

**Transcript of a recorded conversation between Esther Breitenbach and Dr Gillian Murray  
(University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, September 2019)**

Bio: Esther Breitenbach worked in adult community education in the 1980s, including an Urban Aid project in Ferrier Sandilands, Aberdeen between 1981 and 1984; the Central London Social Security Advisers Forum (London); Scottish Education and Action for Development (SEAD), Edinburgh. She returned to Aberdeen in 1989 to working for Community Business Grampian. 1991 she took up an opportunity to combine her community education work with research as part of the Pilton Partnership, Edinburgh. Since 1991 she has undertaken research and teaching in Social Policy at Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities, including secondments from the University of Edinburgh to the Scottish Executive Equality Unit, and to the Women and Equality Unit in the Department of Trade and Industry. Esther was Visiting Professor at the Institute of Governance, Public Policy and Social Research, Queen's University Belfast, from 2003-2005. In 2005 she obtained a PhD from the University of Edinburgh. Since then she has held the positions of Postdoctoral Fellow, Teaching Associate, and Research Fellow in the School of History, Classics and Archaeology.

***Thank you for agreeing to do an interview with me Esther I would like to start with when you first became aware of the community business movement and what were you doing in the lead up to becoming involved in that what were your motivations for getting involved in the movement?***

I suppose essentially it was looking at changing jobs rather than an idea of being involved in community business movement as such. I had worked in Aberdeen from 1981 to 1984 in an Urban Aid project in Ferrier Sandilands, which is a housing estate, which was an area of urban deprivation. And that was really a community work project dealing with -community education project- dealing with issues like welfare rights work. There was work with teenagers and young people, and I did work with women as well; play schemes, looking at housing issues, that sort of fairly typical kind of things that went on in community work projects in those days. Then after that I worked for a year in London for a project called Central London Social Security Advisers Forum, which again was very much again about welfare rights and poverty issues and negotiating with the Department of Social Security as it then was, and lobbying around issues like board and lodging regulations for young people. I then came back to Edinburgh and worked at Scottish Education and Action for Development (SEAD), which was concerned with third world -that was the terminology then- third world issues and it was education with adults. And trying to get people interested in issues that were developing in newly independent countries in Africa, for example, I am talking about the 1980's -probably independent for a while- and Latin America was a big issue then.

And I mentioned these because there was a parallel interest in the issues in Scotland and the third world and, among other things, we funded - money members donated, money went to projects - they weren't directly run by SEAD- they would be run by other organisations and that was mostly round poverty and also there was some women's projects, but that involved an interest in things like micro credit and economic development in say Bangladesh, for example, so there was an ethos about economic development and social enterprise and co-operation was part of what SEAD was doing. And I will just mention in the passing that the person who was key in setting up SEAD was Alan Sinclair, who later went on to set up Heatwise, so you know there were links there to community enterprise, the idea was certainly around at the time that I was working at SEAD. However, when I went to work at Community Business Grampian that is where - much about wanting to move on to another job - and I was encouraged to apply for the job when it came up, because I had worked with people in Aberdeen and kept up these links.

Community Business Grampian had been established a bit before I went to work there and I was trying to remember how long it might have been running for, as much as a couple of years, but maybe not - maybe a year or so- it already had been set up. So I wasn't in at the beginning. I think it hadn't all been smooth going

in terms of getting it up and running and trying to find a focus for the work. And my take on it would be very much that people were responding to what funding opportunities were and doing what they could with them because - as you will know - the Urban Aid programme changed in terms of the criteria and it was reflecting the government ideology about the importance of enterprise so people were, I think, trying to do the best they could to use those resources to tackle urban deprivation. Now in Grampian it wasn't exclusively urban deprivation - I will finish going on about the work and then we can come back to what my work experience was - so I came into Community Business Grampian having already worked in Aberdeen in areas of urban deprivation, and with my work in SEAD had some sense of community enterprise and approaches to that as a way of tackling poverty, but I wasn't really coming in as a big enthusiast for community business as such - if you see what I mean. I worked there for two years, and I will say later about what I eventually thought about community business as an approach, but what I went on to after community business was to be a researcher and evaluator with the Pilton Partnership in Edinburgh. And the Pilton Partnership was a European funded project. It was part of the European Anti-Poverty Network, the third European anti-poverty programme, I think. It had more generous funding than any Urban Aid projects got and it was a five-year project. And what is interesting is that there wasn't really a big community enterprise dimension to the Pilton Partnership, although one of the things that emerged out of it has been the North Edinburgh Child Care Project, which could be defined as a community enterprise, but we can talk about that more later if you like. So it's really kind of a succession of jobs connected with poverty and in different roles and reflecting different political and funding climates.

***And so lets us stick with your experience in Aberdeen for a wee minute. If I am right in thinking that part of the Community Business Grampian you would have been based within the local authority was it funded that way were you in a local authority base or were you slightly detached from this?***

We had separate offices. It was funded by Grampian Regional Council and the City Council, Aberdeen, and I am not quite sure if there might have been a little bit of funding from some of the other Aberdeenshire Councils, because we supported - one of the things that was interesting about Community Business Grampian, although most of the funding was dedicated to areas of urban deprivation - as defined by the Scottish Office as was - there was some funding for work in rural areas and we did actually support some projects, not necessarily with any big resources, but in ways that I think were helpful to them. So that was an interesting dimension of Community Business Grampian and I don't know how much that would compare with some of the other Community Business networks; whether they had kind of rural dimension, or if they were mostly urban. Just to give you an example of the rural ones, there was the Lewis Grassie Gibbon Centre, we gave a small grant to that when they were at the planning stage and it was to help with the development of the design from Gray's School of Art. So that wasn't a big sum of money but it was enough to help the process on the way, so it was actually nice to see that one still exists. There was another one - I don't know if it is still going or not - the community tea room in Clatt, which is a village hall in Clatt - it's at the back of Bennachie - and that was around the summer. And again I am not quite sure what the economics of it would have been, in the sense it was probably quite a lot of voluntary labour going on, but it was a lovely tea room and that certainly ran after my time, but whether it is still around or not I don't know.

***I think there is still some version of it, my granny loved that coffee shop. I do remember her going on about Clatt coffee shop, not sure if it would still be a social enterprise.***

The other one we tried to get going was harder - in New Pitsligo. There was a community shop and café in New Pitsligo that was a bit harder work. They just weren't, I guess, there wasn't, it was hard to have enough customers coming in to make it viable so not sure what happened to that in the long run.

***That's where you were based?***

We had separate offices and we, initially we were a bit out of the way, we were up in a sort of little industrial estate place, but then we moved down to an office that was much more central in town, but we had our premises separate from the local authority. But the main support was coming from Grampian Region and the key person, who, was Dave Simmers. Now, Dave, I am not sure what Dave's title would have been at that time, but it was social regeneration or whatever, but he was responsible for a lot of projects. And also Ian Craik, I don't know if Ian has been mentioned. He was in Community Education. Ian would have ended up being, I think, director of Community Education around about the time of reorganisation. I am not really quite sure what happened after reorganisation in the mid '90s. I think the person who helped set up Community Business Grampian was somebody called Doug McKenzie, but I don't know what has happened to Doug. And he wasn't working by the time I started working in community business. Doug was not involved with it anymore. So he had been in community work at one stage, so I knew him from my earlier work, Aberdeen experience, but I didn't have further contact with him. And I guess the other point to mention is the whole community development world in Aberdeen, the College of Education was important, in particular Bob Hamilton.

***And so when you arrived, I think, the idea of Grampian Community Business, and Fife Community Business, Strathclyde Community Business was to provide some support and also help with growing a network around community businesses, so they could have a central point of support, but also support each other in a network. Did that idea -was that how things happened? Or do you think things happened in a distinctive way on their own in Aberdeen -different from what was going on down in the South of Scotland- or how did things progress with that idea -how much did the reality match the idea?***

I think that they were we were definitely part of the network, to go to the meetings of Community Business Scotland and training events and stuff like that. And the other network that was important was the credit unions. And in fact, I would say, that the credit union, that was one of the things that Community Business Grampian helped start, the credit union, St Machar Credit Union, at that time and then it developed to become something else. And I would say that the credit union was probably the big success of Community Business in Grampian. So on one level you are working in a way that is developing networks in the city for the credit union, but you are also part of the wider networks. And I know there was particularly a lot of experience in Glasgow. Cranhill was one that John somebody - I can't remember - but there were key individuals who had built credit unions in the West, so that model was certainly something we were developing with the support and help from others. In terms of the community businesses, I think, looking at your article, we probably went down some different routes - you didn't have any managed workspaces [in Grampian], for example. The one that was successful, although it no longer exists was the Timber Kinder Garden in Seaton, but that was only just beginning to take off by the time I left.

My experience, the model of community businesses, that you have community committees developing the ideas, and we had that for different areas on the Community Business Grampian Committee, on which the Council and the local communities were represented. And we put a lot of effort into working with community activists. And one of the issues at the time was that people invariably started off with an idea that they wanted a facility in their area, and that community cafes have been terribly popular. And you had to work quite hard with people to say: 'look this is not necessarily going to be viable and it is not necessarily going to create jobs,' you know, if you are situating a facility in an area that is dependent on a relatively small population on low incomes, it's not necessarily going to work. So we did try to get people to think about something they could do that would attract people from elsewhere in order to generate income that could create jobs. And, I think, the Seaton, Timber Kinder Garden did actually succeed in doing that. I was looking online to see what happened to it and, unfortunately, it has closed down. And they appear to have, relatively recently, about 2014 maybe, appeared, to have tried to expand and set up another nursery in Bridge of Don. Then that was hit by the recession and it has folded, so. And there seemed to be issues about

the report from the Care Commission, standards seemed to have declined, so I don't know what any of that was about, but it did actually exist for about 25 years, I think, so it seemed to be one of successful outcomes, or at least in the short to medium term from community business. The other thing we were supporting, there were some food co-ops, very small scale at that stage, and I think it is quite interesting to see how things have developed over time like the sort of network of workers in Aberdeen, that out of ideas about business development things like the [Aberdeen] Foyer would have been influenced by some of that experience as well as CFINE.

***And I was wondering when you arrived back in Aberdeen -the time you were with Community Business Grampian- that must have been later?***

1989 to '91

***And you mentioned how funding had changed and there was a greater emphasis on enterprise. Did you really find that a different experience from the community council education programmes you were involved in the early '80s was the influence of enterprise evident when you returned?***

I mean that is a hard question to answer, in that we were often working with the same community activists, so it wasn't different in that sense, and that's what I mean about - looking at your article - you talk about people coming from a community development perspective, and I think that is where we were coming from - from the community development perspective - and really not so much the idea of enterprise as a kind of concept, but more about other ways of using these resources to try and help create some jobs. And so really it's about what you can do to benefit the community with the resources that are available. And I think in a way it's something like, I think, it is interesting something like the credit union was perhaps one of the key successes, because that isn't really about enterprise, it is about self-help and mutual support and helping people manage money when they are on low incomes.

And that to me was one of the key things that Community Business Grampian was involved in at that time and I am not quite sure what it went on to do subsequently. So I think the enterprise idea wasn't something people were overwhelmed with enthusiasm about, but it is like the funding climate: 'this is what we do with it' and I don't mean by that people weren't enterprising, people were, but if you think about the energy and commitment doing things for the community - but not necessarily enterprise in the sense of economic enterprise - but obviously people were concerned about unemployment and jobs - although with a different situation from the West of Scotland, because male unemployment in Aberdeen would have been pretty low and, indeed, even women. I am not quite sure what was going on in the fishing at the time, because by and large in the communities where you would be working, you know, people wouldn't be particularly benefitting from jobs in the oil industry. But a lot of women, for example, would have had experience of working in the fish industry - filleting fish and so on - but people had jobs like cleaning and so on, kind of insecure - the kind of cycle in and out of employment and on benefits would be a fairly typical one for people. But not the levels of unemployment clearly that would have been experienced in the West of Scotland at that time, or indeed when I was working at Pilton it was, like, 18%. It wasn't like that, but what people experience in terms of deprivation was very similar. So living on low incomes, problems around housing and dampness and perhaps to some extent in Aberdeen exacerbated by actually being very affluent, with a lot of money about, but the pockets of the areas in the city where people had no access to that and probably felt the contrast in ways that would have been demoralising.

***I think I certainly heard that from other people I have spoken to over the course of this research. One thing I have often found is that there may have been some kind of quite seminal community projects in Wester Hailes in Edinburgh or LEAP or GARC in Glasgow. Was there a kind of comparable community development project in Aberdeen that a lot of people seemed to sprout from over the years a certain area***

*or estate that a lot of people who continued to work into community business and community enterprise later had some experience with?*

I am not the person to answer that actually, Dave Simmers would be. One of the things that did develop later was the Linked Work and Training Trust - I don't know if anybody has mentioned that. But that was basically, again, it must have had Urban Aid funding - I am not quite sure - Dave would be the person to speak about this. This was taking up the idea of job creation, but within community development. So there definitely was a network of community activists. First of all, it would have been the people employed by the Region in Community Education and so there were projects in different estates in the city. But, I think, through things like the Linked Work and Training Trust you would have had actual people from the communities becoming trained in community work, skills and some of them would have subsequently been involved in the Foyer, for example, or in CFINE. So there is a link to these different projects over time, and links between the different communities in Aberdeen. But it wasn't necessarily easy, sometimes there was not - people didn't necessarily always get on well and people would fall out and there were rivalries and so on - but you can definitely see a thread, a network of people and coming up with new ideas, and again reflecting funding environments, coming up with new ideas and taking that forward over time. And I think the learning that went on with community business would have been useful, even though I ended up feeling very critical of the model. I do think it was ideologically driven and it was quite cumbersome for what it was trying to do and I will say more about that in a minute, but I think there was a learning that came from community business that would have then transmitted itself into these other developments.

*Just before we move on what you did after, I was wondering as well as these local networks how do you think that is seen in Grampian played into the bigger national and European projects of regeneration that were going on at the time. Was there a sense that they were part of this idea of regeneration, or was it we are doing what we are doing in this area?*

I think people were tying into networks. I don't know about the European dimension, but we definitely tied into networks, in Community Business Scotland networks and credit union networks and going to meetings in Glasgow and Edinburgh and wherever. And, I think, that's as far as I am aware, again, get this through talking to Dave, that he has always been involved in all these network and whether the Scottish Office, Scottish Executive, Scottish Government, etc, over the years. So we were connected to that. On the other hand, I say, we - I am talking about the paid workers - well, community activists on the committees would also have been involved in these kinds of training exercises and networking with people across Scotland, so it wasn't done in complete isolation. Although I think we did do different things in the area, and had the rural dimension. There were some of the other places doing rural enterprise, Fife, for example, but I am not terribly sure. Can I tell you something about what I thought about the model, because, I think, I did end up - and this is referred to when your article talks about Keith Hayton and so on, and reviewing community business, and Alan McGregor. I remember Alan McGregor.

I don't think I shared this with anybody at the time, but I began, you began with community business thinking that's quite a lot of money, because compared to some of the previous Urban Aid funding it seemed quite generous, that you could get funding for a community business manager, for example. But then when I thought more about the kind of businesses that people were thinking of developing, and often it was a kind of small business model. And I looked at literature on small business development and realised that often what happened there is you have a lone entrepreneur, or partners, couple who were married, or just partners, who really put all their efforts into building up the business and that's really where a lot of small business development takes off successfully. And it doesn't necessarily grow to create lots of jobs, and it's something that people have to put heart and soul into in a start-up phase for quite some period of time. And in community business you didn't have those sort of entrepreneurs, you had a committee trying to work out what they might do to help their area or to bring money into their area. And there was a lot of discussions.

These weren't necessarily the same things - as I say, people often wanting to develop facilities for their area, but those wouldn't have generated enough money to be viable or to create jobs.

So a lot of discussions around trying to find out what would be the type of business, I mean, we explored things like environmental, recycling thing. I think Tayside got into that, I think, but maybe a bit later. So we were exploring ideas like that, but I decided in the end that really the resources weren't in fact that generous, despite seeming to be, if you were really trying to develop something that would generate more than a couple of jobs here and there. And, secondly, you had the structure of committees that was actually very cumbersome. And on the other hand, we put a lot of time into supporting community activists and training and so on, and, I think, with the credit union that was successful, but they themselves weren't necessarily people who were thinking of the kind of business perspective. So I ended up thinking that the model was not really very helpful to people. It was not as much money as you initially might have thought and it was really quite a cumbersome model to try and use for business development, and it didn't match up with what was typical small business development, as successful trajectories, if you like. But I don't think I shared that with anybody at the time, but I was interested to read about the subsequent report. I thought, yeah, that was my experience, and one of the reasons why the credit union was one of the major areas that got developed, because that is a different kind of thing and definitely meeting a need.

***Do you think there was still a struggle or unresolved thinking around this idea to create businesses that are mutually beneficial for the whole community?***

I think I don't have a problem with that as a concept, and nor would - the local people would also have been happy with that but it really was hedged in by a lot of criteria about how you had to do things, you know. So it is not about social enterprise - I am not saying that social enterprise is not a useful idea - it is, but how it gets organised and structured and how, where the money comes from, and how it is administered and things. What I would say the problem was, which it really was a really kind of unwieldy kind of programme and actually some of the things that developed subsequently probably, things like the [Aberdeen] Foyer or CFINE have been much more effective and successful. Although, again, I think they had their ups and downs and had to depend on external funding, so that issue seemed always to be there.

***Is there anything if you could go back and could start those initiatives again is there anything like to have the freedom to do that you perhaps you didn't feel you were able to do at the time that you think would of been?***

I suppose, I would have favoured the approach that was about how you create - if you are going to go down the social enterprise model route - in areas of deprivation, I would favour a model that would get resources in from the outside. That would look at doing something that could actually create some jobs, rather than a facility. That seems a bit mean spirited, clearly people would have welcomed having decent facilities in their communities and deserve that, but as a business model that wasn't going to be particularly viable. So I would have, things like the nursery, I do think was the right kind of direction to move in. And, I think, but I suppose, the other thing about the model is it depended on, you had, your local community would benefit, but you also depended on being able to recruit good managers to run the businesses, so you weren't necessarily getting the manager from the local area. And so I think there was a tension on how you generated the maximum benefit for local areas. And as a job creation mechanism, I'm not sure that it was ever going to generate very many jobs. But the experience was clearly different in other bits of Scotland. Some of - Strathclyde, for example, was very much more successful. Although I notice, I think, again in your article, you reference somebody being critical of Heatwise as a model, because my sense would have been that Heatwise was very successful in generating jobs, but there might have been issues about community control there.

So it is not easy to resolve. And the things that we were interested in was, how you could you use the money to help in some way, in areas where there was a lot of poverty. And also supporting the local communities to manage the resources and I think we did achieve some of that. And again, in some ways, I think, I would have liked people to have a freer hand with the resources, actually, and again – same as working in Pilton Partnership, it was the third anti-poverty programme and there had been problems in one of the previous ones about fraud, so the scrutiny, the Pilton Partnership had a full time accountant, the scrutiny that was going on was really detailed. And that seems to me to happen a lot with these initiatives for communities, disadvantaged communities, that they are inspected and scrutinised in ways that are probably too controlling. I am not saying there are no problems with fraud, that does sometimes happen, so I am not quite sure what the right balance is, but I think people having a freer hand with the resources, actually, might have helped other kind of things develop.

***So let's think a little bit about what you did after Community Business Grampian did you say it was 1991 that you had moved on from there, and was that when you went to the Pilton Partnership?***

I was actually employed, I was based here at Edinburgh University, but I was employed by Glasgow University, as the contract for the research evaluation was held by Angus Erskine, he was then in Social Policy in Glasgow. But because the Pilton Partnership was in Edinburgh there was a deal negotiated that I would be based in Edinburgh University, so I had an office along the street -next door actually [at 23 Buccleuch Place].

***What was the Partnership was this one of the schemes that was to meant to engender community participation in new development what was you experience of that? Was it successful?***

Yes, but complicated. The Pilton Partnership, as I was saying, was a five-year programme with much more generous funding, because it was European Union funding. Again, it was sponsored by Lothian Regional Council and Edinburgh City Council and you had a committee that had, sort of, you had whatever the local enterprise company was called was on it, as well, and then community activists, and councillors, and Scottish Homes, as well as, housing staff. And, I think, it would have been Scottish Homes at that time - things keep changing. The participation element was a key part of it, and I did various interviews about this as evaluation researcher and it was really quite interesting, because there was a lot of wariness of each other - the enterprise people and some community activists - not so much the Region and the District, because people had already had the experience through community development of Regional workers. And clearly the key support was coming from the Region and the City Council, although some of the councillors - the councillors who were actually on the committee, were from both Region and District - were very supportive, and, I think, one of things was actually participation. Again, I joined the project after it had begun. Somebody started off as an evaluator and that hadn't worked and they needed somebody else, and they had done a consultation with the local community when I turned up. And one of the big issues was child care, and people wanting a facility, which wasn't something that was in the initial plan. And that got explored throughout the time of the Partnership involving - for example, there was a local child care action group. But we went on a trip to Belgium to go and visit the projects that were part of the European Anti-Poverty Network -to have a look there - and then a plan was developed to set up a child care centre.

And again this took, I am not quite sure how long the process took, as it was well underway by the time the Partnership came to an end, but it wouldn't have all been done and dusted by any means, because they got a purpose built facility. And the idea was supposed to create jobs for local people to give them the training to provide child care for local [people], but also outsiders. And my understanding is that has really worked, it is still going and is a thriving centre. So in sense you could say that's, I am not sure they would define themselves, but it is like a community enterprise that has created jobs for local people. Actually, having said that, the idea of community business as such, a community enterprise wasn't particularly key within the

Pilton Partnership. There was a range of things going on. Things like food co-operatives, health projects, Credit Union, North Edinburgh Arts. There were lots of things happening in Muirhouse and Pilton that the Partnership linked into and supported as well as doing this research based consultation on what people wanted, which did actually then influence the outcomes as well as having lots of participation committees level.

***So was this part of a personal journey for you, from your post at Community Business Grampian into a more research type, was that something that you were interested in doing?***

I had previously done some research about women's work in Scotland and trade unions in the late 1970's, and then I ended up doing work in adult education/ voluntary sector/ community work, so I think - well the idea of doing research was attractive. But I liked the combination of the Pilton Partnership because you had a foot in two camps - doing the academic stuff - but you were also in there, actively involved in debates around community activism and community development: 'what would be good for the community?' There is quite a lot of documentation on the Pilton Partnership if you are interested in that and I did write an article with Angus Erskine about participation.

***I have read bits and pieces, so yeah, I think it is interesting that you've highlighted that some comparable schemes, such as the nurseries from both up in Aberdeenshire -the Timber Kinder Garden at Seaton- and then the Play on Wheels initiative, which I think would have been in Pilton about the same time purpose made nursery?***

Yes, that rings a bell, but in Aberdeen when I was working in Ferrier Sandilands in the early '80s we had a Play Bus, it wasn't just in Ferrier Sandilands. It went around, the Play Bus.

***Interesting that these things are happening despite quite different funding mechanisms and partnerships around them. Do you think perhaps some of the driving force for these things were they shifting demographics around women and employment and those kinds of changes or what?***

At a general level, yes. What is interesting is, one of the things that happened in Pilton, and this was about research that Angus Erskine did - I wasn't involved - but it was around lone parents and their aspirations, because they were a lot of lone-parent households in Pilton and Muirhouse. And what they found, if I remember rightly, was that a lot of the lone parents were sort of scoping, as it were, what might the possibilities be for them in the future, but not able to do anything about it at the time when kids were too young. So the child care was definitely an issue there, but also when you are talking about: 'how did people get employment?' There is the problem about, even once kids start school, the length of the school day, if you are travelling outside of the area to a job, getting back in time. So actually, a lot more parents, were actually clued up about what the situation was and what they might do in the future, but at a particular point - when children are at a certain age - they can't do anything about it. So you can see how the desire for child-care facilities came out of those - the consultation and the bits of research. So, I guess, yes, a growing recognition of that as an issue and talking about the early '90s by this time, so yes.

***Very interesting. I was also hoping to talk to you a wee bit about the kind of if there was a gendered aspect to these kind of movements, both in terms of role that as woman as professionals in community education/ community development/ community business movement played, and those women coming up from the communities and participating as community activists and stuff. Did you feel there was a gendered element to the roles people started playing and the initiatives that sprung out of them, or was not as important as elements of poverty, class and?***

My experience in Aberdeen was that the key community activists were mostly women. And that was



certainly something that was well appreciated by the workers, I think, and the people who were going to stick with things and put in the effort and the time. And, I think, what was interesting when we used to go to Community Business Scotland things, and Credit Union things, you got a sense that on the West Coast there were a lot more men involved, and, I think, that reflects patterns of unemployment, so partly difference in terms of labour market and unemployed men looking for something to do, and people were probably more in and out of employment. That is a big generalisation, because there was male unemployment in Aberdeen as well. But women were the mainstay, and that was true in Pilton as well, just, I think, that was understood without there necessarily being a lot of gender discourse about feminism, or women's power, or so on – but there was some of that around - and I was active in the women's movement, my colleagues knew that. In Community Business Grampian we ended up, after I went to be - I can't think of my title - not sure if it was co-ordinator or director. After I went to be that, we were an all-female staff and it had been a man, his name I can't remember, who had had that job before. But when we had new jobs, it was always quite hard to recruit in Aberdeen because it was an expensive place to move to. Well, and I think, also, a lot of people would have perceived it as being very remote, and so it wasn't necessarily easy to get a big pool of candidates for jobs as they came up. But we ended up with an all-female staff and - as I was saying before we were recording, there were quite a lot of women around in community business jobs at that time, but I don't remember specifically talking about gender in the work context.

As I say, people would have been aware of my views, but it wasn't like a big issue in the sense - we weren't having lots of arguments or anything like that. And I think, because as I say, it is clear that it was the women's commitment that was, at community level, that was so important. And talking about the Pilton Partnership there were several women councillors who were really helpful, there were male councillors as well. And in fact, I will mention, Eleanor McLaughlin was provost in Edinburgh at one point. Eleanor had an activist background and she was on the committee, and she was provost at the time. I don't know if that contrasts with some of the things you have been finding out elsewhere but my experience of working at community level is it is always women were the key players.

***Do you think that is connected to woman's role in generally social reproduction. That if you are slightly on the peripheries of economic production you take on a role wider sort of social production keeping communities together helping out and that sort of reciprocal economy that supports community life.***

Probably in the sense that there are obviously different patterns of participation in the labour market. Also, I think, simply, you know, people's responsibilities over the division of labour over caring, because quite a lot of involvement comes out of play schemes, and mother and toddler groups. And there is a lot of that kind of work. So it kind of comes out of circumstances of people's lives and clearly people do get something out of it - with being in the group, the social support of being on committees and learning skills - but they are also thinking beyond the immediate. That capacity to think beyond your immediate needs and your own family, to think about communities, we certainly saw that capacity develop in women. And the men, I also think there is an issue here, I mean, this is off the top of my head, but probably around masculinity and status and how men deal with unemployment, long-term unemployment, and not being able to be bread winners. So I think there probably is something in there that is psychological. I don't know of anybody who has researched it – that is my impression off the top of my head view there, but yeah.

***So do you mean that men facing long-term unemployment are less likely to get involved with a community orientated activity because that is seen as woman's work, or inferior to a 'proper job' or?***

I think sometimes there are two things. One of things I was aware of in Aberdeen is that some of the men might be active for a bit and get a proper job and you wouldn't see them. Whereas that would be less likely to be the case with women, who might be in and out of part-time employment, so again it's partly reflecting the labour market. I think for some of the men, they got involved, they were looking for a way of finding

status and might want to be more controlling - and that is only thinking about a couple of individuals here - so I wouldn't want to over-generalise. So, I think, how people deal very differently with difficult circumstances in their lives, as in how they find a place to get some sense of self-worth, I think there is a gendered sense to that, I don't know if I can articulate this.

***One thing I think that is emerging out of the historical literature on community development at the moment is that sometimes being part of a local scheme or a local co-op, something like that, was a way to show willing in terms of wanting to avoid the stigma of being unemployed or being impoverished. Do you think that was, you mentioned a lot of these lone parents would participate in these schemes to were very attune to looking beyond when the kids were at school or the kids were older do you think that was some of the motivation for them participating in some of the projects you were part of?***

I think it probably, people might well perceive that as something that would open up networks and open up opportunities, yes. But I think a lot of it just came out of a genuine commitment to mutual support really. And I'm not saying here that everybody gets on well, because they don't - the quarrels and factions, or whatever - but, yeah, I think it might not necessarily be the very concrete sense of thinking opportunities would come out of it. I mean, again, going back to something in the Aberdeen experience with the Linked Work and Training Trust that developed after I was in community business. That was in the 1990s, but that was very specifically about a route into a training that would result in a professional job for people who had already been active as volunteers in their community and that did work for some people. It can also be very challenging for people, and I am sure people would be, and elsewhere - it can be quite a difficult process to go through and I don't know what sort of feelings that would produce with other members of the communities, actually. So in some cases it would probably be quite clear that those sort of opportunities might arise and in some other case less so. And it would be interesting to research that actually. It would be quite hard to find out how much people did come to other opportunities through community activism. Because quite often what you find is some people do end up in jobs but some people, they basically do it for very long periods in their lives and stick with it.

***I have to ask you, although it is slightly off topic, but the kind of the woman's movement in Scotland at the time you mentioned how people were aware that you were a feminist, but it was almost running in parallel to this kind of regeneration and community work. Could you expand a wee bit more on that, or? What kind I am trying to get the sense of how connected, or was it just a separate movement with its own issues, or were there points that cross over?***

There were quite a lot of points that crossed over in terms of people, like me, in community education, and people in - I mean that time I was involved in NALGO, National Association of Local Government [Officers], the women's committee. So these ideas about women's role at work and women's rights at work, and how you provide your service - in terms of- 'who would be the people at the community education service?' 'Whose needs should they be meeting?' I would say, yes, there was a recognition of that and it wasn't just the things like child care, and play schemes, and so on. It was really, really important, but things like domestic violence and being aware of these issues and helping give advice, and so on. I am sure, I didn't do youth work, but I am sure there would have been issues around contraception and stuff, and people getting advice and education and things that would help, hopefully, in some way, or other. But, you know, the generation of people who were working in community education at that time would have been women, not all of them, obviously, but quite a few of them, certainly, would have been influenced by that and clearly there were certainly, other people in Aberdeen at that time, Kate Philips in Powis, for example, Margaret - was it Margaret became councillor? That is terrible, I can't remember her surname [it was Smith]. So, I mean, again it wasn't necessarily part of your daily life, or you have arguments, but you know about what it meant to be a feminist. But it certainly informed what people thought they were actually about, and which groups you then support. And in my experience, the men I worked with - the professional workers - were

supportive of that. There were sometimes some tensions from some local activists and I don't mean that as again about explicit arguments, but it was probably power.

***A wee bit of a power struggle?***

About being too bossy

***Interesting I am trying to gather my thoughts a wee bit I think I have covered everything I wanted to explore with you is there anything that you have been thinking about that we haven't had the chance to talk about?***

I think, just, we have already said this, one of those things about Grampian, I think, was the rural element and that was, I enjoyed that. It was very different obviously from what was going on in disadvantaged communities in the City but that was a nice, interesting, lot of variety.

***What was it in the rural communities were kind of in need of? Were their needs different was the type of support different maybe working with small populations?***

I think it was that combination of a facility, a local facility, and some local employment. And, I mean, again, thinking about Clatt. The paid workers were probably a small number part-time and it was just seasonal and just through the summer months, but it definitely provided a facility. And obviously the network of all people providing all the home baking and stuff, so kind of social community support and cohesion. In the Lewis Grassie Gibbon Centre that was a bit different, obviously, as it was a commemoration of the writer, but that was also about a café and community space that is used and the facilities and so on. So that combination of facilities, social support, and some employment, I think, probably was what was being looked for and sometimes achieved in rural communities.

***Sorry I interrupted you there***

I am having a look at my notes, I suppose, just really I think that the kind of work I was involved in, I've already said this really, that was about a community development perspective, but the enterprise was taken on because of the funding made available. But I think the people that came along learned things from that. That they have used in positive ways and subsequent initiatives and a lot of that is still dependent on external funding and government grants or - not quite sure what local authorities provide any more. I am sure the Scottish Government is still really important in terms of resourcing these kind of initiatives. I don't know how much -research, I would be interested, given your research - a sense of what people from local communities actually have got from these kinds of initiatives? More of a sense of the projects that there are, but, I suppose, one of the things I was saying about community business is, it was never going to create a lot of jobs and I don't know if there would be other strategies for job creation that might be more effective. I don't know, but it would be interesting to know what it is that people from local communities who put time and effort into these initiatives have got from them whether that's jobs, or other types of skills, or benefits, and I would be interested in that kind of thing.

***As a movement and as a moment having a lot of learning and in some way there is learning terms of the infrastructure of what became of the social enterprise sector but yet we have an opportunity to look back and explore more widely in terms of learning from for communities and that kind of things I don't think we have begun to dig into that yet.***

There is another comment. I do think that by and large, the people who were working in community enterprise/ community business jobs at the time I was, would have come from the community development

perspective and, I think, sometimes there wasn't necessarily a lot of business knowledge or skills there, so probably trying to combine those things was a big challenge.

*If you are happy to end the recording, great.*