de discapacidad en el Reino Unido, y como activista pretendiendo influir en la política de nuestra ciudad, en la mitigación del cambio climático. Se explora la autonomía relativa respecto del sistema, en torno a las oportunidades y límites para el cambio. Identificaré algunas herramientas prácticas para mantener la claridad ética.

**Palabras claves:** *Psicología Comunitaria; Políticas Sociales; perspectiva crítica*

**Introduction**

In order to consider the potential relationships between community psychology and social policy it is first necessary to consider the contradictory nature of each in relation to the modern State. It is worth noting that the nature of the State itself has been the focus of considerable controversy in theoretical analysis (for the classical Marxian debate, see Harvey, 1985; Miliband, 1969, 1970; Poulantzas, 1969; Therborn, 1980). The view taken here is that to talk of the State is to describe a set of relations and processes, whereby social and economic interests compete for influence in the State nexus, and then exert influence on the rest of the society, using the resources that the State then affords them. It is the dominant social interests that exercise the most influence, but the process is not automatic, given that it is a field for contestation, and that the State enjoys a degree of relative autonomy. However it is not possible to generalise about the extent to which State power reflects a particular dominant social interest,

without being explicit about the particular conjuncture of forces and relations that apply in a concrete context in time and space. We know that different States follow somewhat different models, and also that States from time to time undergo crises of legitimacy whereby the concordance between State power and the dominant social interests becomes dislocated, what Gramsci discussed as a crisis of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971).

*Social Policy and the State*

It is through the governmental organs of the State that social policy is formulated, agreed, operationalised and implemented. There are several potential levels, which differ somewhat in different countries and regions. British writers on Critical Social Policy (e.g. Gough, 1979, 2000, 2008; Jessop, 2003; Mishra, 1999) from the end of the 1970s onwards, following O'Connor (1973), see social policies in terms of the interplay between the role of the state in the service

of capital and the realisation of emancipatory struggles by a variety of subjects (workers, women, disabled people, ethnic minorities, and so on). In this view the State reproduces the interests of the ruling class, but it does not do this mechanically or deterministically. Rather, it is also responsive to what can be termed subaltern pressures, typically in the form of struggle and pressure from social movements that represent the interests of labour, women, ethnic groups, disabled people and so on. The State then is a site of conflict but also of negotiation and the resolution of conflict, both on a 'grand scale', as in the post-war settlement between capital and labour after the 1939-45 war, and at a more particular level, for example in the reforms to the mental health system over the post-war period.

A consequence of this understanding of social policy is that concrete examples are inevitably messy, difficult to 'decode' in terms of the interests in play and the likely consequences of implementation. Burton and Kagan's (2006) analysis of policy for intellectually disabled people in the UK demonstrates this. That policy framework (Department of Health, 2001) involved an emphasis on employment, personalisation through market mechanisms such as personal budgets, but also an emphasis on the responsibility of a wider set of actors than the traditional health and social care sector to facilitate the inclusion and participation of intellectually disabled people in community places and everyday life. The policy stems from a blending of the social model of disability (Barnes, 1998; Chappell, Goodley, & Lawthom, 2001; Goodley, 2001), produced through the organised action of disabled people, academics, family members, and some groups of professionals, with the neoliberal imperatives of marketisation and the conversion of social needs into sources of corporate profit (Lister, 2005; Pollock, 2004; Whitfield, 2006; Whitfield, D, 2010). This 'unholy alliance' was cemented by a romantic imaginary of intellectually disabled people and a downplaying of the collective dimensions of community life and participation. This policy mix did lead to some positive openings, including the establishment of multi-stakeholder boards to oversee implementation in each municipality, which included intellectually disabled people and family members. While this could and did lead to silencing through co-optation in some areas, in others it opened up policy and provision to improved public scrutiny and introduced new sources of imagination and challenge to the welfare bureaucracy. But the romantic simplification of the task of social inclusion, together with the increased reliance on the for-profit sector meant that some people who were difficult to include (because of the complexity of their needs) were excluded to congregate settings that on occasion had standards poor enough to allow abusive regimes and a national scandal (Oakes, 2012).

### *Community Psychology and the State*

Community psychology too reflects contradictions in the societies in which it is practised, with a similarly dual character, both responding to emancipatory interests and at times transmitting the processes of control and recuperation by dominant social interests. At times it can unwittingly transmit or mediate the processes of control and recuperation by dominant social interests. Examples are the promotion and facilitation of 'self-help' or the role of 'civil society' and third sector organizations in a context of welfare cuts and the State's negligence of human need. Yet community psychology at times plays a role in direct support of subaltern pressures for social justice and reform, facilitating social struggles and the emancipation of communities and oppressed and excluded groups. The distinction between ameliorative and transformative interventions (e.g., Prilleltensky, 2001) pertains to this dual nature of community psychology. It can be difficult to disentangle these two tendencies, since in practice most community psychology interventions, like many social policies contain contradictory (recuperative and liberatory) elements. It is therefore important to understand that the processes by which social interests are reproduced do not form a mechanical causal chain between power and praxis, but are mediated socially in a variety of ways, symbolically, ideologically and through human interaction, which is itself characterized by both conflict and consensus.

### *Social Policy, Community Psychology, State and Society in Dynamic Interaction*

Putting together these two critically constituted elements, 'social policy' and 'community psychology', requires an understanding of the processes of reproduction and transformation at play between a) the State and the power interests within it, b) social policy, at whichever level of the State system it is articulated (at local, regional, national or transnational governmental levels), and c) community psychological praxis, in relation to d) the interests of the affected, that is to say those who are typically the objects of social policy but who might be active subjects in community psychological praxis and sources of those subaltern pressures that act to transform and improve the response of the State to human need.

In order that community psychology does not unwittingly become a tool of Capital or other dominant interests we suggest the following:

1. An understanding of the structural and systemic power of Capital and its ideological disguises.
2. A continual process of reflection, hand in hand with the affected: i.e. the "analectical" interrogation of policy and of community psychological concepts, techniques and methods, by and with those who are oppressed

and/or excluded. This concept derives from the systematisation by Dussel (1985; see Burton, in press; Burton & Flores, 2011) of the process of critical correction, through dialogue, of concepts, techniques and methods that arise from dominant (e.g. eurocentric, oligarchic, technocratic) practices of social science, government, administration, etc.

3. Making the effort to join up learning across contexts, projects and iterations of the policy process (Kagan & Burton, 2000).
4. Taking opportunities to contribute to the formulation of policy, especially via action research or piloting of new approaches, while always being alert to their malign consequences and the corruption of principled interventions.

The remainder of the article explores the above conceptualisation of the problem through two concrete experiences. Both took place in the same period in the same city in the UK. The first builds on the discussion of disability policy above by means of an initiative to improve the processes and outcomes in the transition to adulthood of young people who are intellectually disabled. The second concerns a community psychological analysis of the relationship between environmentalists and local government (the "local State") in relation to policy on climate change. In both the author was an actor and the narrative is a rational reconstruction that draws on documentation, personal notes, memory and discussion with other actors.

### **Example 1: Transition to Adulthood for intellectually disabled people**

Becoming an adult is often a difficult time for a young person and their family. Uncertainty about the future combines with the need to navigate and negotiate a variety of transitions: from school to work or more education, to greater independence in travel, relationships, a changing body and health and so on. But for a young person who is intellectually disabled, and their close family, all these passages are complicated by the need for help and support to both navigate and negotiate the changes and to make use of the new opportunities if and when they are accessed. In the context of a service system that is not usually responsive and creative enough in presenting information, facilitating growth and change, and offering necessary but sensitive support and care, the experience often becomes very bewildering and stressful; low expectations are often transmitted and embodied in the procedures followed and outcomes are often poor. This is very much the experience that intellectually disabled people, their families and their other allies recount, when they have the chance to explain how it is for them.

The *Getting a Life* programme was an initiative of the UK government's Office for Disability Issues. It ran

from April 2008 to the end of March 2011. It was sponsored by four government departments: *The Department of Health, The Department for Work and Pensions, The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills* and *The Department for Children, Schools and Families* (now the *Department for Education*). This joining up of policy was in itself innovative. The initiative was conceived as a set of local demonstration projects, or pilots, in which active experimentation with new approaches would take place and lessons be learned prior to scaling up the innovations both locally and nationally.

As the national programme got under way it increasingly focussed on how to help young people get (supported) employment. In Manchester that was an important aspect since employment brings a number of other benefits (income, relationships, identity, status, learning and development, reduced reliance on others), but we worked on a number of other things too. Table 1 (column 1) shows the goals of the local project.

The project was managed by the author, then the Head of the Learning Disability Partnership, a virtual organisation based with local council's department for adult care but including sections of the local resources of the National Health Service. However the project entailed facilitating change beyond the limits of my his formal authority. A project manager (the post filled by a series of secondment from other organisations involved with the project) was responsible for day-to-day work and a board consisting of representatives of partner organisations, including activists from carers' and disabled people's organisations, oversaw the project. The project made progress on the majority of the formal aims (goal 2 was an exception). It did not attempt to change the overall system immediately but to demonstrate possibility and best practice with a sample of young people at various stages of the 'transition experience', especially through the use of individually tailored person centred action plans (goal 1). However, the project also created a change in the shared understandings of the participants and their organisations, something that has set the scene for a more ambitious follow-on programme, this time backed with government money (the project under discussion was based on using local resources more effectively and although advice was provided by central government, no financial assistance was given).

The project was notable for the almost serendipitous way it fomented other related initiatives and attracted resources from sectors beyond the 'traditional' and specialist disability sectors. An example was a supported employment programme for significantly disabled young people based in a local general hospital and funded by the local further education (young adults) college, the hospital itself and an employment agency, with short term contributions

from the university (accommodation) and the local council (initial funding for preparation before the formal start).

However, despite the successes of the project, it is

possible to make a balance sheet of its successes in relation to its limitations, in relation to the overarching policy and ideological context. This is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Outcomes of *Getting a Life* in Context.**

Goal	Successes	Challenges	Limit Factors	
			Local (municipal)	Systemic (national)
1) Every young person has a personal plan that everyone agrees with and works towards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support structures created inside and outside the formal system, including led by families.</li> <li>• Practices beginning to change in most agencies.</li> <li>• Better plans for a proportion of people.</li> <li>• Acceptance of new approach for next phase of policy implementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not yet available to all young people.</li> <li>• Not always embedded into routine practices.</li> <li>• There are still separate agency plans rather than one shared plan updated and followed by all.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple demands of agencies limit inter-agency collaboration.</li> <li>• Weak inter-agency coordination.</li> <li>• Professional distrust of the voice of young people and families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple agencies with diverse aims and governance.</li> <li>• The system is not designed to promote individually tailored solutions.</li> </ul>
2) Services to be planned and funded before people need them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of individualised funding helps circumvent rigidity of established provision.</li> <li>• High quality and effective inter-organisational innovations with different functions.</li> <li>• Development of a methodology to match provision to need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on cohorts is not effectively shared to inform funding and planning decisions.</li> <li>• Continued discontinuity at age 18.</li> <li>• Pre-funded services remain inflexible regarding new aspirations and needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of planning and commissioning functions in some sectors and limited remit in others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical assumptions (expectations as to what's possible) based on past practices.</li> <li>• 'Market failure': the market model de-emphasises population-based strategic planning, especially for minority /devalued / excluded groups.</li> <li>• Separate national policy frameworks for children and adults, including entitlement criteria.</li> </ul>
3) Establish new ways of working and new responsibilities across the children / adults division.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New team established, working across the age divide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on temporary staff.</li> <li>• Slow to adopt person centred inclusive philosophy.</li> <li>• Overload of work. Slow development of collaborative working with other agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment restrictions in response to budget cuts.</li> <li>• Overload of public service resources / problems of boundary management.</li> <li>• Dominance of bureaucratic model of care planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government's cuts to welfare system, in context of structural crisis of capitalism.</li> <li>• Mutual isolation of policy areas.</li> <li>• Ideology of rationing of support and care: system shift to "crisis gate-keeping" mode.</li> </ul>
4) Spread positive information about how young people can 'Get a Life'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most success concerned employment: Establishment of highly effective demonstration programme with particular organisations.</li> <li>• Employer engagement directly with young disabled people.</li> <li>• Clarity established with regard to necessary steps from school age onwards ("Transition to Employment Pathway").</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only a minority of young people in supported employment.</li> <li>• Review outcomes not routinely linked to a work future.</li> <li>• Still need to publicise images of publicity more widely.</li> <li>• The (evidence-based) transition to employment pathway not being followed consistently.</li> <li>• A relative lack of emphasis on non-work related but inclusive outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of understanding of the real needs and possibilities: torn between non-specialist senior management's relatively romantic and instrumental understanding of inclusion in employment and low expectations of some specialists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government emphasis on employment inclusion motivated by policy of cutting benefits does not accurately identify the real support needs of severely impaired young people.</li> <li>• Domination by a 'Calvinist' work agenda (see aim 7. below).</li> </ul>
5) Strengthen the voice of young people and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition Support Group established and now run by parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggregation and analysis of views from various self-advocates'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of personnel to collect and analyse information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top-down policy and strategy formulation including a 'performance</li> </ul>

Goal	Successes	Challenges	Limit Factors	
			Local (municipal)	Systemic (national)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 'Young People's Parliament' established and linked to non-disabled youth.</li> <li>• Parent carer network established.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>groups to inform strategic change.</li> <li>• Not learning in a systematic way from young people's experience.</li> <li>• Privileging of verbal communication excludes those with limited speech or language who nevertheless live experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paternalistic 'we know best' culture.</li> <li>• Strategic planning not set up to seriously use person-based information from 'the affected'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>culture'. Non needs-based drivers and criteria dominate so inquiry-based approaches like the present programme are constrained by the overall policy mix.</li> </ul>
6) Get people jobs and focus on employment as a feasible goal for disabled young people (see also 4) above).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth supported employment project (YSEP) (Saturday and after school jobs) established with temporary funding.</li> <li>• Ongoing funding secured for supported employment/intern-ship programme (referred to in 4 above).</li> <li>• Co-location of special education provision with mainstream schools and colleges -&gt; more local access to support and vocational courses and inclusive options.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using funding for short breaks (respite care) used to fund job-coaching.</li> <li>• YSEP didn't receive permanent funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureaucratic sluggishness and rules.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recession leading to reduction in supply of paid employment.</li> <li>• Employers with reduced capacity to provide support to disabled workers.</li> </ul>
7) Learn from the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings fed back to government through regular meetings.</li> <li>• Findings integrated locally into next phase (Special Education and Disability Pathfinder (Department for Education &amp; Department of Health, 2012).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project lessons remain relatively marginal although spreading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other agendas dominate in a time of cuts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other agendas dominate in a time of cuts.</li> <li>• 'Market personalisation' – tendency to regard personal budgets as the main tool for securing responsive and flexible support in context of neoliberal orthodoxy, so other lessons not likely to be assimilated.</li> <li>• "Welfare Calvinism" - emphasis on getting welfare recipients off benefits and into (often poorly paid) employment. Little room for highly intensive support models to support the transition to employment for severely disabled people.</li> </ul>

The analysis of successes and remaining challenges in the context of local and national policy contexts indicates that as in many such projects, some successes were achieved. Some disabled young people gained access to options that would not have happened without the project locally or the programme nationally. However, these successes were fragmented and some of the difficult challenges remain– for example strategically planning resources on the basis of an emerging and changing pattern of needs and preferences. Moreover, the dominant models mean that the system is already biased in favour of certain 'solutions' while some of the more

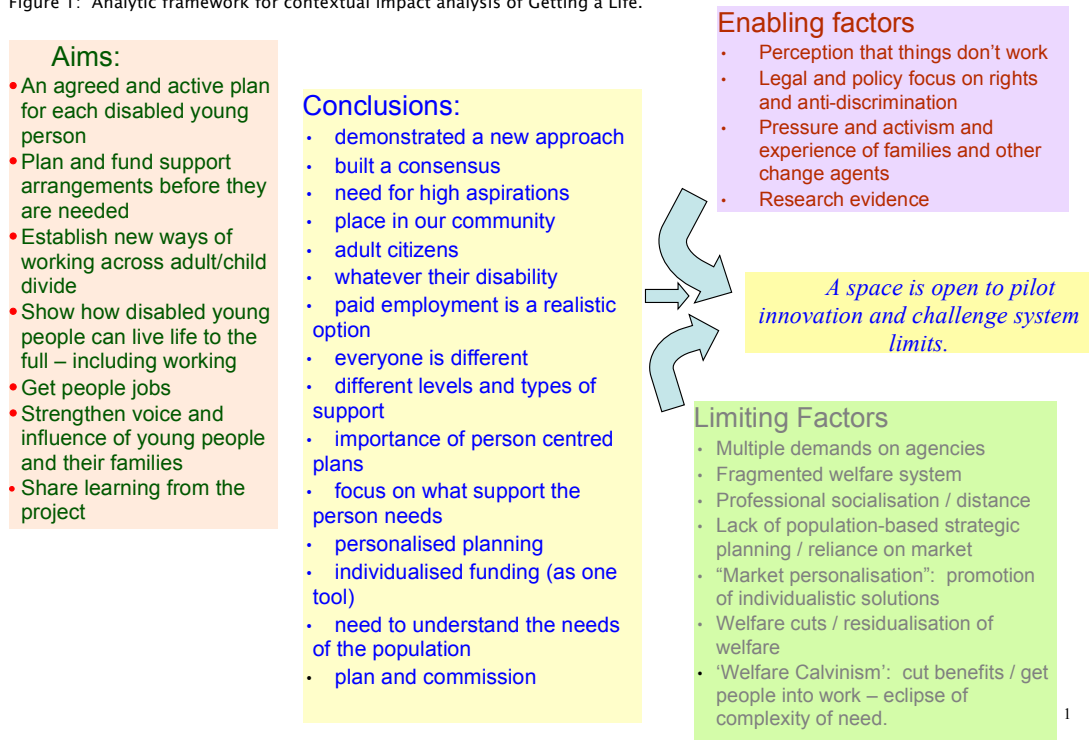
collective planning models, developed for example with family activists, are less likely to be adopted on a widespread basis, maintaining the ideology of 'we know best' despite a rhetoric of consumerism. An example is the aim of personalisation: tailoring support systems to the individual's needs and circumstances, rather than expecting the person to fit in with a predetermined support option. This aim, however, in dominant policy is defined as, or reduced to, the spending of personal budgets: a market, or consumer, model, as if everything can be bought. Finally the cuts to public services, a result in turn of the recession that began in 2008, and the longer term

recurrent crisis of capitalism, cast a dark cloud over any attempts to make a system more attuned to the needs and aspirations of one of society's most disadvantaged groups. Indeed, the city council in question has had its budget cut by 25% due to the Tory-Liberal coalition government's austerity policy, disproportionately applied to the districts that voted Labour. While these reductions might be a spur to more creative, community-based solutions, at this level they merely send the system into crisis gate-keeping mode, reducing radically its aspirations for inclusion and citizenship for severely disadvantaged groups. While the development of supported employment does mean that reliance on publicly funded provision is not necessarily the only option for young people reaching adulthood, it must be understood that this model is not cost-free as it requires a public subsidy, even though overall savings can be made in comparison to traditional provision (British Association for Supported Employment, n.d.).

Nevertheless, the experience of the project indicates some room for manoeuvre. Social policy is not entirely determined by the most powerful interests through the State, although they do exert a powerful influence. The task is to find ways of maximising the space for creative action, hand in hand with oppressed and excluded groups. The Getting a Life programme gave us such an opportunity to demonstrate a more sensitive way of planning with and for young people in order that as adults they might indeed 'get a life'. Some of those lessons have been learned and integrated into the next iteration of the national policy process (Department for Education, 2012), even in the context of the present government's attack on welfare, and the contribution of the voices of parents and young people who are disabled has probably been a significant influence. Figure 1 maps these conclusions.

Figure 1 summarises the material in Table 1 and the text, demonstrating how such a project generates a space for experimentation with innovative and responsive social policy, a space where systemic enabling factors and constraints are played out.

Figure 1: Analytic framework for contextual impact analysis of Getting a Life.



I use the term “intellectually disabled person/people” as the least worst way of identifying and referring to this group. This follows the social model that sees

disability as not residing in the person but a social relation affecting those with impairments. This differs from typical North American usage, 'people

with disabilities' which carries the implication that disability is an essential property of the impaired person. However the qualifier 'intellectual' does confuse the present usage, reintroducing a reference to the impairment, but improving the term would make for a longer and clumsy construction.

**Example 2: Climate change policy in a large city.**

To continue the exploration of the relations between social policy and community psychology in the context of the State, we will turn to a very different focus, that of the construction of policies for the mitigation of climate change at the municipal level. My involvement in this case was the rather uncomfortable one of being an activist trying to influence policies in the city administration that (until March, 2012) employed me, albeit on long-term secondment from the National Health Service, as a relatively senior (4<sup>th</sup> tier) manager: the Learning Disability Partnership at its height employed 650 staff, two thirds of them local government employees. The intervention was not a community psychological one as such, but methods used for the facilitation of meetings of the social movement organisation involved would be familiar to many community psychologists, and techniques such as stakeholder analysis were also used. Reflections made on group processes were also informed by social psychological understandings. It is also worthy of study as it illuminates some of the issues arising when social movements interact with State actors in the policy process.

In February 2008, Manchester City Council (MCC) adopted a set of Climate Change Principles which committed Manchester to becoming a low carbon city by 2020 (MCC, 2008). This would mean that "Manchester will be on track to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to a level consistent with keeping global temperature increases to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and will have adapted its economy, society and infrastructure accordingly – both to cope with the effects of inevitable climate change and to mitigate future emissions." (MCC, 2009a). The 17 principles can be summarised in terms of 5 themes:

- Involves a wide range of partner organisations in direct action to reduce emissions and disseminate best practice, with the Council in a leadership role;
- Enables 'decoupling' of economic growth from emissions growth;
- Helps to mitigate the practical and financial consequences to households and businesses of switching to lower carbon patterns of consumption of energy and other goods;
- Grows Manchester's skills, expertise and capacity base in energy and environmental technologies and builds climate change awareness into mainstream learning;

- Motivates widespread personal behaviour change towards lower-impact modes of living (summary from MCC, 2009a).

The following January the Council published a follow-up report, Climate Change Call to Action (MCC, 2009a). This report was produced as part of a UK government initiative whereby Manchester would be one of three large cities with Climate Change Action Plans. The report, whose writing had been outsourced to a London based consultancy firm, received a cold reaction from the local environmental movement. It was considered weak and in some areas vague while there were some significant silences, not least the role of aviation in greenhouse gas emissions (the City Council had a 55 per cent stake in Manchester International Airport).

As a response, a coalition of activists was formed: "Call to Real Action". Some were active members of local green organisations (Friends of the Earth and the Green Party in particular) but many were not affiliated to formal groupings. One activist, with a background in climate camp activism and current involvement in producing a fortnightly local newsletter on climate change and who has maintained an independent stance in the local political context, took a central role in bringing together the coalition. The goals of the coalition were to,

- 1) Produce an alternative vision of what the Council - and the people of Manchester- can do about climate change: reducing emissions and creating resilience.
- 2) Produce a report, at least as detailed as Call to Action, by 31st March, 2009
- 3) Adopt a maximally open and transparent process.

Call to Real Action proceeded through large, participative and open meetings and workshops which gathered and refined ideas. These were then written up by working groups focussing on various sections of the report (transport, aviation, food, business and economic development, and so on). These separate sections were then collectively edited (using a virtual platform) into a consolidated report, ready by the deadline. The process was in many ways a model of how to produce policy collectively, from a social movement. I should note that I only became involved at the large workshop event on March 7<sup>th</sup>. I had been working independently on a related project (Burton, 2009) that focussed on the Regional level and which had a wider scope than climate change mitigation and adaptation. My role with Call to Real Action was that of contributing to the writing and collective editing of the alternative report and participation in the follow-up work of the coalition until it was wound up.

The final 62 page report, also called "Call to Real Action" (Call to Real Action, 2009) was published on



time and presented to the council. It emphasised the need for actions that were sufficiently clear and strong, that were based on scientific knowledge about the city's emissions (including embedded, or outsourced ones) with measurable targets, that entailed a re-engineering of the city's economy and a rethinking of its economic strategy (based on the pursuit of economic growth), and that covered the 'no-go area' of aviation and the airport. It also emphasised the critical importance of engaging with Manchester's diverse communities both to communicate the proposals and also to develop them further with wide ownership. It suggested that the council should bring forward publication of its plan to before the International Climate Change Congress in Copenhagen, that November, to encourage other areas to take similarly bold steps.

After some hesitation the council responded, to the surprise of the coalition, favourably. They invited representatives in for discussion and embarked on a participative process for constructing its Climate Change Action Plan. This proceeded from a participative workshop and then by working groups (I was a member of one of them) consisting of council officers, hired consultants (this time locally based), representatives from partner organisations (health services, development companies, universities, etc.) and social movement activists.

The plan that emerged: "Manchester A Certain Future" (MCC, 2009b) was considerably stronger than the one that had looked likely to emerge following the appearance of "Call to Action" in January. The council took seriously the need for multilateral involvement and it set up a multi-stakeholder Steering Group (for the Plan) and an Environment Advisory Panel, of which I was a member, to advise the council's officers and elected members concerned with this topic. A Certain Future was launched by the then UK Minister for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Miliband, at an event chaired by one of the participants in Call to Real Action. A commitment was made to Total Carbon Footprint measurement (an important issue for economies like the UK where the process of de-industrialisation and outsourcing of production to production zones in the global South has reduced direct emissions – within the UK – while the total

attributable emissions have increased rapidly.

However, as with the other project it is important to make a balance of what has been achieved. This is presented in Table 2 where the proposals of the three reports, Call to Action, Call to Real Action, and A Certain Future are compared. It is clear that despite the adoption of some proposals from Call to Real Action, the overall shape of the report is little changed. To illustrate, there remain two "Elephants in the Room", Economic Growth and Aviation. The overall economic model of global competition for economic growth is unchanged and the illusion is maintained, despite the evidence that economic growth and greenhouse gas emissions can almost certainly not be de-coupled (Jackson, 2009; Næss & Høyer, 2009; Victor, 2011).

Finally, it can be noted that the welcome to activists has acted to silence some of them as they have become implicated and embedded in the official programme. This seems to have happened in two ways. Firstly some (former?) activists are now members of the city's A Certain Future Steering Group and thereby have responsibility for the implementation of the plan, which despite its fundamental shortcomings is one of the most ambitious nationally (an indication of how far away we are from the policy implementation necessary for climate safety). Assuming a corporate responsibility tends to engender the auto-censorship of dissent. Secondly, between 2009 and 2012, a wider grouping of activists became members of the council's Environmental Advisory Panel. This did not function very well, certainly not as a way of effectively advising the council on environmental matters. The presence of such a forum though, could be interpreted as a "pressure valve" for criticism. As Marcuse (1965, p. 134) put it,

"The tolerance which was the great achievement of the liberal era is still professed and (with strong qualifications) practiced, while the economic and political process is subjected to an ubiquitous and effective administration in accordance with the predominant interests. The result is an objective contradiction between the economic and political structure on the one side, and the theory and practice of toleration on the other.

Table 2: Comparison of the three Climate Change reports.

Call to Action, January, 2009	Call to Real Action, March, 2009	A Certain Future, December, 2009
(MCC, 2009a) <b>The report emphasised,</b> <b>1) Strengthening capacity for Climate Change Action at a City-Regional (Greater Manchester) level,</b> with a focus on contributing towards economic advantage and prosperity <b>2) Delivering Climate Change Action in</b>	(Call to Real Action, 2009) <b>The report made a large number of proposals, too many to list but it emphasised</b> 1. The need for bold actions and avoidance of more demonstration projects: <i>"the time has passed when iconic or exemplary projects serve any useful purpose .... for Manchester to build an isolated urban turbine, or another low-</i>	(MCC, 2009b) <b>The report set two overall goals:</b> <b>1) To reduce the city of Manchester's emissions of CO2 by 41% by 2020, from 2005 levels.</b> This equates to a reduction from current levels of 3.2 million tonnes per annum to less than two million; it also equates

Call to Action, January, 2009	Call to Real Action, March, 2009	A Certain Future, December, 2009
<p><i>the City of Manchester</i> with focus on 5 areas:</p> <p>3) <b>“Get our own house in order:”</b> report on council's own carbon emissions [already required by central government].</p> <p>4) <b>Promoting business and the city centre with emphasis on</b> growth in high-value, knowledge intensive businesses, building on the University sector and low carbon opportunities.</p> <p>5) <b>Physical development and regeneration.</b> Maximising competitive advantage in the property sector.</p> <p>6) <b>Engaging Manchester residents in climate change action.</b> To understand people’s circumstances and understanding of climate change and help elicit a shift to low carbon choices and behaviours.</p> <p>7) <b>Mainstreaming climate change action into services.</b> Largely focusing on procurement and reducing need for travel. <b>Nine “catalytic actions”</b> would provide impetus, begin to build transferable skills and knowledge – ‘learning by doing’ – and show leadership on some of the biggest challenges and opportunities climate change poses to the city.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>To identify trailblazing major regeneration neighbourhoods</b> in which to develop internationally recognised exemplars for socially, economically and environmentally sustainable place-making.</li> <li>2. <b>Retrofitting Manchester’s civic heritage</b> [the Town hall Complex – a building with poor energy conversation characteristics].</li> <li>3. <b>Establish a business alliance for climate change action.</b> [Concretely a business summit would be called with an international speaker].</li> <li>4. <b>Low carbon energy infrastructure.</b> Do feasibility study of establishing a Manchester-wide Energy Services Company ... to supply low carbon and renewable energy across Greater Manchester. [Action already planned by Association of Greater Manchester Authorities].</li> <li>5. <b>Low Carbon Communities.</b> To encourage neighbourhood or community groups to identify opportunities across the city in which to pilot transformational Low Carbon Communities. [Concretely, it was proposed to run a symposium on neighbourhood climate change action.]</li> <li>6. <b>A climate-change ready Local Development Framework,</b> building on a commitment to repopulating the 'urban core' and achieving a more compact urban geography so that future economic growth is more sustainable.</li> <li>7. <b>The Manchester Prize:</b> a prize to be awarded biannually to a range of designs for sustainable living at different scales.</li> <li>8. <b>Greening the city: i-Trees.</b> A proposal for long-term investment</li> </ol>	<p><i>carbon demonstration house, can have no effect on the citizenry or on advancing the zero-carbon agenda. Activity of an altogether greater order of magnitude is called for”.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The need to adequately fund interventions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions (citing work by the government's advisor on economics of climate change that a stimulus of some £M400 would be required).</li> <li>3. The need to tackle directly the issue of economic growth: <i>“The Industrial Revolution, born in Manchester, launched the relentless growth of our economies with a reliance on the ever-greater use of coal, gas and oil. We know that we cannot go on like this. If Manchester wishes to be a part of the post-industrial revolution, then it will have to challenge its own habits, hopes and vested interests.”</i></li> <li>4. The need to tackle the emissions from flights into and out of Manchester: <i>“The Council should stop expanding Manchester Airport. Not shut it down, just halt its growth; Cap emissions at Manchester Airport. MAG can set an annually reducing cap on the CO2 levels from the flights that it facilitates. It will be up to the airlines how they can accommodate this regulation.”</i> <i>“We recognise that the council is a stakeholder in the airport and this has up to now been a significant plank in the Council and regional economic strategy. But let us be honest here and acknowledge that sadly there is no such thing as a green airport. The pretence that there can be undermines not only the catalytic actions but the whole Call to Action. We call for leadership, courage and genuinely new thinking in recognising the unsustainability of this approach.”</i> <i>“Whilst the City Council talk about strengthening local neighbourhoods, in practice they are too easily seduced by mega-developments such as the recently-proposed Airport City, which will encourage longer-distance commuting and undermine any carbon savings elsewhere.”</i> <i>“Aviation: When you are in a hole, stop digging. Freeze the expansion plans for Airport City.”</i></li> <li>5. The importance of adopting a bio-regional perspective that went beyond the conurbation and included parts of the rural hinterland in order to maximise options for food and energy production and to reduce unnecessary travel into the city.</li> <li>6. Getting its Own House in Order. A variety of proposals suggested how the council could do more to lead by example, They included, 1) <i>Makes a public commitment that its members and officers will, if travelling within 300 miles, avoid flying....</i> 2) <i>Explores teleconferencing as an alternative to long-haul travel.</i> 3) <i>Discourages the use of car travel to and from work by its employees, by creating an above-inflation charge for its car parking, that ratchets upwards. This money should be ... used to encourage more environmentally friendly means of transport.</i> 4) <i>Institutes a “meat-free Monday” in all its facilities, and encourages its partner organisations to do the same. Meat is a major contributor to greenhouse gases.</i></li> <li>7. Committing to exceeding targets in government and (then thought to be pending) international agreements.</li> </ol>	<p>to a reduction in per capita emissions from 7.3 tonnes to 4.3 tonnes per head.</p> <p>2) <b>To engage all individuals, neighbourhoods and organisations in Manchester in a process of cultural change that embeds ‘low-carbon thinking’ into the lifestyles and operations of the city.</b></p> <p><b>Over 150 actions were identified</b> with varying degrees of specificity, covering the five themes of Living, Working, Moving, Growing and Adapting.</p> <p><b>Notably, the proposals were seen to be the responsibilities of a variety of organisations, public, private and NGOs. The approach now emphasised engagement and participation and a multi-sectoral steering group was established to oversee implementation in partnership with the council's Environmental Strategy Performance Board and a new Environmental Advisory Panel.</b></p> <p><b>The report also committed to measurement on the basis of the city's Total Carbon Footprint</b> which includes all the greenhouse gas emissions, including those from aviation (now known to be around 17%) and those embedded in everything we buy.</p> <p>However, the report</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <b>Continued to assume that economic growth can be made sustainable, now in denial of the available evidence to the contrary. Indeed the city's strategy of competition in the global economy remained undisturbed.</b></li> <li>2) Using the argument that there is no internationally agreed means to apportion aviation emissions, <b>excluded aviation from the action plan.</b></li> <li>3) <b>Remained unclear as to how a broader movement in support of climate change action would be built.</b></li> <li>4) <b>Continued to lack a bioregional perspective and continued to propose some small scale local actions</b> that would be too small and slow to impact on the emissions problem.</li> <li>5) <b>Was vague on how the 150 actions would lead to the desired emissions. In other words there was a gap in the theory of action and many assumptions were unstated.</b></li> </ol>

Call to Action, January, 2009	Call to Real Action, March, 2009	A Certain Future, December, 2009
<p>in greening Oxford Road, the busiest road corridor in the North West and a major gateway to the City Centre. To establish a living laboratory, to study the impact of CC and adaptation interventions.</p> <p>9. <b>A Green Airport.</b> An airport with zero carbon ground emissions.</p>	<p>8. A general emphasis on increasing local production, particularly of food.</p> <p>9. A set of alternative catalytic actions was proposed, under the headings: Economy, Energy, Engagement, Food, International, Planning, Resilience, Transport, Water.</p> <p>10. A very strong emphasis on public engagement, consultation, participation and the collaborative formulation of policy and action. This emphasised transparency and openness, using clear English, multiple channels of communication, public debates, the funding of local groups and networks in the green sector, and the encouragement of new ideas.</p>	

In this second example, while it is not possible to be precise about the causal linkages, the anti-systemic movement, Call to Real Action, was successful within certain limits in altering the city's approach to climate change adaptation. Specifically, the plan produced following our intervention, and with our participation, was more ambitious and comprehensive than the previous document. Its commitment to Total Carbon Footprint measurement was an example of this, and this has since led to the production of very useful data (Berners-Lee, Hatter, & Hoolohan, 2011). The other major change was the very participative and open way in which the plan was produced: as one of the group members commented at the time: *"They liked the way we worked but not what we had to say"*. And this was accurate. While some movement was produced, and Manchester has a better climate change action plan than it would have had without Call to Real Action's intervention, it did not prove possible to mount an effective challenge to the two major ideological, but very real obstacles: the dogma of ("sustainable") economic growth, and the privileged, central role of Manchester International Airport in the economy of the city and region. The former problem is now the focus of a new process of policy writing and campaigning by some former members of Call to Real Action (see Burton & Steady State Manchester, 2012), in the context of the current economic crisis. Lessons from the episode described here are being taken into account in this new initiative. It should be noted that while this section has focussed on the linkages between the local State (local government), policy and a subaltern movement, the entire episode was also nested within a broader context at national and indeed international levels, again predicated on the assumptions of sustainable, or green growth and the precedence of the economy over the environment and society (for an alternative economic approach see Daly & Farley, 2011). An example was the way the UK government ignored the evidence-based recommendations of its Sustainable Development Commission (Jackson, 2009) to the effect that it was not feasible to reconcile economic growth with ecological and climate safety. Similarly the entire

post-Kyoto process of international negotiation over climate-change mitigation (Copenhagen, Puebla, Rio, Doha) assumes that converting emissions and ecosystem services to tradeable commodities, within the goal of continued 'sustainable growth' is a desirable way forward (for alternative perspectives see Lohmann, 2009; Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2011; Solón, 2011; Tricarico, & Gerebizza, 2012).

#### Discussion and conclusions

The writer's role was different in the two case studies presented here. The first, disability case was closest to the usual role of the community psychologist, although here I had rather more position power as a senior manager in the adult care system than might be typical of community psychologists. Nevertheless, because this work went across a number of different agencies and systems my formal authority was certainly limited. In the second, ecological case, I had no formal position at all, but was one of a number of activists in a loose coalition: nevertheless I was able to call on my knowledge and skills as a community social psychologist and navigator of local government bureaucracy. The difference in roles in the two cases might suggest some caution in drawing conclusions. However, in each case I was a participant observer of a wider process which is the primary concern of this article: the interplay between the State, systemic power interests and pressure from subaltern actors. Taken together, then, the two examples indicate that, it *is* possible to establish collaborative processes to debate, experiment with, and draft policy with State actors. Both cases demonstrate sustained engagement and collaborative work exerting an influence on the content of policy. Moreover, in such situations there *is* the possibility of policies becoming more suited to the needs of the people the policies will affect (disabled young people and their families, and current and future global populations, respectively). This is in large part a reflection of the relative autonomy that exists at the level of the State, and its constituent parts, including the 'local State', and which also extends to the ambit of policy.

However, there are clear constraints imposed by

power interests at a variety of levels and these in turn reflect the struggle for power and influence in and over the State apparatus. In the disability case, those interests were manifest in the neoliberal premises that favoured a consumer-market model for personalising supports while sidelining collective, social, mutualistic approaches such as co-production (Needham, & Carr, 2009) or local area coordination (Bartnik, & Chalmers, 2007). In the climate change case, the dominant interests set limitations by ruling out of consideration two fundamentally critical questions, the economic growth / accumulation – global competition model for economic strategy, and more specifically the impact of aviation and the growth of the local international airport. In both cases there was also evidence of the silencing of activists, or at least of dissident views as a by-product of their involvement and incorporation in the policy process.

As such, policy innovations can become distorted, with over-emphasis on issues close to the interests of the dominant groups, at the expense of the interests of the subaltern groups (who in some cases can be a majority in population terms, as in climate change).

Community psychologists can therefore helpfully see their role as being both “in and against” social policy (London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, 1979), working with the system but owing allegiance to those affected by the system rather than to the system itself. This involves playing the role of organic intellectual (Gramsci, 1971) or engaged scholar (Lykes, 2000), which should both subsume and extend the more familiar role definitions of scientist practitioner, reflective practitioner, responsible professional, etc. The lessons for community psychology practice can be summarised in terms of four postulates:

- 1) It is possible to facilitate worthwhile change in policy and its implementation, and in some circumstances these changes can be considerable, for example when we replaced the large institutions housing thousands of intellectually disabled people and developed inclusive community living.
- 2) But change will always be constrained, and at times will be severely compromised. In such circumstances there is a real danger that involvement in the process leads to the legitimisation of something inadequate to the need, or worse.
- 3) It is rarely possible to know in advance how things will turn out. However an understanding of the interests at play, in the specific context, can help guide us.
- 4) To avoid losing our way and becoming incorporated in the game of the dominant classes, it is absolutely essential to keep the

interests of the affected central (Dussel, 1998; Martín-Baró, 1985, 1996), strengthened where possible by direct engagement and listening (in all senses of the word) so that a practical yet critical approach can be maintained.

Manchester community psychologists have used a number of practical tools and analytic frameworks for this, including boundary critique (Kagan, Caton, Amin, & Choudry, 2004; Midgley, Munlo, & Brown, 1998; Watson & Foster-Fishman, 2012), stakeholder analysis (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2011: 151-3) prefigurative action research (Kagan & Burton, 2000), polarity management (Johnson, 1992) and a tool for plotting interventions in terms of their scope and extent as a way of analysing the ameliorative-transformative balance (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2011: 341-2).

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