

Students, Volunteering and Community Action 1960-2000: A Witness Seminar

Edited by
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Convened by: Georgina Brewis and Adam O'Boyle



Institute for
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1. Introduction

Student volunteering in the UK has a long history, from university settlements and missions in the nineteenth century to workcamps for the unemployed in the interwar period to CND protesting and Student Community Action after the Second World War. Despite recent research and policy interest in volunteering by university students as well as in the broader topic of how higher education institutions can improve their public or community engagement, the history of the movement remains a relatively underexplored field.

On 24 June 2010 an oral history group interview brought back those involved in student volunteering and social action to discuss and debate issues as they remember them. In this report we publish the full transcript of the witness seminar, together with the original briefing paper sent to all participants.

This witness seminar formed part of a research project initiated by the Institute for Volunteering Research and Student Hubs that aims to fill key gaps in the history of student volunteering and locate its evolution in the broader context of nineteenth and twentieth-century social, economic and political history. The project was guided by a working group of academics, research students and workers in student volunteering and received small amounts of funding from St John's College Oxford and the Economic History Society.

For more information about this project visit: www.studentvolunteeringhistory.org

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2. Key Witnesses

Graham Allcott

Graham was a student volunteer at Birmingham University from 1998 to 2001 and then worked for the Guild of Students there as Student Volunteering Manager between 2001 and 2004, overseeing Millennium Volunteers, student community action, RAG and a range of other projects. During this time he also founded Intervol, which sends students from Birmingham University on overseas volunteering placements during the summer. He then became Chief Executive of Student Volunteering England (2004-2007), working with Volunteering England on the merger of the two organisations. He was also the founding chair of READ International (2007-2010) where he remains a trustee, and he is also on the board of the youth homelessness charity, Centrepoin. Graham's current 'day job' is running 2 companies: Fruitful Consulting (www.fruitfulconsulting.co.uk) and Think Productive (www.thinkproductive.co.uk).

Dr Mike Aiken

Mike Aiken has worked for over 30 years in the third sector and is now Head of Research at IVAR (Institute for Voluntary Action Research). In the early 1980s Mike was a Student Community Action worker in Bangor, North Wales and, in 1982, was employed as Joint Co-ordinator at the national Student Community Action Development Unit. Subsequently he worked for organisations such as Community Matters, Save the Children and the Development Trusts Association. Mike holds an MA in Applied Social Policy from the University of Sussex. He gained a PhD for his study of third sector organisations' values at the Open University where he later undertook social enterprise research and gained a Visiting Research Fellowship. In the last seven years he has published reports, book chapters and journal articles on UK and European third sector organisations and the related policy environment.

Dr Alan Barr, OBE

Alan was a VSO volunteer 1965-66. He was closely involved in the very early days of the Student Community Action (SCA) movement as SCA Organiser at Birmingham University 1967-69, National Organiser SCA (Funded by B & G Cadbury Trust) and Chair NUS SCA Advisory Group 1969-71. Alan then moved on to build a career in community development as Assistant Director, Home Office Community Development Project, Oldham 1973-77; Practice Teacher (Community Development) Strathclyde Regional Council 1977-79. Lecturer in Social Policy and Social Work at Glasgow University 1979-89. Principal Officer for Community Development, Strathclyde Regional Council 1989-91. Senior Lecturer Glasgow University and Co-Director Scottish Community Development Centre (national support agency for community development in Scotland) 1991-2008. Senior Research Fellow University of Strathclyde/Scottish Community Development Centre 2008-10. Alan was editor of the Journal of Community Work and Development and has published widely in the community development field.

Mike Day

Mike worked with Community Action at Lancaster University from 1977 until 1982, whilst not embedded with a project as such he helped create an initiative called the "Kick the Squirrel" roadshow the aim of which was to provide a platform for entertainers and at the same time bring live entertainment to people who rarely had the opportunity to enjoy it. He was also fully involved in a full

range of student media, drama and RAG. Following a term of office as a sabbatical officer Mike went onto work for NUS (twice), Barnardo's and the University of Strathclyde Students' Association. He is currently the Director of NUS Scotland and is writing a new history of the National Union of Students.

Kelly Drake

Kelly's career spans over 24 years of work in the statutory, voluntary, arts and youth sectors. Her citizenship and campaigning experience began at school continuing into University politics and work with Leicester University SCA. Her first posts were in 'VSU Youth in Action' in Kent and then as a community development worker in Camden. Kelly went on to train as social worker, gaining an MA from Nottingham University and in 1992 joined SCADU. In 1994, acting as the organisation's first ever Director, she seized the opportunity to develop the organisation by applying for a new Make a Difference grant as well as a new £600,000 grant from the Community Fund. In 2006 she became the CEO and rebranded the agency into Student Volunteering UK; twelve members of staff and two regional branches in England, a small but growing SCA Scotland organisation and the very successful independent SCA Wales. As she left the national movement in 2002, civil servants at the DfES, acknowledged the importance of student volunteering and injected £42 million into the HE sector to fund student volunteering. Since 2002 Kelly has worked as a freelance consultant with and for local national and international organisations. Kelly is an alumni member of the Windsor Leadership Trust having made a 'significant contribution in her chosen field', as well as a SpeakersBank Associate.

Erica Dunmow

Erica served as Student Community Action Worker in Cambridge from 1980-81 and was a founder member of the new SCA National Committee set up in 1980, as Rep for E Anglia, in which role she helped to negotiate funding from the government for the new SCA Development Unit. She moved to become City CA Worker from 1982-4 and served for some of that time as SCA National Committee Treasurer and Rep on the Management Committee of the SCA Development Unit. She became Co-Worker at SCADU in 1984 and served in that role until 1991. Erica moved to Sheffield to take up the post of Assistant Director of NACVS (now NAVCA) until 1996 and afterwards served as Director of the South Yorkshire Community Foundation. In that role she piloted a national pilot grant-making programme from SRB and European funding streams, called the Key Fund, in partnership with the Sheffield Community Enterprise Development Unit and the Development Trusts Association. She took time out for an MA at Durham University in 2002 and since 2004 has been working nationally as Urban Mission Development Advisor, helping churches to work more professionally in their community engagement and social action.

Dr Debbie Ellen

Debbie was involved in LinkUp at Sussex University from 1980-1983 and after a brief period working in Barcelona and London moved to Manchester in 1984 to start work as Community Action Worker at UMIST. She left UMIST in 1986 to undertake a round the world sponsored bike ride (1986-1988). On her return she worked for Manchester City Council's Benefits Service and the British Council (1992-1996). She did an MSc part time (1995-1997) and then a PhD (full time) 1997-2000 and since 2000 have worked as a researcher (part time), both self-employed and at universities. She has also worked for a range of voluntary sector organisations since 2000 and tutor on a course at The Open University and spends much of her time working as a volunteer on a range of projects in Manchester

Richard Lott

Richard was a student from 1993-1997 and heavily involved in Third World First throughout. He ran his local group for the latter 3 years, and was on the organisation's national groups council (back when networking took more work than just updating your facebook status!) in his last year. He started as an intern in 1997 in the office and has worked here since, through the Jubilee 2000, the G8 in Scotland etc, so has been fairly close to student campaigning for the last 17 years or so.

Dr Nick Plant

Nick's involvement in community action began as an undergraduate in the mid-1970s, via empty property campaign work in partnership with the local branch of Shelter in his University town, Southampton. This led to voluntary work in a student short-life housing co-operative and an elected Students Union sabbatical post. It also led him to reject his degree subject – electronic engineering! – and start his career in the social housing movement, including short-life housing in London in the early 1980s. He then realised that small-scale computer technology could underpin community action, and pursued this in the 1980s this via community IT training, system development and consultancy roles in worker co-ops. As an academic in a new university from the early 1990s, the University of the West of England, he's retained and developed close working relationships with community and voluntary sectors through innovations in the curriculum, action research and knowledge exchange. He's involved in curriculum-linked student volunteering and personal voluntary work.

Ray Phillips

Ray was Student President at Birmingham University, 1968-69, and supported Alan Barr in launching Student Community Action. Subsequently, Ray was appointed as the National Co-ordinator for Student Community Action at the National Union of Students (SCANUS). During the latter stages of his 3-year tenure at SCANUS, Ray became a volunteer for Newham Education Concern, which was an innovative pressure group that formed a charity, Newham Parents Centre, in 1975. Ray became Director of the Centre, which he helped to develop as a community action project, in London's East End, involving hundreds of volunteers and staff, qualified by local experience, until 1995. In 1995, Ray joined the London Voluntary Sector Training Consortium, where he became Director in 1978 to the present. Here, he has continued to volunteer and promote volunteering through agencies such as the European Anti-Poverty Network, the Third Sector European Network and the UK Coalition Against Poverty. In 2005, as part of the UK Year for Volunteering, Ray led the organisation of the General Assembly of EAPN, where he continues to be a key member of the pan-European Task Force on the European Structural Funds.

3. Briefing note

a. Introduction

Student volunteering in the UK has a long history, from university settlements and missions in the nineteenth century to workcamps for the unemployed in the interwar period to CND protesting and Student Community Action after the Second World War. Despite recent research and policy interest in volunteering by university students as well as in the broader topic of how higher education institutions can improve their public or community engagement, the history of the movement remains a relatively underexplored field.

A witness seminar is an oral history group interview that brings together key individuals in a chosen field to discuss and debate issues as they remember them. This seminar will be recorded, transcribed and published for use by all those interested in the history of the movement. This paper sets out some background to the recent history of student volunteering, campaigning and social action in the UK and identifies the key research questions we hope to address through the seminar.

b. Key Questions

This briefing paper covers a number of key areas that we hope to explore further through the witness seminar. These are:

- What models of student volunteering / social action existed in each period?
- What accounts for changes seen in the landscape of student volunteering over the period?
- What were students' motivations for involvement in voluntary action?
- What has been the place of voluntary action in the broader social education of higher education students?
- What infrastructure and funding existed to support student volunteering and social action?
- What was the role of student volunteering/social service in shaping public image of universities and students?
- What were the hopes of student volunteers about their mode of action that have not been realised?
- What has been the contribution of student volunteering to social change?

We think this an appropriate scope for the seminar:

- The work will look at volunteering in all its forms, include local community and international volunteering as well as campaigning and fundraising.
- It will focus on Higher Education covering universities, polytechnics, teacher training and theological colleges.
- The UK will be the primary point of interest, though reference to key work internationally may be important.

c. Student voluntarism before the 1960s

Higher education students in the UK have a long tradition of voluntary action. The movement has its earliest roots in religious societies formed at universities during the eighteenth century revival. The expansion of higher education in the last quarter of the nineteenth century coincided with a new enthusiasm for social service among students who recognised that the privileges of higher education carried social obligations.¹ Such widespread enthusiasm entailed the creation of new models of service. By 1914 social study or service clubs, branches of the Student Christian Movement and committees to support settlement and mission work formed a significant part of student life in all British colleges and universities. In the inter-war period a range of new opportunities for student voluntarism opened up, reflecting the heightened political consciousness that marked British universities during the period: popular activities included workcamping and fundraising for local hospitals and charities through rag days or weeks. The Second World War also provided the small number of students who remained in colleges and universities with many opportunities to volunteer on the Home Front. Such experiences began to break down the sense of separation many university and college students felt from the rest of society.²

Student voluntarism in the immediate post-war years was marked by continuity as well as innovation. The traditional institutions of student social service such as settlements and boys' and girls' clubs continued to receive support from students and recent graduates in the post-war years, although the

¹ Reba N. Soffer, *Discipline and Power: The University, History and the Making of an English Elite 1870–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 206.

² NUS, *Students and the Blitz* (London: NUS, 1940).

nature of such help was changing with the expansion of the welfare state.³ In the 1950s the rag tradition was revived as increasingly outrageous fundraising stunts took place, avidly reported by an eager local and national press.⁴ In January 1958 a Charity Rag Federation was set up to ensure better exchange of ideas and plans between member universities.⁵ At the same period, however, some students began to press for reallocation of rag funds to causes other than local hospitals or traditional charities. From the 1950s students also began to take on campaigning and fundraising roles in connection with such new movements as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Oxfam, War on Want, the United Nations Student Association and the anti-apartheid movement. World Refugee Year in 1960 prompted a variety of forms of student fundraising for Oxfam and War on Want, including carnivals, sponsored marches and 'starvation' or bread and cheese lunches.⁶ One important new post-war development was the formation of student social service groups and associations in many universities, including London, Cambridge, Hull, Manchester, Birmingham and Swansea.⁷ These social service groups involved small numbers of regular volunteers in a range of social service and fundraising activities. Typical activities included gardening, decorating, hospital visiting, work with older people and children, the mentally ill, 'dropouts', immigrants as well as support for Shelter and Amnesty International.⁸

d. From 'service' to 'action'

However, by the mid 1960s students at some UK universities were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with these existing models of community involvement. For instance in 1967 Birmingham University Students' Union established a commission to examine the values and purpose of rag week.⁹ At several universities, students began to press for more effective involvement of students with community problems, marking a transition from traditional social 'service' to community 'action'. In 1968 and

³ Union of Girls Schools for Social Service, *A Report to the Trustees of the Sembal Trust*, 1968 [Southwark Local History Library, Peckham Settlement Archive Box 3], 5; Marie Lewis, 'Developments in Settlements', *Social Service Quarterly*, 36, no. 2 (Autumn 1962), 52-55.

⁴ 'Cash, Rags and Capers', *Student News*, November 27 1958, 12; 'Profits Soar; Carnival mixture as before', *Student News*, 3 December 1959.

⁵ Terry Rees, 'Rags and Riches', *NUS News*, November 28 1957, 7.

⁶ NUS, *NUS Secretary's Hand Book* (London: NUS, 1953), MSS/280/144/14, NUS Archives, Modern Records Centre, 28-9.

⁷ Jill Manthorpe, 'It was the best of times and the worst of times': On being the organiser of student volunteers', *Voluntary Action* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 83-96.

⁸ NUS, 'NUS announced Community Action Programme', Press release 12 November 1969, MSS 280/86/3, NUS Archive, Modern Records Centre.

⁹ Alan Barr, *Student Community Action* (London: National Council for Social Service, 1972), 11.

1969 students at the University of Birmingham and Aston organised experimental 'community action' projects. In 1965 the University of London Union Youth Council employed the first paid student community action worker; in 1968 this work was reorganised into the London Organisation for Student Community Action (OSCA). These shifts to a more politicised understanding of voluntary service were reflected both in the formation of new campaigning organisations such as the Child Poverty Action Group (1965) and Shelter (1966) as well as the wider questioning by students of the values of higher education. In this period students' unions were beginning to take on more campaigning roles, focussing on such issues as student grants, access to records and files, the rights of students to have a say in the content and structure of their education and the need for greater links with trade unions and community organisations.¹⁰ These changes were reflected in the widening of the National Union of Students' remit in 1961 and again in 1967. Some students began to use their involvement in social service to generate positive publicity that would counter negative perceptions of student radicalism, although this approach was criticised by others within the movement.¹¹

As part of these wider changes, students from different universities began to come together to discuss the best ways to get involved in their local communities. The first National Conference on Student Social Service was held at Liverpool University at Easter 1968.¹² At the same time the NUS began to show interest in the burgeoning student community action movement. In 1968 then President Trevor Fisk pledged support for the development of SCA and Jack Straw's election manifesto included a promise to introduce a SCA programme. During 1969 NUS executive member Ruth Bunday lobbied students' unions' presidents on the topic.¹³ In light of this new-found interest a motion was put to the November 1969 NUS Margate conference. Somewhat controversially before the conference met, the NUS executive issued a press statement outlining the NUS interest in student community action. As President Elect Jack Straw noted:

We want to see unions making community action a central part of their activities - as central as running a 'Rag' has been in the past...but let me stress that the programme is not a 'do-

¹⁰ A. H. Halsey and Stephen Marks, 'British Student Politics', *Daedalus*, 97, no. 1 (Winter 1968), 127.

¹¹ 'Students in Social Service', *The Times*, 4 July 1968, 9; David Gilles, 'NUS Conference, Margate, November 21-24, 1969', MSS 280/86/3, NUS Archive, Modern Records Centre.

¹² Barr, *Student Community Action*, 62.

¹³ Letter from Ruth Bunday, MSS 280/86/1 Margate Conference November 1969.

*gooding' public relations exercise designed to improve the tarnished images of students at the expense of the underprivileged in our society.*¹⁴

After heated debate the motion passed at Margate included a clear statement 'Conference believes that the Student Community Action programme is vital to the future of the student community' but somewhat confusingly linked SCA to a host of other concerns including squatters, self-help tenants associations taking militant action, travellers and movements attempting to achieve racial harmony.¹⁵ As Alan Barr noted 'the composite motion...was confused, and in some ways contradictory'.¹⁶

e. The development of Student Community Action infrastructure

Following the conference, the infrastructure needed to support student involvement in community activities developed significantly during 1970-1973.¹⁷ During the academic year 1970-1971 important foundations were laid for a national programme to develop student community action in universities, polytechnics and colleges across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. An advisory group was formed to advise NUS on SCA, comprising members elected by the National Conference on Student Social Action and three NUS executive members with responsibility for SCA.¹⁸ Administrative support was received from staff within the Education and Welfare Department of NUS and a newsletter was started in October 1970.¹⁹ The movement was highly self-critical in its early days and the national leaders, at least, were determined to mark a break with the past. In May 1971 the first meeting of the advisory group concluded that student community action was only 'just beginning to distinguish itself from do-gooding'. By the start of the autumn term 1971 two full-time members of staff – Ray Phillips and Jane Hustwit – had been appointed to development roles with funding from the Gulbenkian Foundation and King George's Jubilee Trust.²⁰ They began to collect information and resources on SCA, publish a newsletter, organise conferences, and facilitate the growth of regional student community action networks.²¹ The Student Community Action Newsletter of 1971 concluded:

¹⁴ NUS, 'NUS announced Community Action Programme'.

¹⁵ The motion was tabled by the NUS Executive and Birmingham University; Exeter; UCL; Lancaster; Liverpool.

¹⁶ Barr, *Student Community Action*, 66.

¹⁷ NUS, *Student Community Action: Report of the Pilot Programme of the NUS Student Community Action Project 1971-1974* (London: NUS, 1974); NUS, *Student Community Action*; NUS, *Annual Conference, Margate 1969, Amendments to Agenda*, MSS 280/86/3, NUS Archive, Modern Records Centre, Warwick.

¹⁸ The executive members were Mike Terry, Digby Jacks and John Wilson.

¹⁹ *Student Community Action Newsletter*, May 1971, 1

²⁰ *Student Community Action Newsletter*, Vol 2, no. 1 (1971).

²¹ *Student Community Action Newsletter*, Vol 2, no. 1 (1971)

*A change is coming over Student Community Action. More and more S.C.A. groups are realising that social service, though often valuable, is not facing up squarely to the large-scale questions of our society. A number of groups have begun to ask deep questions about the problems of housing, social services, education and industry in their localities.*²²

The work expanded to cover environmental work and 1974-1977 was known as NUS Community Action and Environment Unit.

With this support network in place, Student Community Action groups were started in many colleges, universities and polytechnics. By 1978 there were 100 SCA groups, many of which had become registered charities and employed workers, and a further 100 student unions were involved in related work.²³ The activities of these groups varied from 'volunteer' or 'service' oriented work such as decorating, entertainments, teaching immigrants, mental health projects, work with older people, support for Shelter or the Samaritans (for example at the Universities of Dundee, Leicester, Leeds, Loughborough, Royal Holloway) to more radical campaigns on such issues as alternative education, housing, squatting, radical media, anti-racism, anti-cuts (to public service funding), tenants rights and anti-recruitment (to armed forces) (Bradford, Manchester, Warwick, Sheffield).

f. Criticism of students' community involvement

Students' involvement in community action was however controversial during the 1970s, as critics questioned the legitimacy of students' involvement on the grounds that they did not experience the continual poverty of the residents in the areas where they operated. In 1972 Robert Holman, a Birmingham University lecturer, warned students that they were in some cases wrongly classifying community service as 'community action'.²⁴ Moreover, in addition to the 'lack of continuity, inconsistency and a high drop-out rate' which he argued characterised student community involvement, Holman identified several further challenges to successful student community action. These included the possibility of large numbers of students inhibiting local residents from joining a project, students' own values determining which social needs are addressed, the possibility of division between students and local residents and the danger that students' involvement leads authorities to

²² *Student Community Action Newsletter*, December 1971, 3.

²³ *Student Community Action Resources Programme, Annual Report 1978-9*.

²⁴ Robert Holman, 'Students and Community Action', *Universities Quarterly: Higher Education and Society* 26, no. 2 (Spring 1973): 187-194.

dismiss projects as the work of ‘outside agitators’.²⁵ In his 1975 book on *Student Politics and Higher Education*, Digby Jacks (a former communist NUS president) likewise warned that the SCA movement had not achieved as much as it set out to do suggesting it was easy for activists ‘to slip into the old “do-gooding” mould.’²⁶ Indeed it seems likely that many students continued more traditional ‘service’ type activities despite the more radical rhetoric coming from the NUS.

In 1978 NUS funding for student community action was withdrawn after a financial crisis which saw the collapse of NUS Travel, although NUS retained an executive member responsible for SCA work. President Charles Clarke judged much SCANUS work to be ‘of a low priority’. In its place an independent committee called SCARP (Student Community Action Resource Programme) was established in July 1978 with four staff based in London and two in Manchester. This project effectively received half its running costs from the VSU within the Home Office, and effectively took over the by now defunct group London OSCA, which was a registered charity.²⁷ In 1980 a SCARP publication suggested that despite the push towards community development or community action by the movement’s national leadership during the 1970s, many SCA groups were still pursuing the traditional community service model.²⁸ Again, the national leadership pushed for more radical interventions. The report counselled, ‘don’t worry about losing a few volunteers because of your involvement in controversial activities. You’ll be getting others who would not previously have been interested.’²⁹ In the Spring of 1980s, however, SCARP’s outspoken style led Teddy Taylor, Conservative MP for Southend East to launch an attack on student community action and urged the Home Office to review its support for student groups.³⁰

g. Student volunteering and social action into the 1980s and 1990s

In 1980 the Student Community Action Resource Programme folded due to these scandals and financial problems amid accusations of mismanagement, with the staff team being made redundant.³¹ For a few months there was no national organisation in place to support student volunteering.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Digby Jacks, *Student Politics and Higher Education* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 142.

²⁷ Dave Carter, ‘The Closure of SCARP and current plans for the future’, NUS Archive, NUS Scotland, Edinburgh.

²⁸ SCARP, *Taking Action in the Community* (London: SCARP, 1980), 32.

²⁹ Ibid., 32.

³⁰ ‘Teddy Taylor attacks “Student Community Action” – “Outrage that Taxpayers are obliged to finance revolutionary workers”’, Press release dated 17 May 1980., Conservative Central Office.

³¹ ‘Letter to members of SCA network’, July 1980.

Following the collapse of SCARP, students involved in SCA decided to take action themselves, electing a National Committee to support the network of community action groups across the country. In 1981 the Student Community Action Development Unit (SCADU) was set up with funding from the Voluntary Services Unit of the Home Office (it became a registered charity in 1983). SCADU employed two workers who worked closely with student representatives on the SCA National Committee. SCADU publications throughout the 1980s emphasised the importance of the Development Unit, workers remaining responsive to the needs of the local membership, hence it was the responsibility of the National Committee to develop policy and set the agenda. By the late 1980s there were SCA groups in 100 universities, colleges and polytechnics involving 15,000 students a year and thirty of the larger and more established groups employed a member of staff. The movement had seen a distinct shift since the 1960s. In 1984 SCADU's Mike Aiken described a typical SCA group as likely to be:

*Involved with the elderly, the mentally handicapped, young children, assist at a PHAB club, do prison visiting and perhaps work with a welfare rights group and a women's refuge...groups would usually have links with local resource and community centres.*³²

In contrast to the early 1970s, Aiken argued, most SCA groups now saw their role as 'one of support not vanguard' in local campaigns.³³ A key feature of student volunteering and community action through history has been the ability of student groups to respond to changing needs. With unemployment growing in the early 1980s, students became involved with centres for the young unemployed and lobbying on problems faced by disabled people living in Britain. Some groups also lobbied for 'community access', aiming to make colleges and students' unions more accessible to local people. Key issues on the agenda in the mid 1980s included homelessness, disability and mental health, anti-racism and women's rights.

The 1980s and 1990s also marked the rebirth of student 'rag' weeks. Having survived the criticisms of the student community action movement in the late 1960s and 1970s, rag groups continued to raise large sums of money for charity, although the carnivals and processions, sexist and racist 'rag mags', and beauty contests which had characterised rags in mid-century had largely disappeared.³⁴ For

³² Mike Aiken, 'What has community action got to do with students', *Talking Point* 52 (April 1984), 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁴ Carol Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

example, in 1978 Lancaster University launched a 'rag revival' its first since 1972. The newer universities took up rag as an important aspect of student culture. Students began to define rag as 'raise and give'. However, the national leaders remained hostile to fundraising activities:

*SCA Network Committee has recommended that SCA groups should not do general charity fundraising for distribution to other organisations often undertaken by RAG and similar bodies. This is because the time and efforts needed for this detracts from the process of learning from and sharing with community groups by working alongside them.*³⁵

In November 1990 students joined protesters outside the filming of the BBC Children in Need show demanding 'rights not charity'.³⁶

The 1990s were marked by ever growing emphasis on student volunteering for skills and personal development.³⁷ There was greater recognition of the potential of student volunteering for influencing career choices as well as enhancing employability.³⁸ In the mid-1990s youth and student volunteering issues were high on the policy agenda through the Major Government's 'Make a Difference' Strategy (1994-1997) and Labour's Millennium Volunteers scheme. SCADU's response to the consultation on the introduction of Millennium Volunteers highlighted the 'massive potential that exists for student volunteering'.³⁹ There was a further shift in the recognition of the role that student volunteering and community action could play in improving a university's relations with its local community. The number of student community action groups grew during this period from around 100 in 1990 to 140 by 1997. SCADU worker Kelly Drake listed typical volunteering activities in the 1990s as including 'playschemes and youth clubs, long-term befriending, campaigns, environmental work and support for homeless people.'⁴⁰

During the 1990s SCADU's work focused on issues such as volunteer training, spreading good volunteering practice, developing accreditation schemes and promotion of student volunteering. There was also a strong push for local groups to employ a paid volunteer manager or sabbatical

³⁵ *SCA Network Newsletter*, no. 33 (November 1990), 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *SCAM*, 7 (February 1998), 2-3

³⁸ Kelly Drake and Lynne Richards, 'Valuing Student Volunteers', *SCAM*, 1996.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁰ Kelly Drake, 'Learning through Student Community Action', *SCAM*, 3 (February 1997), 4.

officer, and a Association of Student Community Action Workers emerged.⁴¹ New funding sources for supporting student volunteering at national level included the Make a Difference initiative, Unilever, Lloyds and the national Lottery Charities Board. SCADU became known as the National Centre for Student Volunteering in the Community.⁴² At local level, however, students continued to be involved with campaigns on key causes such as support for refugees and asylum seekers in Britain, homelessness and 'Third World' debt.

⁴¹ Kelly Drake and Lynne Richards, 'Valuing Student Volunteers', *SCAM*, 1996.

⁴² In 2000 this organisation was renamed Student Volunteering UK (later Student Volunteering England) and eventually merged with Volunteering England in 2007.

4. Transcript

Chair: Georgina Brewis (bold)

Some people will have received something that I wrote about this, the history of this movement. This is very much a beginning to the work, it's very much based on how access, my access to written sources that I have had here at Volunteering England. So Volunteering England is kind of I guess the, it was founded in, as the Volunteer Centre in 1973, but we kind of merged with the Student Volunteering England in 2004, I think that's right, we have some of the key staff from the, so, the successor to that is a team within Volunteering England which is still responsible for promoting student volunteering both in further education and in higher education. And the team are here, if they'd like to say hello. Andrea, Jack and Amanda, it's really great that they're here, just to show that this movement, this kind of link with which we're discussing today and the pre 2000 era, sort of has a legacy and has an ongoing legacy both here at Volunteering England, and of course in groups like Student Hubs, and in other organisations as well. I know they've given you a bit of information, I think that includes a pledge that we are asking people to sign if they feel, maybe at the end of today, if they still kind of feel suitably committed and inspired by what we've heard, to sign a pledge to support an event that Volunteering England runs every where, which is student volunteering week, which is taking place in February 2011. That's quite an important date because it's marking ten years of student volunteering week, so another kind of historical moment, of which it's great to look back at the past, but also to think about next February and what, how people might be able to contribute to that in different ways.

And we're hoping that the history will kind of have a presence in that week as well, because we think that the history of the movement is really important, at this kind of time of political uncertainty and change, and kind of where we're going forward, I think it's good to reflect upon the past.

So they'll be here if you would like to talk to them at any point, during the break or later on.

So! What I'm going to do is, this is a group interview, it's an oral history interview. I've got some questions and basically just going to let people sort of talk and share their experiences and reflect upon the period as they know it really. We're going to split it into two sessions, with a kind of a focus on the earlier period for the first half, which is basically the 60s and 70s, into the early 80s, and in the second half, more of a focus on the 80s and 90s. But because we're really interested in looking at comparisons between those two periods, it would be really great if people want to kind of step in at any time and contribute, and reflect upon how things were different in their periods, to the periods that we're hearing about. But we'll have a kind of main focus on the earlier period first, and then after the break, move on to that second period. And I know there are some people that might kind of, like Mike Aiken here, maybe fits into both, that kind of 81 is maybe a bit of a crossover and perhaps Erica as well. So that's what we'll do.

I am going to ask everyone around the table first of all to introduce themselves, and we'll do that as a quick sound check. I thought we'd ask about asking people who are in the audience, we couldn't have everybody up here on this stage being recorded, but I know that most of you are witnesses as well, and I thought we could do a quick kind of show of hands, and maybe ask people if they were involved in student volunteering in earlier periods. And I thought we could do this sort of decade by decade, just to see if we have (general murmuring from group) anybody who maybe has been involved in student volunteering, either as someone who was a volunteer, someone who was a worker, somebody who was a researcher of the topic in the 1950s? No, sadly not! A little bit too late for that, how about the 1960s, in the audience? Fantastic. In the 1970s? Yeah, and around this table as well. In the 1980s? Great, some people obviously staying involved. The 1990s? Excellent. And the noughties? So we've got another generation as well. So this is really, really,

this is really kind of fantastic for us to bring people here from all these different periods in the last sort of fifty years.

OK, so the other thing to say is that because we want to get this transcribed, and we're having people taking notes, but when you say something, it would be fantastic if you actually just say your name before you start speaking. I know that can get a bit tedious, and everyone here will get to know your names, but it is really for the purpose of the tape, and that's part of this whole, the fact that this is a witness seminar, it's quite a specialized way of doing things. And unfortunately we have two Mikes, there was a third Mike, Mike Nusbam, who unfortunately cannot be here today because he sprained his ankle at the start of the week, and I'm really sad about that because Mike would have been a great witness from the 1960s, but I'm hoping that I'll, we'll talk to him at, and he's also the chair of Volunteering England, the previous chair of Volunteering England's board of trustees. So that would have been fantastic, but I'm sure he's thinking of us, and he can listen.

So Mike Aiken and Mike Day, you're going to have to say your names in full, if that's alright, I'm sorry, everyone else I think has a unique ...

Mike could be A, and ...

Yeah Mike A and Mike D, that would be fantastic. OK, and we've got the video, so we're, this technology is quite scary. OK, so I think if we start with another round now of real introductions, it would be fantastic if you would just kind of talk to the audience, say who you are, what your period of involvement was, and kind of I guess why you're here today, why you're interested, clearly everyone here is interested in reflecting upon the past and in sharing those stories with us. And I know there are others that have been involved in the movement who perhaps are not so interested, or have other reasons why they don't want to necessarily talk about it. So it would be great if you'd just why you're here. If we start at this side, and start with Debbie if that's OK.

Debbie Ellen: Yeah, hello, my name's Debbie Ellen and I was involved in Student Community Action initially as a volunteer at Sussex University, and was involved in Link Up. And then I got involved as a worker, I actually relocated to Manchester and I worked for three years as a student community action worker up there, and never left Manchester, I love it so much. And the reason why I'm involved today is that I got Georgina's e-mail from a list that I'm involved in which is a research network of voluntary, people that research voluntary sector, and she was actually searching for somebody, and I said oh I was involved in student research. And I'm a researcher myself, and I did a history degree, but have never looked at all the history, so I was quite fantastic in this process, which is why when she said would you like to come, I was delighted to be invited.

Yeah, go ahead.

Erica Dunmow: I started volunteering as a student when I was at university in the late 70s, but actually didn't connect directly through to SCA, it was the sort of thing that was in background that only the leader of the volunteering group knew about, so I wouldn't recognise the name. I did a sabbatical post in that same university, Cambridge from 80 to 81, caught the bug and ended up as a staff member on the Students' Union staff of City University in London doing a community action post, up until 1984. And from 1980, I had been connected on the, both the national committee, and also then helped set up what became Student Community Action Development Unit and sat on its management group. And I did retire from the management group before applying for a job, to work from it, for it from 1984 to 91 when my formal involvement then did finish and I worked in other fields in a job sense, but in the community and voluntary sector.

Mike Aiken: Hi, Mike A! Oddly, a slightly similar route to Erica, because I was at University in Bangor between 1975 and 78. I didn't get involved in the Student Community Action Group, although it was one of the continuum of things around. I think probably volunteering put a big V to it, seemed a bit sort of traditional and old fashioned for us, so I tended to be more involved in environmental and socialist politics and different kinds of campaign work for my activism. And when I left the university I, this will sound terrible to the next generation, but I think we saw the being unemployed and claiming small amounts of money as kind of a continuation of student life (all laughing) and a chance to sort of do activism full-time! So I was, I spent probably a year or two in different guises, being very involved in campaigning in the town on a variety of social and environmental issues. And as it happened, the post came up, a sabbatical post for Student Community Action organizer and I had had more contact gradually with Student Community Action, actually through the town end. And so I saw myself as quite a good person to do that and I did that post for a year. I've got some of the press cuttings from that time! I must admit I'm slightly ashamed now of the leading role I decided to take on advocating for issues as a Student Community Action organizer, now I would probably criticize as taking a sort of role inappropriate for, in my position. But I did that for a year, and when that came to an end, I had a slight break in Germany. And when I returned, I moved to Brighton and almost immediately I saw the post of national coordinator at SCADU advertised, and I went for that post. I think Mike, you might have gone for it as well then or later as well! But anyway, I then worked at SCADU for two years, Olivia Dicks had been the first worker and I worked alongside her. And I would say, well Erica was later on the committee, probably Olivia who still works in this field, was absolutely central person getting that organisation back together at that point. And I think relatively I had an easy ride with all the struggles that came before in the different periods. So I worked there for two and a half years I think. And since then, I've remained in the voluntary community sector and subsequently got my doctorate in values around the third sector. And I now work for a research institute which is kind of a sister/brother organisation to IVR, we're called IVAR, Institute for Voluntary Action Research, which is about half a mile down the road in Tavistock Road. I think that's my brief ...

Thank you.

Graham Allcott: Hi, I'm Graham Allcott and I feel slightly sheepish to be around the table rather than sat over there, because most of my experience of student volunteering is post 2000. So I was a student 98 to 2001 in Birmingham, was involved in community action projects there, and particularly kids adventure, taking kids from inner city Birmingham to go and walk in fields for the first time and see sheep for the first time and things like that. And then after I left Birmingham University, I kind of fell into a role as a worker at Birmingham, so then getting paid to organise volunteers, which two months before I was doing it for free, so I thought that was pretty cool. And so I worked at Birmingham University for three years as the main worker around student volunteering there. And then after that went on to run Student Volunteering England, as it was then known, between 2004 and 2007 and my sort of current involvement with student volunteering, I still kind of keep a toe in because I'm on the board and was previous chair of Read International, which is an organisation that organises students around the UK to shift books, particularly from secondary schools to Tanzania and now Ugandan secondary schools as well. So I still have a kind of, keep my toe in interest in student volunteering.

Nick Plant: OK, hi, I'm Nick Plant – I was a student at Southampton University 1974 to 78, or thereabouts. In my second year I got involved in a student short life housing coop which I will just name for the record, PRANGLE, which was an acronym, People's Residents for Accommodation At No Great Living Expense (laughing), as well as a pun on the surname of the student activist slightly before my time, but opposed to setting up of this scheme, and I didn't quite ever understand that story! (laughing) But he was a political enemy of the guy that set up PRANGLE. I moved from that in terms of sort of taking control of my own housing with colleagues on a self help mutual aid basis into empty property campaign work, where we bridged town and gown kind of stuff with an organisation that we named Southampton Joint Housing Action Group, that included ourselves as PRANGLE, the Students' Union, the university accommodation authorities, and several local community organisations, including at the time Shelter, the local branch of Shelter, and the Southampton

Federation of Residents Association. You can see that there's hazy recall here, I have found some archives, I can wave them around later, as you see fit – that's not a threat, that's a promise! So we got involved in empty property campaign work, we did a survey of empty properties in Southampton and published a report, embarrassed the city council. There was stuff around at the time involving the university strangely enough, and empty property, there was a squat of university-owned empty properties, they'd been buying up Victorian houses in the region of the university. And I then got involved in, I was also a student, an active sabbatical officer, education and welfare officer, and strangely, like others, I think I've already said, a slightly peripheral involvement with SCA type of activity, slightly distant from the mainstream of student politics. But jumping on, I then moved into an early career in short life housing, housing co-ops in London, as well as a straight initial housing association job. I won't continue the story except to answer question, why am I here? I am, like others, involved in voluntary sector research. I picked up the interesting invitation, I think it's a fantastic research method and delighted to take part, but for me this comes full circle. I've been, for quite a long time now, an academic in a new university, University of the West of England, Bristol, and amongst a range of things I do there, I get students involved from within the institution, in curriculum embedded and traditional volunteering, and other things in between. So it's really, really interesting for me to come full circle, and I can fill some of the gaps later if you wish.

Fantastic, thank you.

Alan Barr: Hi, I'm Alan Barr, I'm delighted to be here too, it's absolutely fascinating. I was a bit taken aback at the idea of being invited to an oral history seminar, and I'm delighted that some people's oral history is only ten years old, it makes me feel slightly better! I suddenly thought, oh my goodness I should be sitting around in an old people's home, reminiscing to try and keep my brain working, which is a struggle. Yeah, I got involved in student community action really at Birmingham University in 67, having done VSO I was kind of into that sort of area of interest, but in very traditional kinds of ways to begin with, really kind of substituting RAG weeks with something that might be a bit more productive. We went on, the following year, to organise a kind of big student community action group with about 2,000 students involved, but it was all, actually most of it, not all of it, most of it was pretty traditional kind of stuff, there wasn't very much that was particularly radical about it. But the process of getting involved in relationships with people in Birmingham just kind of I suppose opened our eyes to our naivety and we moved from an interest in I suppose mass scale volunteering, to something quite different. And I've kind of moved away from that in many ways, into much more kind of focused community development, community action based work. And indeed we set up, after we graduated, the student community action organisation to promote SCA that preceded the NUS programme which was funded by Barrow and S Cadbury, for whom we, to whom we are extremely grateful. But it was interesting because we started off talking to people all over the country about what they were doing, and the diversity was incredible. I'm just looking at the first question here, what models of student volunteering existed in each period? Well actually every model existed simultaneously. And it was, what was fascinating about it was getting into a dialogue, and that whole way in which, in that period, the political awareness of students started to interface with their involvement in communities, and people started to think what the hell is all this about, to be honest, why are we doing this, what are we trying to achieve, who is going to benefit? And I suppose that's what took me on in the long run, to a career in community development, and teaching community development which I've done for the last forty odd years. So that's me.

Thank you.

Rich Lott: Hi, so I got, I went to university in Sheffield in 1993, and there I got involved in the group called Third World First. Third World First had been around for a long time since before 93, it was set up in 69, and it, I was studying engineering, I wasn't studying anything to do with that, but I knew that there were these big global issues out there that I cared about, and I saw Third World First as a way to go along and learn about these issues and to take action. I never really saw it as volunteering at the time, and that's something Mike said

earlier rang true with me too. So I was very involved with that in my first year, and then in the remaining three years that I was at university, from 94 to mid 97, I was one of the organizers of the group, and also involved in trying to network with other Third World First groups around the UK, to try and work together on campaigns and try to develop things, develop campaigns ourselves. And in the last year, became a part of the national group council of Third World First. And then in 97 when I left university, the support office that had been there in one form or another, but mostly sort of, in the early 90s it existed, but none of the students knew it did exist for the Third World First network, they started having internships, so I took an internship there as a way to, well again really sort of, I wasn't, I couldn't quite get my mind around not being a student, and so the idea of not being paid very much and getting to sleep on student floors and talk about activism and stuff around the country seemed really appealing! And I've been ac, Third World First changed its name to People and Planet in the late 90s, in 98, and as a sort of recognition of sort of, it's like human rights, poverty and environment and seeing, taking an holistic approaching and seeing how those things are all linked together. And I've been involved, I've been working there at the office in Oxford ever since, which has been a really good way of sort of keeping in touch with student volunteering. And it's interesting because as I say like when I was a student, I never saw myself as a volunteer, but now very much it's the language we're using again, with, you know we see people as volunteering and it's enabled us to give the involvement a lot more value actually and sort of understanding. So yeah, that's me really I think. And very interested in this for a couple of reasons really. One is to feed in about Third World First, because I know so many people that it was such an important part of their student experience, so I would like to talk, chip in what I know of, before my time about Third World First, and my time as well, but also just to learn about the bigger context in history that led to that experience. And I'd also be sort of really interested in any ideas anyone had for sort of doing an assessment, a sort of impact assessment of how people that were involved in Third World First or People and Planet, what happened to them, did you know, what difference did it make to the world after they left uni and that sort of thing. But that's an aside really!

OK thanks, that's a good idea.

Kelly Drake: Hello, my name's Kelly Drake, I'm absolutely delighted to be here. My involvement started as a student when I was at Leicester Uni, 83 to 86, I also didn't call myself a volunteer, but I did teaching English to Asian women, and I lived in a really Asian part of Leicester, so that felt like activism and sort of integration work really I suppose around the women's group, and there was stuff going on at the time around miners' wives, so I saw that as part of my political activism as well. And we tried to take over RAG and turn it into an anti racist, anti sexist thing, which I think we did a good job on. So I had three years of fantastic time. It sort of was organized through the SCA, but I don't, I would never have said I was an SCA volunteer interestingly, so it didn't have a very high profile I guess actually at the uni. And then, some years later, going to 92, I actually went for that job that Mike got! (all laughing) And I remember, I was so gutted! I really wanted that job! Anyway, whatever the, two years before, so 1990, I got the job in 92, yeah I reapplied, I was absolutely desperate to get this job. And I joined a collective of three people which was a very interesting model to work in, which had obviously come from the 80s as well. And so we were a collective, all on level pegging, which I think kind of also reflected a lot of stuff going on in the network. And I became the first director and then the first chief executive, because I was very ambitious for the organisation, and I could see, when I was there, there were some huge opportunities which we absolutely grabbed to get profile and money, and to grow the network of student volunteers. So that was, and then I left in 2000 and, at the end of 2001. So I did 10 years. Why am I here? I woke up this morning really excited about this. It was the most greatest 10 years really of working! (laughing) I mean you know I was doing amazing things with really intelligent people, which is what I loved, fantastic young people. And my previous work was always youth led, I came from the youth, I was a trained social worker and I'd lead and use the movement, so you know people with mental health problems running their own organisations, and I believe that young people should run their own organisations, and we had, we were doing that nationally which was very exciting at the time. And I just like telling stories really, it was a really important time of my life, and I met amazing people. And I've done some work with the new team or

the, not new guys, but running a campaign in residential that I do, and training up student volunteers last year and the year before. So that's my connection.

Mike Day: OK, afternoon, I'm Mike Day. I was involved at Lancaster University in general, and not just in community action, I sort of spread myself extremely thinly, I went to study classics, but that was more of a hobby really than anything else! It's really good for quizzes (laughing). Now one thing my parents had said to me before I went to university, whatever you do, whatever you do, do not get involved in the Student Union, so of course that was the first thing I did! I went along to the general meeting, and quite early on got to meet Tony Cooke who was our full-time Community Action worker and is in the audience there. And I suppose like anyone who gets involved in volunteering, whether you call it that or not, you generally do it for someone else who do it. So I thought that sounds quite interesting, I'll do that. So various things. So I was involved with the community action office, or CAG as we called it, it spread out, you know the tentacles spread out into student radio, student drama, student you know everything that was going on really. So it was quite a creative time, quite a fun time. I too was involved in getting involved with Rag to make sure it had a community focus and not sort of a more excessive things that Rags could do, so I became the Rag secretary. And of course that got us involved in lots and lots of community aspects of things. I then, after a year or two of doing that, I was elected as Sabbatical officer, so I was Vice President. And during that year, I remember the funding, the continued funding of Community Action came up, whether we should continue that or not, so obviously we wanted to keep funding which we were successful in doing, but it did involve some masterly negotiation with the vice chancellor, Professor Reynolds, who was really good at negotiation because he also had, remember the Bod cans, he also had one of those on his desk and we had to plough our way through it whilst negotiating. You wouldn't get that now! So that was quite good. But the particular thing I think where all my interests came into focus was a thing we organized called the Kick the Squirrel Roadshow which was I suppose a sort of community gala thing. The idea was that we could give performers a platform to perform, so all sorts of folk musicians and bands and poets and I was involved in a comedy group and things like that. So we needed to give them a, you know, a place to perform. We'd just come back from Edinburgh and it had cost a fortune, and we hadn't done very well, got a rubbish review in the Scotsman, which led to pretty bad things, our audiences dwindled. And we said right, we've got to learn how to perform to different audiences in different ways. So this was a good way of combining that need with other stuff. So we had these tours where we used to tour around in a double decker bus that we borrowed from some Preston charity, that was a charity that existed to give people double decker buses! (laughing). And we travelled around, and we did street theatre in the morning, illegally, because that's what we felt it was right to do! I remember performing Shakespeare dressed as a cornflake packet! It was quite surreal. We were there before Vic and Bob in many ways. So that. And in the afternoon we would go to a project or a hospital or hostel or something where people didn't get out to see live entertainment very much. And then in the evening we'd do pubs and clubs. So we were every day testing ourselves with different audiences in different ways. My very last performance was being covered in cream and rubbish by three year old children, in what was jokingly called 'the disappearing act' which didn't work! (laughing) Everybody else disappeared, but I was still there on the stage! So it was varied performances. Thereafter, you know I got stuck in, rather more stuck in to NUS things by this time. I attended a good ten years' worth of Community Action conferences, although I can't remember them all! So, but I did about ten years in those which is where I probably met Kelly and Mike. I went on to work for NUS areas, when they still had those, so I worked initially in the North West of England doing that, and eventually Cumbria and then moved to, after a brief period of running an unemployed workers' centre called, what was it called, Prospect House, that was it, on Prospect Street, people had prospects if they came to this unemployed workers' centre. Interestingly that, but I got funded a bit more, but I moved on midway through from that and then went to Leicester and worked in the same building as Kelly, as the Leicester area office. And then moved to NUS for ten years. Then got stuck into, I went to work, I was the first membership services manager at the Student Union up in Strathclyde, so I did that for ten years. And then I went to Barnardo's. And at that point, my mother said at last you've got a proper job! So I worked at Barnardo's for a few years as a learning development consultant, specializing in management development of retail. And then naturally Barnardo's made all their learning

development consultants redundant, so I then came back into students' unions as another director of NUS Scotland. But I still, I've done training for student volunteering Scotland, I'm still in touch with them, and I suppose I'm still slightly in with lots of really amazing officers doing amazing things, and really sort of disproving the general idea that students don't think of things, because they still do. So that's why I'm excited to be here. Oh and the other thing is I'm also writing the history of NUS, so I'm just obsessed with this right now!

Thank you.

Ray Phillips: Hi, I'm Ray Phillips, yes, my parents never thought I'd ever got a proper job, so ...! I've come here, I mean I think it was a great chance to meet up with Alan again, we haven't seen each other for a while, so we're going to spend a little bit of time together later today. I suppose the kickstart for me, apart from general interest in education 'is the sense that some students sought to use involvement of social services to generate positive publicity that would counter negative perceptions' etc. Well, I was student President at Birmingham University in 1968 and we had quite a lively time, I recall as student president we had three meetings of over 2,000 students and four or five meetings of over 1,000 students, we had one particular meeting where there were 4,000 students. And I also remember eating fish and chips off the vice chancellor's carpet, he disappeared from sight for about eight days, and we stopped the university basically. And there were a lot of concerns, I remember Alan and I were talking at the time you know about the various things, the President had responsibility for other activities, about what impact that might have on things that we were organising through the year. But in fact it was quite a busy year, because apart from all those activities, we organized a successful teach-in one weekend, Richard Hoggart was working on it with me, in fact Richard Hoggart broke confidentiality and he was basically shown the door by the vice chancellor, ended up as deputy director I think of UNESCO, after that particular debacle! And also we had, that involved over 2,000 students as well over the weekend. We also had a big arts festival, and I remember from all over Europe, art students came together because they thought this was Paris! You know all over again! And I remember one evening, at the end of a performance, the audience decided they wanted to vote on whether they should go home that night. And at the end of the day it was a vote, and it was a very marginal majority for going home, otherwise the theatre would have had to stay open all night. The next day some Germans with their mannequins, filled them with sauerkraut, smashed them all over the stage, and created absolute mayhem in the auditorium. And the theatre manager said why didn't you tell us? And they said well that would have spoilt all the surprise you see! (laughing) Fair enough. So anyway they were, as a result of that decided they would pull away, but they wanted to make a statement before they left. So I remember sitting on the front of the stage with all the audience sort of waiting out there, and then the stage opened, and I was looking out and I saw all these faces of alarm, and I couldn't quite work out what was happening, and each member of this German group, SARCAS, came forward and gave a speech about why they thought this was a big let down, and then the last image was all these naked people running around Birmingham being chased by policemen, trying to get them into the back of vans. Well that was, and then of course came, a little while later, Student Community Action! But it was very, very interesting that, there was this very, very large number that Alan had managed to get worked into this programme, and everything in a sense, looking back on it, was mega, it was, there were so many students doing this, it was, there was real activism and it was being channeled in so many different ways. And of course looking back on it, you know, those were very different days, my kids have gone through university since then, and it's all about poverty now and loans and there's no, there's very, very little opportunity that, as we used to have, before continuous assessment as well, in terms of being able to do things. And as a result of that programme, the NUS, I went onto the NUS executive, and I remember we set up a meeting, a big plenary meeting where we invited Alec Dickson from Community Service Volunteers, and Eric Robinson who'd written the People's Universities, it's was all about...

Alan Barr: I've got the record of that here if anybody wants to look at it.

Ray Phillips: There you are. Now this is amazing in itself, you can tell, NUS conference is a place where you go to pass resolutions and amendments, it's not a place where you go to actually listen to the argument. And to get these two people up onto the platform, and I thought have I done the right thing here, because there were these paper aeroplanes coming off the top of the balcony, descending, and I thought what are they going to do? Anyway, Alec Dickson had everybody in the palm of his hand, he was an incredibly charismatic figure, he was backed up by Elizabeth Hoodless, who still runs CSV, and clearly there was a big issue there about a notion of volunteering, which was a CSV notion, and the link with the Rag perspective that was coming through, this book about universities and what higher education is all about, picking out the same themes in a sense that we were doing with the teaching. I also, for my sins as a result of that, drafted a document on the student wage, which was passed unanimously at the NUS conference, and that was a programme that involved building into the degree, involvement with community activity, community elements of the curriculum that would in effect link higher education in with action in the community. Then along came SCANUS, the work that Alan did to create it, and I went for the job and was involved for three years. Community-related curriculum is a theme that we were trying to develop through that time, across the four nations, looking at how universities could be more relevant and more accountable to the communities in which they were working. As a result of that, I got involved in an action project in East London, called the Newham Parents' Centre, where I worked twenty years in the organisation, started off as a pressure group, then developed a charity, and then a company, the book shop's still there over by West Ham football ground. We developed with the, with North East London Polytechnic, and that's where I came into contact with Mike, many years ago, looking at some of the issues around parental involvement in education and education at a community level. And we started off with no money at all, we had jumble sales, one of the first big arguments we had was should we get rid of the jumble room and replace it with a literacy store, literacy materials, and get into literacy work? And over a period of twenty years we developed a programme with forty staff, seventeen, eighteen projects, and most people were qualified by experience, they weren't qualified by bits of paper. We had a few people with bits of paper, but essentially it was a place where local people got jobs and in a sense that was a litmus test of good community development, who gets the jobs at the end of day. Interestingly enough, as part of that work, I picked up a bit of work through the British Council in Soweto, through Read, and did some work looking at parental involvement amongst some of the black families there in the township. Of course Soweto's on the map for a different reason now, but in those days, it was very interesting to see how, when you went out there from the UK, everybody was expecting to say we'd got all the answers, and of course we'd say look in the East End education isn't working, schools aren't working. And of course the interesting thing was they weren't expecting that news, that message, and when they got it they, they suddenly, they were much more attentive and much more inclined to listen. Also, as part of this parent centre, we got involved in holiday schemes, we ran a holiday scheme for seventeen years, took kids to the country, you know again they hadn't seen the country either. And interestingly enough, in the early days we got a lot of students from the local colleges and also the schools involved in putting this programme on with local parents. We also had a workers' education association branch we set up for ten years, and oral history programmes and memorably, one day, this old lady came into our book shop and said, I'm your page three girl, and I thought hey what's this? And anyway, she dug out this photographic book we'd put together and published, and she opened it up and there was her when she was five, in a beautiful dress, and that was her many, many years before, she was in her 80s or 90s. Another guy did his own history, and we just got it to him in the hospital before he died, that was a very memorable time, and he was in print. So ...

Ray, sorry, can I interrupt you, thank you, that's fantastic as a kind of introduction, taking us into a quite a lot of issues I think it would be great to kind of explore. I should just say I shall bring the audience in to ask questions and to kind of reflect and give their own witnessing as well a little bit later. I'd just like to kind of throw it back to some of the witnesses we've got around the table, to kind of come in and maybe think a bit about what people have been introduced as some of the key themes. Alan suggested that far from there being one model at any one time, there were multiple models of activism and volunteering and social action

that existed at different moments. And I wanted people, kind of wanted to reflect upon that a bit and to see whether they, that's something they kind of feel was the case. Erica's nodding ...

Erica Dunmow: Yeah, I mean I think the centre of gravity shifted, I think the range has always been there. And the fascinating conversation I had in my first job, was I was contacted by a guy who had set up what was then the university Social Services Organisation in Cambridge in 1952 or 3, because university social services organisations was the name that was used up until some point in the 70s, by various groups. And we ran through the projects that we had helped to create links with, and I could tick them off! You know visiting people in Borstal, working with young adults with learning disabilities, I think that was the language we were using then, mentally handicapped, probably was the language we were using then. But what we were doing in addition to that, which his group hadn't done, was the community action group stuff, that campaigning stuff. So I think the centre of gravity, and what the national organisations reflect about that centre of gravity shifts. And I can remember that when I was a local worker, doing work on racism in the early 80s, was seen as political and radical, whereas racism would be seen as standard, you know you'd operate anti-racist policies now as absolutely standard. By the end of the 80s we were doing a lot more work around gender issues, around sexuality issues, seeing ourselves as educating students about setting the 'why?' Those kind of 'why?' questions, as well as making sure the practice was good, you know thinking about what was good development practice. So I think for me, I saw that centre of gravity shift from you know the connection with NUS and having a more political, with a big 'P' emphasis, through to sort of community involvement with small 'p'. I mean I can remember the groups in Scotland were having the SCA banner at poll tax protests, when the community charge was an issue in the 80s and they, asked why they did that, they said well because we can see what impact it's having on the local people, therefore we are standing alongside the local people. So it was a sort of a community-up kind of politics rather than a, pragmatic politics maybe rather than rent politics. So I'd see that, the definite shift in emphasis. And the comment somebody made about the word 'volunteering' now gives you value, I would say that's because society currently gives the term 'volunteering' value, being a community activist gave student community activists a different kind of value at a time when that was a good and current term.

Rich Lott.

Rich Lott: Sorry yeah, thank you. So yeah I think, I was witness to another sort of shift, because, which was sort of away from the concept of charity and more towards the concept of change, and campaigning. So yeah, when I, certainly when I was at Sheffield there were all these different sorts of volunteering, from Rag things to Amnesty, Third World First, anti-fascist/racist societies, as well sort of genuinely community volunteering, sort of out in your local community. But certainly in the Third World First group there was this sense that we were being progressive because we were focusing on our role in a rich, western country, sort of that thinking global, acting local thing, and that that was progressive because previously people just used to raise money and give it and they thought that was the end of their responsibility. So the fact, yeah, I'm quite interested to hear how these trainers went. We've, in the office I found this old thing, it's actually from the 80s I think, yeah 83 this is, and I've got to be careful, it's got somebody's bank details on the back! Which is where, I mean I suspect is sort of the start of this, whereby the money that was, that they were trying to raise for Third World First has said well, we're doing changing attitudes and policies on Third World issues, but we'll give 50% of your money to an overseas cause, and the other 50% will be used for campaigning in the UK. So that was 1983 when they were putting that out, and that was just at the start of anti-poverty action, it was part of the thing that I think you mentioned as well.

Alan Barr.

Alan Barr: Can I pick some of this up and, sorry Alan Barr yeah, I'm fascinated you introduced the notion this is about social change, and I was about to say very much the same thing before you spoke. But the question for

me is social change for whom and for what? And we've talked about the centre of gravity, I think the issue, I think there's actually not one centre of gravity! There are several centres of gravity! And the questions I think we had to keep asking ourselves were, who are we trying to influence, for what reason here? And I think we were quite confused in many ways, because a lot of the things that Ray was talking about, they were all about students, our focus was why don't students have a more developed critical perspective on the world that they're part of. And we saw Student Community Action as a means by which we could open up people's horizons and make them think. Now that raises some very interesting questions about how far is that actually exploited. You're using that opportunity to stimulate thinking amongst a group that you are associated with as a community. And I think a lot of us, certainly in my period, began to become quite kind of worried about what we've been doing, and in a sense almost rejected the volunteering bit, and said no, actually no, where we should be is working with communities. And indeed I think I still hold that view, we've got to be very careful whose interests we're serving and be very open about that. And if I were to ask the question now, where do I think the emphasis should be in student community action, it would be getting working class students who are active in their communities, into the opportunities for higher education that allow them to take the jobs that the rest of us have occupied for the last forty years. And there is a scheme that we're involved in Scotland called the Training Trust Programme, which is taking people with no academic qualifications, and I'm sure there are lots of similar things around the country, but in many senses I feel more positive about the sixty or seventy people who are now working in local communities in Scotland, who come from those communities, than I do about the 2,000 we work with in Birmingham who volunteer for a week or so, it's interesting and it's fun, but if you actually ask what sustains long-term change in communities, then you know there are different questions to be asked.

Kelly Drake: There's different focuses depending on where you're coming from, because I'm sat here thinking as a national member of staff, my focus was completely on students and their development. And some of the sorts of issues that we were, I suppose my personal thing was, that was going on in the 90s, was the whole thing about 'youth-led' versus 'placements', and that whole argument, and what you gain from what, you know, the spectrum you sat on really. And so I suppose for me the ten years was about the virtue of youth led soc, I called it social action, because I'd come from the 80s community development, social action in the 90s wasn't really, I don't think a term used actually, certainly not in the field, not with young people. So yeah, it was very much about getting people in governance really, running their own groups, which I know they always did, but what happened was, that that started to kind of wane a bit really (general agreement from other members of group). So yeah, that was my focus, and stuff about placement and youth-led stuff and youth, young people organising for themselves really. And that was always problematic because it was often about funding, and about the worker and what power the worker did or didn't give to young people. And us as a national agency, were often seen as sort of naughty parents who were stealing the students from the local groups to do national work. So there's that dynamic going on which was interesting. And also just to echo Erica's point about, for me, we've always done really these conferences and anti racist stuff, and that really died around 95 I would say, because numbers were going, young people weren't going to our events, and so we stopped that. That's another interesting thing I think ...

Mike Day: Well certainly – Mike Day, I was that one of the students that, I suppose who thought was stimulated during that time, and I seem to remember from our community action group, we did both, both types, so there was a pure service end of things if you will, plus there was the political action, which we also engaged in. And again, I seem to remember there was one of the things at the time was saying well this is the situation in our local community, we've got until the revolution comes, I need to do this, this, this and this you know, so we were kind of, we were doing lots. And I think we thought by doing both that people would get a better perspective on things, they'd meet lots of different people, they would shift to the left, quite frankly. And so in that in itself seems a good thing, but equally the things that were done in the community, whether that's through community action or indeed the Rag week that we used to run, you know I think were generally beneficial. And I guess we just sort of, you know in a small town, got on with it and enjoyed it and I don't, and

certainly there were a lot of community links that were made that were really, really positive, because initially I believe the local residents had been quite apprehensive about having a university there in the first place, that was the last thing they wanted. So ...! And I seem to remember there was a choice between having I think the Royal Albert Hospital, which was a mental health hospital at that time, or out of the town, and it was voted that they would rather have the students out of the town and hang on to the mental health hospital, thank you very much. Because then they got a purpose built hospital out of town. So it was a real interesting time. But yes I think we did both, so yes, those models that Alan was talking about is everywhere.

Graham Allcott: Yeah, just to pick up on a couple of those points, Graham Allcott – that sense that Kelly was talking about, about the ‘placement’ versus ‘student-led’ sort of model, I think from my experience in sort of the late 90s, people’s, you know students came into volunteering still wanting to change things, but didn’t really want to change how they changed things. So as that went on, what happened was a lot of those committee structures and even particular schemes were just kind of carried on year on year, without the thought about you know what’s the interface with the community here, what’s the community need? So students were coming along and saying, well we do this particular thing, we’ll carry on doing that. And I think Alan you sort of dispelled my rose tinted myth of the late 60s and 70s around student community action, because my sense, sort of opening up dusty filing cabinets as a worker in Birmingham and finding stuff, probably more from the late 70s, 80s, was that there was a much greater level of conversation going on between the students and the people that the students were trying to help in whatever community setting that was. And I think as it went on there was a sort of sense of volunteering’s here and we just do it, and then volunteering is a good thing to do, which I think was partly about you know perhaps what was going sort of nationally and politically, but it just became a habit maybe, and people were just kind of turning up to volunteering, there were schemes in place to do that and it seemed like an easy thing to do, but there wasn’t necessarily that kind of political attachment to it in the sense of like we need to change how this is done as well as changing what to do.

OK, so Nick, then Mike.

Nick Plant: Yeah, Nick Plant – just picking up on that, I like that conversation word there, and I just wanted to sort of reflect on a couple of things that we’ve been discussing and I think agreeing on in terms of the shifting senses of gravity and the point about benefits. And I’ve got this pretty simplistic, I hope it’s simplistic, kind of model that makes me make sense of my own trajectory from that housing co-op onwards story that I introduced. Because I started, and I perceive that I became friendly with and engaged with, as starting from self interest, self help, self help as in we’re looking after our own destiny, we’re having a great time, renovating shoddy houses to make them fantastic and etc, etc. So the beneficiaries, to use your word, were ourselves. And then we linked that, I mean part of my Students’ Union wasn’t SCA engaged, but had the label CI, community interaction, and that was very, quite different, because it was about altruism and that’s fine, there’s, you know that’s a philanthropic kind of motive there, it’s about working with local community groups, we were doing very different things, we were looking after ourselves. But we didn’t remain solely self interested because the next step in the logic that I certainly gave a lead on and pushed through, was networking with the community organisations that were concerned about us as students, privileged in terms of housing, homelessness was big time in my university city at the time. So we were helping the community by working with Shelter and the other groups to do the empty property campaigning work, having developed as, if you want to call it this, a sort of sense of community responsibility. So we’re coming from that self interest, benefiting ourselves, so some of that can’t be seen as altruistic, but seeing ourselves as part of the problem, so connecting ourselves with that, not externalizing ourselves from those community activities. And then I suppose if that’s step one from self-help to charity, to change, we then, I would like to claim, started developing common cause, so there was then a conversation, and it wasn’t one interest against the other, but it was a set of mutual, reciprocal interest that I could then see later. And I’m dying to ask some people that I still know from the short life housing movement, whether they perceived this, but that culture of reciprocity

and mutuality and that conversation then sort of was a big part of the short life housing moving that we kind of contributed to in the 80s. So, and I'm, and David [Owen] would know this, in the audience, in my work, in my university now, I'm deliberately using those, that spectrum of motives and benefits to articulate different reasons to do volunteering. And it's interesting that we, several of us agree that we didn't regard ourselves as student volunteers at the time, and I liked your contribution about the value as the labels etc, etc. So there is a range, there was a range and there still is, the value base is different and the political kind of contexts are different, but I'm rather enjoying celebrating that sort of spectrum and that multiple repertoire of possible ways to engage. And as somebody that's passionate about community engagement and public engagement, in my university, going back to what you said about the work in Birmingham, and the then imperatives that were there, that you were trying to get on the agenda, about university having a civic kind of responsibility and a public engagement ethos is, I think that's really interesting kind of coming full circle. But as I say, recognising those three, at least three different modes of engagement and different benefits and motives.

Mike Aiken: Yeah, you asked about models and, sorry Mike Aiken – I think I'm just going to say more about the experience as being a local worker in Bangor in the, just into the 80s, 80, 81. And I think three things, maybe institutional issues as well as models, and context really because the, someone touched on, I think you were saying, sorry I've forgotten your name

Graham Allcott: Graham.

Mike Aiken: Graham, I think Graham was saying about this model of groups of students, which I know the Home Office who funded the early SCADU start up, were very interested because it was one of the few volunteering methods, as they saw it, where groups of volunteers worked together, often quite collectively, to plan and activate their work, and they liked it for that reason. But also I realise that institutionally it had another function, in fact it worked in two ways. To some extent having groups of students meant that when, because there's a high turnover of students, the fact there was a group meant that in year, when the third year lot disappeared, there was already a sense of knowledge stored in that group about what they did, so new people could be inducted with relatively little problems from if you like the centre of the group. So each project could induct its new people. Now that had good things, because knowledge was transferred about group, say a young people's project or a children's project or an elderly project, that kind of format. It also had some reinforcing of structures and processes that were maybe not always very good basically, I mean working with people with learning difficulties, often there was a kind of circus feel to it I feel, I felt quite critical of some of that work, and that was transmitted to the new group, it was having fun with people with learning difficulties. But nevertheless, institutionally in groups, I mean our group had over 100 volunteers as they would now be called, with one sabbatical officer. And that method actually did mean there was quite a lot of ability to keep the structure going. But I think the context is also an important issue, I mean that was a small town, and many universities of that, later as well, like Lancaster were, universities situated in small towns, often a bit poor and periphery but in nice surroundings, and in our context in North Wales we, there was an extra cultural dimension of the Welsh language, it was a very strong Welsh language area, and the Welsh language students at one point separated from the Student Union, they had a separate Student Union altogether. Community action was sort of pardoned slightly, we had a good relationship, I don't know if it was because I was learning Welsh and I was excused (laughing), but there was that issue as well. And I, what I think happens in a small town may be quite different to what happens in the big urban areas, because ... I've got two photos here from that time which shows my campaigning days, and that's a little picture of the community centre in Bangor, the only community centre, it's probably like a small Portakabin, I used to show this ... And where is it? And that's the university, a four storey, two hundred room building! And actually, the way that the university and the town council operated, and the role of the students in that was quite interesting, because one of our issues where we lead with other student groups was to say, well why can't local people come into the Student Union? Now probably in bigger urban areas that wasn't an issue, but in a small town that was very critical. So I think those issues were very live, and there were some students that didn't want the locals coming in, and there

were some local people that didn't want to come in, and other people wanted the resources. But I think the other point in terms of institutionalizing that I would say, was that, unlike the 60s possibly, there were these sabbatical officers and I don't know at what point that started, but those groups, I think Kelly might know more about this, but in my experience at SCADU, the national organisation, those groups that had a worker, even if it was just a one year worker, they were much stronger, there was continuity, there was training, (agreement from Kelly) there was development, and so there was more chance of changing what was going on within the group and not getting stuck in a rut. But also the pattern that I recognised at Bangor, which happened to be full-time sabbatical officers, they themselves went through an enormous, including me, an enormous growth period in that year. So the first thing was to focus on the individual, different models of volunteering, but usually by the end they were much more engaged in the town, and often in small towns, looking back it seems incredible that was a quasi-community worker ...

Kelly Drake: Yeah.

Mike Aiken: And in small towns, I mean in Bangor at that time, people might contradict me, but I cannot remember a single community development worker of a generalist nature. And even if it was just a half-hearted, untrained student activist as a sabbatical, that often could provide linkages in the town that might not have existed otherwise. And relatively, it was a very well resourced, a full-time post, and my memory is we had a grant of about £600 every year from the Students' Union, that would make it £5,000 in today's terms, and we had a mini bus, and we had all this building. I mean even today, in many community groups in certain parts of the country, wouldn't have had a resource of that kind. So there was a lot of stuff like that. But I wanted to pick up just one other point that Alan raised. I think we always felt the sort of, not quite the 60s generation you know (laughing), but I think there were a lot of ideas around, because I remember as a worker in 79, 80, we always felt we ought to be doing curriculum related work, like making sure that student projects were directed to community ends, and setting up counter courses, and getting university lecturers to take a part in some of our work, and it was often quite hard to do that, though it was a bit like maybe in the late, in the mid 90s, you were trying to do a sort of anti racism conference, and why aren't they coming? And we tried to do those things but they didn't go anywhere. But there was a sort of current, a transfer of ideas from earlier eras that still influenced us, and we always felt what we were doing, we were very... But what we did now, I was reading some of the stuff, not my stuff particularly but my predecessor's, in the town, one previous activist, sabbatical officer, was the leading light in setting up a community law centre, the following one set up a community home where people with learning disabilities and students lived together, permanently, and my immediately predecessor, Val, was one of the instrumental people in setting up a women's refuge in the town. I mean enormous resource, if somebody just had a bit of extra time to resource things, to go about looking up funding. And so the sort of, these kind of benefits that happen actually through the resource of the worker, which probably we don't think of as a model, but it was that one person.

Thank you Mike, I'm going to take a question from Debbie, a comment from Debbie and then I'm going to open it up to the floor for some questions and comments before we break for tea.

Debbie Ellen: I just want to pick up on some of the things that Mike was saying about context. I, when I was a student working with Link Up in Sussex, I was working in the context where the university had a very mixed range of subjects, and so the people that came into Link Up they tended to be students that were doing arts degrees, arguably people would say because they had got time on their hands. When I moved up to Manchester, I was the community action worker at UMIST, which stands for the University of Manchester Institute for Science and Technology. But one of the things that I would say is that the people that tended to get involved in community action at UMIST were generally speaking the management students within that university, there was hardly anybody from the hard sciences, you know, like electronic engineering, people that were doing those sorts of degrees didn't tend to get involved. And that's actually quite an interesting issue. And then the other thing that I was going to mention in relation to that is at UMIST we were quite well

resourced, we had a community action and sabbatical member of the Student Union, so there were two people that were basically working in, you know, in a fairly full-time manner. But for me, I think the really important aspect of the work in terms of moving people's perceptions and kind of picking up on what Mike was saying about hoping to move people to the left a little bit, was that I can kind of see it as two different activities really. There was the sort of day to day volunteering which did tend to be quite mundane and quite ordinary, and if I'm honest sometimes I think people, you know, the projects were, they were very sort of prescribed and people just did the same thing, and a new group of people came in and we all, you know they all did the same projects, so there wasn't much development of new work. But what really, for me, what really sort of changed people's perceptions and I would hope their kind of like ultimate careers and where they went after they left after university, was the training that came, that was associated with community action. So it would be, we had weekends away, and I don't know how many community action groups were able to offer that kind of resource, but it made a huge difference to the group of people that came, in terms of building a team and opening their eyes up. And I think that's where we did the kind of community development type work as opposed to the sort of kind of running it and doing the soup runs and the old age pensioners' parties that happened year after year. And some of those people also went to regional conferences and national conferences and all of those different levels of activity, I think it would be fascinating to try and see to what extent that kind of input into the SCA movement and what impact that had on their lives. (general agreement) Because for me as an individual, it had a huge impact.

Fantastic thank you. I'd like to just open up for any questions or comments from the floor. I recognise that there are many among you that are effectively witnesses as well and would like to say something. Great.

Caroline Jackson: I'm Caroline. I'd just like to say that during the 60s when I was a student volunteer - I went on later and became a community liaison officer with responsibility for SCA for about fourteen, fifteen years - but when I was in Manchester, I went from Pembrokeshire, from Pembroke Dock up to university, I'd always worked in Oxfam before, so I did it again in Manchester. And within a very short time I thought I'm just wallpapering over the cracks here, because when you were talking about different models, and the theme in the late 60s was very much that you needed to get out and make your own models, you needed to start again. And that wasn't the same later when I was working, but certainly at that point there were a lot of people, oh, experimenting with drugs and so on. And we set up a place called Imagine in Manchester, a general information centre, where if you were having a bad trip you could come! It wasn't just students, though it was quite a lot of students were involved in it. And I was just thinking as people talked about models and how times had changed, and that politics had made a big, big - I was involved in sit-ins and stuff too, and open files, but there was a lot of work too. I mean there were all the Grosvenor Square and demonstrations against the Vietnam War and I was thinking how politicizing they were, in the same way that the Iraq war was for a later generation. But they were different types of people who went, and the Iraq war, it was the whole population, there were so many, you know, it wasn't a student-led thing. Whereas I felt the Vietnam protests very much were. So I was just thinking of contrasts between the 60s and later models and what sparked them.

Adam O'Boyle: Adam, StudentHubs. Just a question really for those who were involved in the 60s, you mentioned Alan, you talked about when you came back from VSO you had some dissatisfaction with RAG models and you were thinking of other ways forwards, and I just wondered what it might have been about the wider social and political context that spurred some of those things. Because I presume that not all of these changes happened just within university environment. What was it and why do you?

Do you want to take a response on that?

Alan Barr: Yeah, Alan Barr, can I come back, it's very interesting, when I was coming down on the train, I actually posed some of these questions for myself. And one of them was, why did I ever get involved in this in the first place? What was it about my journey that ended me in the place I ended up? And actually the VSO

thing was very interesting, because I did VSO in Sarawak in 1965/6, during the period of confrontation between India, Indonesia and Malaysia, and I was working ten miles from the border, people I knew got shot, we had interment camps, it was a pretty tough assignment for an eighteen year old. And I came back, meeting students who were straight from school, and I was just gobsmacked, it was like well what are these people about? It's a different world out there. Now I'd changed fundamentally in a year, I'd have been just the same as them, but for the fact that I'd had that experience, and lots of other people who did VSO as cadet volunteers as we were called, rather than, came back I think with a different perspective. And I think it was part of understanding that the world around us was changing fundamentally. And I actually wrote a note to myself this mornings, things like what was the influence of post colonialism on my thinking? And I do think it was actually quite significant, because I was seeing people taking control, challenging the status quo, but doing so in a way which was serious. And I came back to watch people throwing eggs at each other and flour and God knows what, and I just thought, oh for goodness sake, what's this all about? I think I may have been a serious, boring old bugger you know, but there was something about that I found quite irritating. But I didn't actually have a kind of a model for doing something, I got involved, like many other people probably, in teaching English to people who didn't have English as a first language, who had just arrived in the UK, and I was doing that for a bit. And then I thought actually this is very isolated, why are my colleagues, my friends and so on not thinking in the same kind of way, which was actually what got us motivated. But I think there were other things about that era that were really important, that there was an opportunity to challenge people's perceptions because their horizons had been liberated by the fact they were no longer going to be required to go into the Army, you know, we were the immediate post war generation, I was born two years after the war finished. So I compare myself with my brother who is four years older than me, who was born during the war, and had all of that hanging over his head, of quite a different world. And I think we came into that era expecting to have a freedom that our, previous generations didn't have. But we didn't actually know quite what to do with it, because we didn't have an analysis of what it was we were interested in doing something about. And I think that only emerged over time. And actually your question is posing all sorts of things for me, but during the following period from being involved in SCA, I was involved in all sorts of community action stuff, the strikes in Balsall Heath and so on, and I kind of wonder what right I had to be involved in those things. So I got involved in the Home Office community development programme, so if anybody knows the history of that will know that it was a very confrontational period, in which a lot of people from, with the same kind of history that I'd had, were beginning to critically analyse why the hell were people in the position that they were in. And that whole kind of structural analysis of poverty emerged. I think we've struggled with that ever since. Because I remember Harry Speck writing a paper in the 70s which described British community work is characterized by its large hopes and small realities (general laughing), I find my life's been characterized by large hopes and small realities! And I've had to kind of work my way back into saying, what is it possible to do in a society which doesn't actually share, or isn't, doesn't want to share an analysis which is perfectly logical and sane, about why we're unequal, and why we're in the position where Osborne can tell us we've got a progressive budget, when in fact it's going to destroy the interests of the ... But that's, it's a capturing of the moment, and I think a lot of us who thought we were in a progressive area have struggled through our lives in many ways to keep hold of that, and it's delightful to hear other people actually struggling with the same thing! But I don't think we've won, I think, you know the Iraq war is a very interesting example, that it was a single issue process about a war, it wasn't a, if you like, a holistic analysis of the nature of our society and why it is not fair. And I think we've got to do something about – sorry I'm rambling on, but ...

OK, I've got a question from the front here.

Ruth Lewis: Thank you, Ruth Lewis from Northumbria University – I just wanted to follow on from the points that you were raising Alan, because I think that, for those of us involved in activism, it's very easy to talk about, with rose tinted glasses, to talk about the kind of fantastically positive impact activism has had on our lives. And I was at an ESRC seminar series earlier this week where we were talking about activism in the global North and global South, and talking about the pains and the costs of activism. And I was talking about it from my

experience of doing work about violence against women. But I wondered whether others here in the audience or on the panel had views about the costs of activism which might be to you individually or to the community that you're a part of or no longer a part of, because of your activism. Just to kind of, in a sense to slightly problematise the notion of activism and not having it as this rose tinted concept.

Kelly Drake: I can answer that quite briefly, I've often thought about this.

Kelly.

Kelly Drake: As I spent ten, eleven years working as a national activist I felt really, promoting and profiling SCA to Government to get money, to civil servants to get them to believe that it made a difference to young people, to fund universities etc, etc, local workers. And that whole thing that you must have done, where you get up at 5 o'clock, you don't get home until midnight, you go on millions of residential. So for ten years, I mean my point really is just it took so much energy to do that, and by the time I was finished I was pretty burnt out actually, I was very burnt out. And I wouldn't change it for the world. But also I couldn't have done it if I had kids, so I think there's an issue about that. I didn't have a second wage coming in, so you know I had to work and you know that kind of issue. So yeah, it has got cost and I've thought about that quite a lot, because it was a lot, it was a big part of my life. And it was something I absolutely believed in you know, I absolutely believed that student volunteering made students better people, that was my fundamental notion, and that's what I wanted to get out there.

Unknown male: Past tense?

Kelly Drake: No still do, yeah, yes, but those ten years of my career were focused on ...

So we'll take a comment from Erica and then we'll break for some tea ...

Kelly Drake: No, no I still believe it if you're asking me that question, oh God yeah, absolutely!

Erica Dunow: I mean on two counts I think, I mean I've since been responsible as a manager for employing staff, and I think my time with SCA made me very aware of issues around the payment of administrative staff, secretarial staff, technical staff. And I mean I have tried always to make sure that the staff at the bottom of the organisation were paid well, above minimum wage, rather than concentrating on the chief exec's salary, my own one. So in a sense there has been a personal cost in terms of my income, but I think that's due in part to my philosophy ... And I live where I live, in the multicultural part of the East End of Sheffield because, because student community action, the way it was and the experience I had in two local groups and national, looking at what was happening for the students, made me feel very aware of that sense of trying to build good community, and feeling you can't talk about building good community unless you're living in the kind of place. I mean I lived in the East End of London when I was working at SCADU, you can't, you know, I don't feel you can talk it unless you can walk it. So I think, you know if you're talking about your integrity, for some people who are engaged in SCA, I think it did have impact on where they chose to place their lives thereafter.

Fantastic, we're going to take a short break now. Please do get a cup of tea or coffee and then we'll reconvene and we'll consider some of these questions in further detail. And the audience, if you want to think of questions to ask, fantastic. Thank you. (general talking) (END OF FIRST RECORDING)

(SECOND RECORDING)

Thank you very much, I think we've doubled the number of fans in the room now, so I'm hoping that, the sound recording might be ruined, but at least everyone will be a bit cooler. Are we OK with the sound? OK,

sound check. Fantastic, I'd just to kick off again the second part of this then, to point out that there's going to be a time afterwards, we're going to finish about 5.15, then about 45 minutes for drinking some wine and continuing these conversations, and then we're going to, if everyone, if people are interested in keeping going, we have to leave this room at 6 o'clock because of the room hire, but there are several pubs around here that we are going to go to. We're thinking of going to the Thornhill Arms which is just across the road, which is quite a nice, or quite an old time type pub, but you know it's quite nice and lots of room, and people can come there and continue chatting. So I'd like to sort of kick off with some of the questions that we were trying to answer through this. And just to say also we recognise that there are lot of big issues being raised, a lot of people want to say stuff, so we really are seeing this as the first step in potentially a kind of longer oral history programme, in which we can look back at the transcript and sort of identify some of the key themes and perhaps go back and talk to people individually and draw in other people. If anyone has any ideas of who might like to fund such an exciting piece of research, then please come and talk to me afterwards. I'd like to talk with, just to open with a question again to the panel, which is a question that we put in this briefing paper, what were the hopes of you as student volunteers and workers, about these different modes of action that we've talked about, and how far were they realised? We've suggested that there were many different ac, types of activities going on at different times, but I'm just interested in kind of people's kind of personal hopes and fears, and I guess how much they were realised.

Kelly Drake: I'll kick off then, I've said already I suppose I hoped to, people meeting from different backgrounds, class backgrounds, sexuality, city, polys, whatever, that that would generate discussion, friendships etc, I'm talking about a national level here, and also about leadership, so that was where I was coming from really, it was about young people in leadership positions, leading committees, travelling, getting up you know, doing all the things that people, students, people say students don't do, getting up early, getting on a train, getting somewhere, sitting in a committee room, taking minutes, and yeah, fair enough there was always the bar at the end, but you know that real work. And I guess you know I could, when you asked me to come today, I could think of probably ten or fifteen young people that I work with at a national level who are trustees of student volunteering UK etc, who have, who are now chief executives of organisations. Now if that's not a result really, what is? So that for me I suppose was my hopes really, it was about young people having access to national positions, going to international conferences that we would send them on, talking to ministers, I don't know, whatever all the other things people did, running working groups about anti racism, sexuality, all those sorts of things. Yeah so that's ...

Thank you, others? Graham.

Graham Allcott: Isn't there, it seems to me like an interesting thing, Alan and I were just talking in the break about you know people's original sort of motivations, and Alan came to Birmingham, we did a 40th anniversary for Student Community Action there. The sort of founders found it quite strange that the main emphasis in terms of recruitment materials and a lot of the language that was being put around volunteering tended to be around employability, CVs, skills, you know that kind of sort of end of volunteering. And I kind of see it as a whole spectrum, it's a, you know, one of the great things about volunteering is that it's a win, win, win, win situation, there are so many different facets to it, you know in terms of the positive outcomes. But I do wonder whether, Kelly your point about the people who would see it as trustees of student volunteering UK and student volunteering England, I could say the same thing and then go on to be you know chief executive of organisations, what were their original motivations for getting involved? Was it that the ones who got involved in the 60s and 70s were keen to change the world, was it that the ones in the 90s are now much more keen to change themselves in order to get on in their careers, and that happens to involve some changes in the world at the same time.

Rich Lott: I wanted to change the world.

Kelly Drake: No, I think they still wanted to change the world Graham, because I can remember, I suppose I'm thinking about the ones I personally worked with, who I had personal relationships with, and by meeting me and my co-workers and other people, that changed them, you know. I think back to when I was a young person, when I was eighteen to twenty one, and I often used to say this, I would have loved to have met people who are sat around this table, all you guys, because when I was eighteen and twenty one, I didn't really have any mentors particularly out of university, I was struggling finding my feet whatever. But if I had been really involved in a national movement like SCA, I would have met really interesting people, and they did, they met fantastic, and as well as their local community, I'm not, you know I'm talking about the national activism now really ...

Let's have a bit of a 1970s perspective ?

Ray Phillips: Yeah well 60s, I mean ...

60s, Ray Phillips.

Ray Phillips: Yeah Ray, Jack Straw never produced a document with academic freedom in the law, and he produced a critique of it, because there was a minority of us on the executive time. And it was at that particular time that Student Community Action and NUS were getting into dialogue in a sense. And it's interesting that you've had this notion of hands off the universities, we want to keep our independence, our autonomy, and that's very important, very fundamental, and yet the whole thrust and motion of volunteering is moving another way in a sense, raising issues about responsibility, accountability, that, at a theoretical level anyway. And those are the sorts of debates that were going on within NUS and why NUS was attracted, despite the negative comments from Charles Clarke in his paper, he was quite positive and quite pro in the early days. I mean I wasn't around when those comments came through, but certainly that debate, that dialogue going on, it was quite a strong discussion going on at national level.

Yeah.

Erica Dunmow: I mean I think the motivations were hugely important and in the same way that you talked about the sort of centre of gravity and what was happening, for some individual students it was a way of getting to meet people. For some people who felt you know the student environment was not one they were comfortable with, having contact with an older person, visiting them in their own homes, was a way of connecting with the kind of life outside the maelstrom of student life. And then there were the ones who liked having fun, and you know they did see student community groups as some quite fun and interesting things. And then there were ones who did have a more kind of change the world motivation. So I think you got the whole range. And you know some groups, some local groups had quite a tension between the people who concentrated on, I mean in a sense you know a number of us have said when we were at university, we identified with an activity, not the community student action group. And then you maybe became a student community action activist, and you saw the whole range of engagement with community through this kind of programme as a good thing, and the perspective shifted and a bit like, you were talking about your shift in perspective. So I think for some students it was a good thing to do on you know the days when most people had Wednesday afternoons free, it was a good thing to do with a bunch of mates, and you know that was the bread and butter of a lot of what went on. And then there were people who caught the bug, began to ask the questions, why is it like this? The papering over the cracks, that Caroline talked about, began to ask the questions, began to have their consciousness raised, you know through the process. And then there were the ones who came in through the political angle. And it was interesting that in the 80s, I think the links we had with NUS were through disability issues, we produced a joint pack with NUS on access for university campuses for students with disabilities, and we were seen as the people who knew about the practicalities of that, and NUS came in as a partner, which we were very grateful for. And it's, we actually got on Radio 4, 'Does He Take

Sugar?’ for that piece of work! It was the one piece of media coverage I think we got nationally. And it was, you know, and, but then also relationships with the individual organisations like Third World First you know, a lot of people would identify with that particular thing. And there was SCA, like Mike was talking about in the background, sort of providing the oil for the wheels of a whole range of things, and trying to get the university in the 80s, I mean we had a community access programme, trying to get the university to take its relationship with its local community a little bit more seriously through that. So all sorts of motivations.

And in terms of, kind of moving on from motivations, I was, kind of the question I was really trying to get was, I guess different motivations but how far are those things realised and kind of some of the aspirations realised?

Alan Barr: I think, I take your point absolutely, there were so many different motivations, which set of motivations are we hoping we’ve realised, and whose motivations. I think there’s a difference. You talked of the people that caught the bug, there is a kind of core of people for whom this was much more than volunteering, it was about personal identity (general agreement), personal values, how those are expressed. And I suppose my thought about that is that it wasn’t just students, that realization took us into relationships with a whole lot of other people, and we started to think quite differently. I think we were, as much as anything, the people that were changed. And if I look at community work, community development in the UK over the last forty years, I can name lots and lots of people who came out of SCA, but also people who came out of other areas who started to amalgamate with one another, trade union people, people who had been involved in politics, people who had just come out of their own communities, whatever it was. And I think those people have a different set of aspirations, because they are aspirations that are connected to the notions of social justice, and we’re driven by some idea of social justice, it may not be exactly the same. And you asked the question of how far do we think we’ve made some difference, I don’t know if it’s us, but that movement, that set of connections, that set of networks I think has made a huge difference. I’ve brought some pictures with me of just some of the kids we worked with in Balsall Heath in 1969. And I looked at those pictures for the first time for years and years, I just got them out of the cupboard, you were saying you were in the attic, I was in the attic too! And I took down these photographs and I looked at them, and it was like seeing something out of the Victorian era! And I suddenly thought, yeah the world has changed, what, to what degree did we contribute to that? I don’t know what the answer to that is, but I do think there is some contribution - which is about the degree to which we shifted the values and assumptions about what was a reasonable way of enabling people to lead dignified lives. And I think about Balsall Heath where we ran a neighbourhood centre, you know, the housing visitors came with their clipboard, they didn’t even ask you to go into your house, they walked through your door and they marked down the quality of your furnishings, the quality of your carpets, etc, and then they allocated you a house. It was like a kind of grading system. Well that’s wrong. I mean that whole business of getting beyond, into a kind of well rights model, and the whole housing association movement, I wouldn’t claim SCA was ‘the driver’, but if I look at the community based housing association we have in Scotland, there are connections, but there are connections to lots of other things. So there’s a bit of me that says we need to avoid seeing SCA as ‘the centre’, it is a contributor to a whole lot of other things that were going on, which hopefully are about some notion of a more just society, which at the moment we’re struggling to hold on to. But there we go.

Graham Allcott: You’re right Alan just you know, it’s people that make change isn’t it? And there are a significant number of people who have been influenced by student volunteering which then helps with the changes that they go on and make, it’s not necessarily because of that one thing there, it’s about people and institutions isn’t it?

Richard.

Rich Lott: Yeah, I really feel like, you know when I got involved it was about change, I wanted to change the world, and I probably would have said it just like that as well! (laughing) And you know it was about these issues you know, I can't believe it, I can see these things on the telly and I can't believe it, I can't believe we're not doing anything about it you know, I want to do something about it. And so for example third world debt was the biggie that just never went away really when I was, all through my student years and it was, for us, for me there was, I suppose there was two things I wanted to do. One was like get some of that debt forgiven(?), make a real change for people in the global south. And the other, and part and parcel of that was to work with others to do that. And I think like we, so we got together with several other groups across the country, particularly in Manchester and set up Lloyds and Midlands boycott campaign, focusing on Lloyds and Midlands banks because their exposure to third world debt was far above other banks at the time. And we did loads of campaigning on those with, outside banks, making a nuisance of ourselves and what have you. And it wasn't, you know it wasn't terribly successful, we did make a difference, they did sort of become more sensitive about the issue and what have you, but what we did do was involve a whole load of people in the process, and talk to a whole load of people so that, as soon as after I left, ceased being a student, it was still going out there supporting students, and Jubilee 2000 came along, it was, we saw massive numbers of people join in Third World First, People and Planet as it was by 2000, you know all sorts of groups that hadn't got involved before, and really, really signed up behind that, and you know with really good results. And I think that like, we collected the second largest number of signatures or something for Jubilee 2000 in the end, and we had a really good success. And the networking, the networking thing that, our student network has never let up, I was joking in the break with somebody, when somebody said that students didn't sort of, took a step back from wanting to lead and stuff, and I was going oh I think we must have got them all, because our network has always been like angry at sort of, at the office who were existing! Because it wants to do everything itself, and it's always been an autonomous network, and in the 90s that was a really fri, there was a lot of friction in the relationship, whereas at, towards the late 90s we'd started to work together, we worked, and just this whole, we really understood we need to work as a network, we can achieve things. And so, I mean I know while I was at uni, the last year there, a campaign came over from students in the States who had been campaigning to get Pepsi out of Burma, and we did a national campaign, got stuff out all over campus, all over the drinks machines and everything else, and Pepsi bottled it so to speak! (laughing) And they, you know, they actually moved out seven months after, because they were scared that the fact that this campaign had moved from students in the States to students in the UK and was now all over the place, and they're nothing if they're not cool to students. So I feel we did a few ...

Let's bring Mike in.

Mike Aiken: On the question of motivations, I think I agree with Erica, probably like all volunteering or social activism, you can have a variety of mixed motives, we don't have one motive necessarily. And I think certainly, I mean I can remember people saying to me, well I got involved in the community action group because there were people I fancied in the group you know! (laughing) And you know, it's a kind of way of socializing and getting involved with people who also might be a bit more like you as well.

Graham Allcott: Horizontal networking ...

Mike Aiken: Horizontal networking, yeah, well whatever you fancy! (all laughing) But I think, I still think that what Alan's saying is really right because this thing about being part, and contributing to something or other. And I think that sometimes that that might have been through feelings of guilt or duty. Some people, you know today as well, people might think I ought to put something back, sort of in inverted commas. But also I think at the time I was in, at Bangor we even had, the university structure was much more elitist even than it is now, and the it was, the vice chancellor would tell us on the first day we were at university, you are the privileged few, you must, you know, you must make use of this experience, this was the thing like that. And also I remember, and the vice chancellors weren't particularly radical, but they did point out to us we were

living in a small town and it was important to you know respect our neighbours, i.e. the people that lived there most of the time! So there was a kind of sense of you were supposed to do something. And so you could say the guilt factor also played some role, as well as all these other things.

I'll just take Nick, I know there's questions on the floor, I'll come back to that.

Mike Aiken: Can I just say one other tiny thing?

OK, go on then Mike, quickly!

Mike Aiken: I think there was just one other thing that we haven't touched upon, but that was the independence of Student Unions (general agreement), because they had independent funding and there was relatively little scrutiny, I don't know, Mike might say differently! But there was relatively little scrutiny of how money was spent. And the fact was that that did mean that people could come into a student community action, or into other student groups, and get a small amount of money to do something. I don't mean they put it in their pocket, but if they wanted £20 or £50 in today's money, whatever, to go and run something or set something up, they actually had the power to do that. I mean now you could call it entrepreneurial activity in a social sense, but there was that scope that probably now that the funding is very different and the model is very different. And I was shocked when one student, a student from the US asked to come and do something, I didn't have any volunteering placements, so I didn't know what to do with him, but I found something, you know, people could find their place, a bit like I say a community centre, in that way, could find something that he could be involved in. And at the end of the yeah, he did his stuff very nicely, came to all the meetings, he came to training, and he said oh Mike, I'd like you to now write my testimonial, and I'd no idea what it was, and he had to tell me what it was, and I very happily wrote him two pages and that. But nobody had ever asked me for that, nobody in all the time I was there ever asked me for that. And I later realised of course that there was a different model in the States and that was quite usual, to get everything accredited that you'd done.

If we take Nick and I'll perhaps ask Mike to say something because he hasn't said very much, so, to make a contribution.

Nick Plant: Shall I go first? Yeah, Nick Plant – Just to comment very quickly on Mike's comment on scrutiny before I make the point that I was going to make, if I may? It so happens that it was scrutiny that radicalized me in terms of student politics, and I'll just tell you why very, very briefly. Because the General Purposes Committee of my Students' Union was so bureaucratic in scrutinizing my pitch for resources, as Treasurer of the Winnie the Pooh Society (laughing) in my first year, that I thought to hell with this bureaucratic cross examination, I just want to go and explore the South Pole...with my honey ...

Male: You didn't want the honey?

Nick Plant: Yeah I wanted a honey budget! And that's what got, awoke me to student politics and committee work in the students' union. So, but that's a sort of slight anecdote, I don't want to confuse you ...! But what I was going to say if I may, was just to slightly deconstruct your research question if I may, because we've been talking about hopes and aspirations and outcomes, but there's a slight danger in those questions in terms of imputing kind of linearity, some causal kind of sequence. So I, when you put the question after the break, I couldn't think what the hell I was going to say about hopes. I mean like others, I agree with those broad hopes, yes I did want to change the world, yes I did want social justice. I particularly, and one of my things from my loft is really embarrassing, an article in the Students' Union newspaper, I'm not going to read out, but I wrote it, and it's about getting other students as passionate about social change and social justice as I. But those are very loose kind of hopes and aspirations. And I think it might be more productive to talk about outcomes, and to allow for emergent outcomes, and to see the non causal kind of sets of systemic kind of connections that

have gone on there. And one of the things that has empowered and enchanted me in coming to this event today is starting to track some of my friends and colleagues in the social housing, short life movement that I was with at the time, and I'm still in contact with to some extent. And I started writing lists of outcomes and benefits, and what was the other word in the research question? The contributions to social change. And I think if we started to map those, you know what's round the table in terms of where people have got to, and in the room and out there, it's absolutely bloody enormous, you know, it's enormous, and I'm not going to sort of start pursuing the point, but you know people have got politicians, senior politician status, senior ministerial status, directors of national charities, leadership roles in social housing, internationally, that I can connect with my and others' student activism days. And so the difference that we've made isn't linear, it's not because we've set out to do it, but it's emerged as it were, but it's absolutely massive. And so coming right back, hopes for me as an academic in a new university, trying to get things done, is that I can actually continue that process. And we were talking about people, students inside their straitjackets which are very, they're much, I think students are very straitjacketed today in a consumeristic kind of model of higher education, and students need to come out of their boxes and to be thinking not just of their degrees, and we in institutions need to sort of facilitate that. And so that's actually the same really, but more so, as it was in the 70s and at other times. So my hope is that there's still hope to regenerate that process through us old farts that are kind of still passionate you know, and younger farts too, or younger nice people as well! (laughing) Sorry, no offence meant there! I was speaking for myself! I was speaking for myself there in terms of those adjectives ...

Mike Day: Might I add that Nick's analysis of the emergent role of getting involved thing, because as I was involved and I don't know, you know, Kelly was wishing she had a mentor, and I suppose I had a mentor in Tony there, so you know he sort of presented opportunities, things I could get involved with, some which were fun, some which were serious, some which were a bit weird sometimes, but all of which were highly useful. And I suppose whether that was you know my personal journey, the things I got involved with, because I stuck with supporting students through Student Unions and NUS, is seeing where people end up and what they end up doing. I mean I was at a conference yesterday and we had a panel debate on the future of higher education, and the Vice, what, Pro-Vice Chancellor for the University of East London was there. Now I trained her when she was a nineteen year old student, she was in my group, and she was absolutely fantastic, she ran rings around the other students, she was really, really sharp and everything else, she got totally involved in the sort of community work and things like that. There was nothing she couldn't do or didn't do. But the crucial thing I think is the fact that she's come through that, she's stuck with it, she's risen through the ranks, she's now a pro vice chancellor. But what she was talking about was access and all the kind of things that were making the University of London you know a really good place to be for the diverse community of East London. So it's those values that she's bringing, and with people like her in charge, I think there is hope for the future, so it's those values that inculcate into people through, exposing them to all the experiences. (general agreement)

OK, I'm going to put it back out to the floor now, it seems like there's quite a few, I noticed quite a lot of questions. We'll start, and you've been looking, asking me for a long time, so we'll start with you. No?

Yeah, I just wanted ...

Sorry, can you introduce yourself, say your name and where you're from?

Gail Emerson: My name's Gail, I'm from Citizens' Advice, but I suppose it's more of a personal comment, I think that a lot of people touched on, particularly around the motivations for volunteering and about, and the broadening of access to university and the fact that it's perhaps not an elite who go to university and the more, and the introduction of fees and you are more, you know it is more of a kind of consumer set up now and how that can impact on the student volunteering kind of theme that we..

Fantastic OK.

Keith Stapylton: Yeah, can I throw a hand grenade in, is that alright? My name's Keith. It's a very comfortable, cosy group of white folks that have done great and good things. And to me, an outcome is not necessarily that somebody's become a Vice Chancellor. I thought Alan and Nick were starting to talk about it. Where is the perspective of the users, people who were, where volunteering was done unto them? If you ran a project to develop you know Bengali women's literacy, have we got, and no doubt you have got evidence that that was a successful volunteering project. I think that's important to feed into this, and you know we haven't really had user input into this seminar. And just an observation, I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing, but if research councils are giving points, or maybe it's just UCL that are giving points for volunteering, is that a good thing or a bad thing, you know if you have to collect whatever it is, forty points after three years, and you get one point for running a placement or whatever, I'm equivocal on that, I don't know whether that actually. Perhaps some people might do it in order to get their points and then be sucked into the wider context of volunteering, or actually it might be just a good thing to have a bit of stick and carrot to get people to...

There's some interesting points there about users and the people that maybe have benefited. I wonder if we could address that before we come back to some further questions.

Kelly Drake: Well I can respond to that, and I can say that I agree with your anxiety, because I also used to feel that at a national level about, er, I guess some of the comments that young people would also say, when I would meet them in conferences and we'd be doing some training on equality say, or anti discriminatory practice or something, and there was you know, yeah there's always going to be a bunch of people who probably come across as really patronizing because they're helping the less you know well off, you know, the kids on the estate, that kind of stuff, the council house kids ...

Keith Stapylton: And offering them ping pong.

Kelly Drake: Yeah, or whatever it was, and I suppose you know that is an anxiety, but I guess that didn't, coming back to my own personal motivations, that didn't stop me doing the work because I hoped that you know we could challenge that via training actually, what Debbie said, I think training was, for me personally in the work I did, was absolutely crucial locally, nationally and regionally. So I mean that's what we've spent a lot of money trying to train people who are at leadership levels. But I think it was very difficult in groups of students to monitor that, it's the reality. So I think it's a fair comment.

Others on that from different periods? Graham?

Graham Allcott: Yeah, just to sort of progress Kelly's point there as well, I had very similar experiences in terms of, with you know we'd do training with particular student volunteers and you would, there were moments where you'd kind of cringe actually and you'd go like, just the language that you're using and the way that you're talking about this and so on. But no one sets out to be patronizing, no one sets out to you know, to wrong the people that they're working with, with those kind of views. And I think you know the bit that kind of worries me perhaps though is that it does feel like the kind of social policy thinking about the design of those programmes is perhaps the bit that we've, that has waned in recent years. And a particular example of that was when I was a worker in Birmingham, we'd been running this particular project through the community action unit if you like, it had probably been run for like twenty years, and it was about, it was called Monday Night Club, and it was a club for adults with learning difficulties, and I've no idea whether it's still there, it might even be still there. But we got involved with a local charity that was also doing similar work, and on about the second session, the guy that was the staff with the charity came along and said, you know like really sorry to sort of broach this, but you guys are sort of doing this all wrong. And I was like, oh really, we were all, we thought we were doing a really great thing. And he said you know fifteen years ago the model was that you take adults with learning disabilities and you give them a space where they're together, and the social policy

thinking had gone on that actually then it becomes about mainstreaming. And it can, and then so a lot of the newer projects that were being set up were about, right take these people down the pub, get these people integrated into, you know so that people around them who don't have an understanding of learning difficulties, get that understanding and so on. And that was not an intentional thing that the students had done, it wasn't that they'd set out to do something in an old fashioned way, or do something in a different way to progressive thinking, it's just that they'd turned up and done their bit. And like someone was saying earlier, you know, there's that kind of three year cycle, so some people leave, and then the next people come in, and they say well we do it like this, and then we do this. And so it was just kind of one of those things that happened, it wasn't, there was no conspiracy around that. So I think it's important just to sort of note that sometimes those motivations are spot on and people did really want to change the world, but sometimes you know, some of the thinking around the policy and sort of political aspect of that hadn't maybe caught up, and I think there's a disconnect there that perhaps looking at this as a sort of historical piece and thinking about how we then learn from that, for me, that's something I'm quite passionate about to take forward really.

It doesn't... on users?

Mike Aiken: Yeah.

OK, to Mike.

Mike Aiken: No I think it's good to break up the cosy consensus, it's beginning to be like an old training group, student community action where people get up, in fact interestingly there was always a discussion workshop I think at every workers' conference on well why student community action, what do we do you know? But I think it's interesting that you raise the question about users and beneficiaries because I, I think even that vocabulary is actually a more modern vocabulary, because actually I'll be quite frank in saying, we, there was thinking about the way we're interacting, and there were very different ways of interacting with different kinds of areas of work, there was, Community Student Action wasn't one thing, it was twenty or thirty different things as I think was pointed out (general agreement). But I think that vocabulary itself actually, I wouldn't have thought it even raised there, I think that's a good challenge, and I'm thinking yeah, in today's language it is, but, and if we look at things from a very individualistic point of view, we want to say well of those three people with learning disabilities who went to that group, you know what's happened to them now? Have they got, you know, have they improved their life chances? But I think outcomes in some ways is a very, on this kind of work, is very complex, because actually we might be talking about very long term outcomes, both for communities and for those students. So I think one thing that I think, despite the fact that yeah I would agree, in my era, student community action was probably female dominated, but with men as leaders of their projects! Yeah? And very white. Overseas students we, I worked very closely with overseas students, but they would never get involved, it wasn't their thing you know. But I think the outcomes of certain activities can be very diffuse, like I think one thing that there was a lot of work done on in our Student Union, was opening the building to, just for young people to come in to go to the disco. Well have they got better disco dancers in Bangor from that era?! (laughing) Because, well no, but what has that contributed in a, I think the contribution rather than actually focusing on a very targeted approach, because that may have changed just a little bit, relations between two groups of young people.

OK, I'll take some more from the floor. I've got Andrea who has been waiting patiently.

Andrea Rannard: Andrea Rannard from Volunteering England. And it's really, really nice to be here because I suppose where we are now with the further and higher education team within Volunteering England is the legacy of all of your work up there. So you know we feel very privileged. My background is I was a student volunteer, I volunteered for Oxfam, campaigned when I was at Bristol University, and I found that external to the university. I then went on to manage, as a worker, volunteering for student and staff at Edge Hill

University, and then Manchester University, and I joined Volunteering England in 2008. And I think a key thing that I've noticed in the history of student volunteering was, a key quote was in 2002, when student volunteering received funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England. And then from that period forth, student volunteering was much more integrated within the university as opposed to being a really central figure just in the Students' Union. So looking forward, you've seen a change since 2002 where it's become more about integration within university, linking it up with the curriculum, we've seen models of social enterprises arising as well, as more academics and careers consortiums have been involved. In the future, as funding cuts come into higher education, and a lot of the, you know whether the student volunteering continues in a certain way and has funding, all depends on how integrated it is within a university. That will mark the success for student volunteering in a lot of universities going forward. So taking that into account, what do you think student volunteering will look like in higher education in five to ten years' time? That's the first question. The second is, as a national body, that leads on this work, what do you think we should be doing to support student volunteering?

Mike Aiken: How long have we got?! (general laughing)

OK, so I'll take some more. OK I've got Adam and then Anjelica.

Adam O'Boyle: Not to dismiss Andrea's question, but I thought what might be nice is at the end of this seminar, if each speaker did maybe give a vision of student volunteering, just in the next five or ten years, to wrap things up. And my question was around the institutions and some stuff Andrea's touched on. You know we've talked a lot about motivation from student levels, but you know as workers what are we trying to build? You know we've had SCADU, SCA NUS, what sort of institutional framework are you trying to build towards and what were some of the reasons that that came and went? Was it that students drove something or was it the Home Office was driving the agenda, or funders were driving the agenda? You know where do things come from and why do things change? Why have we seen such potted history of student volunteering over the last forty years?

Can I just take Anjelica's question first, because I know you've been waiting for a while, and then we'll maybe come back to that infrastructure question.

Anjelica Finnegan: Yeah it's probably about about responsibility, because I was just picking up on things that, I'm sorry, Andrea said, and also Nick said before as well, about students like volunteering outside of university, because you went to Oxfam which was outside of the university, actually I volunteer outside of my university rather than being part of you know that institution. And I was just wondering, is that something that's kind of changed or do you volunteer as, oh I'm a University of Southampton student, so I volunteer as a Southampton University student, or do I just volunteer as a student? Because my particular university, I feel, is incredibly apathetic and there's not a lot actually in the institution to do.

Male - That's what I said!

Angelica Finnegan: So, but yeah so.

Thank you, OK, so we've got more questions. I thought we could maybe answer that question about the infrastructure that's kind of grown up to support student volunteering, of which we've kind of got a legacy here in Student Volunteering team at Volunteering England. I wonder if you could start maybe with Alan and with Ray who were kind of really right back at the beginning of this?

Alan Barr: It's a difficult question to answer. It seems, because your comments were fascinating, because you were describing a world that is quite difficult I think, certainly for me to recognise, I don't know how Ray about

that. But it actually does come back to the point that Graham was making about context. And the nature of the student world has changed fundamentally since we were students. I've forgotten what percentage of us went to university, about 7% or something like that? It was very small. I mean you're now supposed to be getting towards 50%. That fundamentally changes who students are, and how they relate to the community. In a sense we were, I mean I've forgotten which of you it was that talked about, it was yourself, OK, the vice chancellor talking about how privileged we were, that was very much the attitude, and that was, it was an incredible insult because they were actually saying we don't really think this is very good! We would like to do it differently! So for us, we were trying to do something which was to connect something, that was highly elitist, to the wider world, and I wonder if we're in the same environment. I, we were talking too over coffee about local intake to universities. I taught at Glasgow Uni from 80 to 90 and I've been connected to it ever since, and to Strathclyde University, but they're both local intake universities, 60% of their students come from the locality. Now the issue about whether they volunteered through the university or whether they've stayed connected to the things that they were associated with in their communities is quite different. And there's part of me says I'd rather they would be connected to the things that they were part of anyway, because they're relating to their own experience. And that raises questions for me about the long term future in terms of the funding of higher education, how students survive in the circumstances that is increased fees, and my own kids going through university, three of them, ten years apart, and the third one worked most of his time in order to be able to pay to do it. And you're thinking well hang on a minute, so what are my reasonable expectations of someone in those circumstances? And that I think is about saying well yeah, but you are part of the community, he didn't live at home, but he lived within a community that he knew about. So I'm just wondering whether we need to have a debate about recognising that the student world is now very, very different from the way it was forty-four years ago.

Ray

Ray Phillips: Well I've been involved in student as it sort of engaged with the NUS, and it's sort of a bit of mainstreaming going on then, NUS wasn't necessarily the first place you'd look if you wanted to develop Student Community Action. And part of the whole way in which that was happening was around the notion of our saying education is a right and privilege. And I was being corrected about this is when I used to do some other work over at the Institute here. Now you know the belief that we were willing and trying to unite a national model of higher education. And that was part of the forward thinking at the time. So in a sense what were these institutions doing, and we were asking these questions in a sense to try and make it more open, more accountable, more real, and there was that rhetoric going on, no question. As a result of that, I mean after a number of years working in that context, I stepped out of the higher education paradigm if you like, but moving to a sort of street level paradigm if you like, working with parents for twenty years and on educational issues. Got involved with the University of East London which was claiming to be the people's university of the East End, and trying to make some sort of sense of that. And looking to the future very quickly, because there isn't much time. I mean there are issues now that I'm engaged with, and have been for the last twenty or thirty years, around European structural funds, and that's rather a small space for development. Interesting, because this year's a European year against poverty, next year's a European year on volunteering, and at one time you could put volunteering in as match and generate resources, and we're trying to get back to that idea as well. So the European structural funds are an area around social justice, because that's where I've been over the last couple of days, I came back this morning. And their real interest is to link the European structural funds to poverty issues, and the UK is leading on a lot of that. And I think for me, the interest that's developed, how the student community action is a strategy to try and radicalize, change the way institutions relate to their environment and tackle poverty. And that's been the issue that's motivated me.

Erica.

Erica Dunmow: Can I just say in the 80s, yeah sorry. I'd like to come back to the notion of how people identify themselves. I mean SCA in the 80s had funding from the Home Office, from Smith's charity and the Queen's Silver Jubilee Trust. And they were concerned that the money was used well, but actually the way they, although the Home Office actually had an observer at our management group(!) all the time I was there, and I think they found it quite fun actually, we had a good relationship with them! But they wanted to make, you know there was a concern that we might be radical students doing all sorts of stuff with the money. But actually as long as we weren't doing something they didn't like, they didn't set the agenda, and it tended to work like that. And I think what, you know trying to project ahead, I think if we're truthful, Student Community Action during the 1980s was very thinly represented and connected into, it got thinner the further away from university you got. So it got thinner in what were the polys, now the new universities and had limited activists, apart from some exceptions where they had full-time staff. But once you got through to HE in FE, it didn't have much impact at all, although we did try. And I think, I think that's about how does a person identify themselves? And this home based student versus away based student, you know the whole thing about when you were a student, when only about 15, was it about 15% of people went to uni in the 1980s, was it as low as that? When you were like that, you went away from home, you had this whole experience and you immersed in it and you identified as students. And the townspeople saw you as students, you were sort of this, you've used the word town/gown? Is that a label that still makes any sense to anybody now who's at uni? Whereas now I think people much more identify with their social group, you know, and maybe the label 'student' will mean less, as a bigger and bigger proportion of a population in any one area are engaging in higher or FE education. So the important thing that we felt in the 1980s, that SCA should stay an independent organisation, and we had an offer that we would be based with a national youth agency when there was the shift from SCA to SCADU, and we said no, we think it's good the student identity is there, because that's what will, people will identify with when they are students. And I think the really interesting question is you know, that student label has become softer because you've introduced yourself as from Volunteering England, you know, you didn't use the word 'student' there at all. And so I think that's the big question, projecting ahead, how far will the label student be an important identifier for people as individuals? And how far therefore does some kind of student volunteering need to use the student label to attract people to it.

Mike.

Mike Aiken: When you asked your question I thought I'm not going to say anything about that, because I can't possibly advise you, as Alan said it was, you know the era has completely changed. But now I have an idea which actually links back to some of those things that were talked about in the 60s. And I thought well OK, one possibility, obviously maybe ask the students what they want and what the communities want! But I thought one possible model that could be tried out, would be to turn the thing on its head for the beneficiaries, because I think really the main beneficiaries are the students probably. So if you see it that way, and if there is a more individualistic culture and people need, you know they're working in pubs, so they haven't got a lot of time to do the hanging around that we did, but if you take those two things together, then maybe, and the connection with the university, then maybe one way to do something from this mix, if that is the only mix that's there, is to go back to some of the thinking about course related, in a loose way, connections with projects. And I think that the trouble is when that's been done in the UK, I know there's some interesting examples going on, because I came across them at the conference in Manchester, that you and I met at, but one way to think about that would be to think that the, unlike if we make any difference, I think the actual participation with other people, where you do something reflect learn and you're in a group together, I think that is the key thing of what we did. Now if you take that as the key and students as the beneficiary, then what student community action could do is act as the intermediary between the university and community projects and community needs, and think well what do we need in terms of you know sociology, research, da di da, and what can you offer? But as long as that student who does that, maybe a short term project, as long as there's enough connection between the group and those organisations to make sure there's a good fit, and it's not just the cheap labour, and that there's a good relationship so you can see there really is something that a student is

doing, nursing or whatever, tourism, can offer, and it's a piece of work they can do and is a good contribution. But crucially the other elements that the group can do, is to maintain the connection with students doing that kind of work. So they're reflecting, analysing, meeting regularly for socials, you know, the social side's important, and having some input, maybe talks, you know what is this about, how are we going to influence things through this? So that there's a kind of consciousness raising, sorry old fashioned language, element to it, and if one of those elements isn't there, I think it doesn't work. But it could be a way of building and capitalizing on what seems to be the need, and someone gets a credit maybe even for their course or whatever, or that they can manacle their course into a dissertation or whatever on these themes, it could be one way of doing it.

Nick?

Nick Plant: Yeah, Nick, just to pick up on that thing, that direct point there from Mike, to come back to performance indicators and to try to start answering your question, briefly! Some of us are doing those things in HE. And David hasn't commented, but the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement is bringing universities together in terms of ways in which we can strengthen and deepen our connectivity, if I can use that horrible word, between universities and community voluntary sector organisations in all sorts of creative ways, that hit university admission targets as well. In other words we teach and we research. Universities pretty much do those two things, knowledge exchange is bolted on at the end of that, and the third mission kind of, complex arguments, I won't pursue them, but there's a whole agenda there in terms of potential for current universities and some, as I say some of us are doing it, have been trying to do it for ages, to develop curriculum based connections, projects, accredited volunteering, all sorts of things, there's a wealth of possibilities. So just to encourage you, I'd like to pick your brains some more on those ideas. But beware in terms of your point about users and beneficiaries and measuring outcomes and benefits ...

Keith: I didn't quite say that.

Nick Plant: No I know you didn't, but I just wanted to actually not to allay your anxiety, but potentially to exacerbate it! I've witnessed my vice chancellor stand up and give public presentations with Powerpoint stats about numbers of student volunteering hours which, I shouldn't say this because we're not on Chatham House rules are we, but I, so I won't say what I was going to say (laughing), But deconstructing those raw statistics, the rhetoric ...

Keith: So not outcomes.

Nick Plant: No well OK yeah, but that's my point, that we are in a performance indicator culture these days I'm afraid, and that's desperate. So I'm a bit worried about that. But being more positive and to come back to Andrea's question, I think you do need to ask as national organisations, people in universities and people that have strategic roles in universities and university sector, your question, but I think you need to be a bit careful. Earlier on in the afternoon I think I picked up a thread from 60s, 70s, 80s contributors about the extent to which working at community level on empty property or whatever it was, we were doing our thing, we weren't aware of national structures, and they weren't necessarily relevant. No offence to colleagues that were then leading national organisations and etc, fantastic work, but there was a disconnect between local activism and top down national leadership, if I can use that phrase, and I just wanted to chip in the old stuff about bottom up, top down before the end of the afternoon, because actually stuff happens because of bottom up. So your point about 2002 and higher education active communities fund, I hear what you're saying, and that was a huge move on the part of state investment in higher education and student volunteering, and absolutely significant, but in terms of going from that comment to what you said about integration, that might be a perception from a national office, no offence, but the realities at an institutional level about where I can track where those funds were spent in my institution, and coming back to inputs versus outputs, you know, what

you're measuring, the reality is a lot more complex than in, than just it has become integrated. And I would need to, that's why I said, I didn't mean to be sarcastic, that's why I said, that's a whole meeting, that's a whole agenda, how long have you got? It's a really, really important question, but it's now ten to five, so I'm going to shut up on that, to acknowledge the question, but you know it's complex.

Great, I know David did actually have a question, he was name checked there. So David, introduce yourself.

David Owen: Oh thank you – David Owen, National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. One of the interesting themes that I've picked up, certainly a couple today, was the role that you played in actually trying to bring your university with you, and actually to, as activists, to actually make your university more engaged in the work in public and in local communities. And I think that's a really interesting reflection to take forward in terms of Andrea's question about the role of students moving forward. And so it's more of an observation, but I would welcome any sort of further comments on that.

Kelly Drake: Yeah, I was just going to say a few thoughts coming out of this general issue of where we're going, what we're doing, how can you improve what you're doing etc, whatever. I've written down awareness raising as a, you know somebody else said consciousness raising, I think that's a crucial *raison d'être* that will never go away. I've written down movement and network, they're old fashioned terms that I'm using, but I think, I think one of the things that is really vital about student volunteering is taking it from the individual university, to the region, to the area, to the you know national whatever. So you know I don't know what goes on now in terms of that, those things around who is meeting who, who is making what connections as students, but I think that's absolutely crucial, it's not ... It's all old fashioned things, you know for me going to university is not just about a degree, it's about you know, and I know people are working, which is tough, but I think technology changes ways in which people can volunteer as well, which I think is another whole area we could get into going forward. And I think the crucial thing we haven't talked about today is branding actually, because we saw changes, you know talking about models and motivation and all that sort of stuff, got changed or followed, branding followed those motivations, and I think very much it continues to be about how you sell it and who you sell it to, and what people feel that they're going to get out of it really. And I think that sense of being part of something is still really vital to people, young people. You know the research shows that to me. If you think being isolated they need something to bring them together ...

Male: Mm, so it's not old fashioned.

So Graham then Ray.

Graham Allcott: Yeah, just trying to pick up on both Adam's question and Andrea's question and the comments about the National Coordinating Centre and then Kelly's points as well. And what's kind of going through my mind is, you know, we've been talking about the history of student volunteering, student community action, and I kind of feel like there's sort of three different definitions for me. There's the kind of student community action, which is very much about activism and a political edge to that and a political engagement and motivation in there. And then somewhere in the middle there's student leadership, so I'm going to be involved as a student and I'm going to run something, I'm going to be, almost be told by the people who did it the year before how to run it. And then there's placements you know, and being told you know, here's a website that's run by V, there are you know, there's a final hour thing. And almost like you go and consume it. And I'm not saying that one of those things is better than the other two, you know, far from it, I think they all have a place, but I think in terms of just then trying to answer Andrea's question about kind of what next, you know I kind of feel like the student community action activist part, certainly in the second half of the 90s that was the bit, for me, that was on the wane. And maybe part of that is that the wider sort of political context was that people felt like actually we're better off than our mums and dads were. And I think in terms of ten years' time, we are getting to the point now where young people are going to start thinking that they're worse off than their

parents and, both in terms of you know their own sort of personal wealth, and the fact that you know they've just shelled out 1000s into debt to, with the prospect of getting a job that doesn't exist at the end of it, and all those kind of things, the property prices and all that stuff, I think they will start to feel discontent. So I think looking at ten, fifteen years' time, what does that mean for student volunteering? I kind of see we're at a crossroads and it could either go one of two ways. The positive way is you know, is actually that universities play a part in this too, but students start to feel this sense of unrest and start to get active, and the university can play a role in helping those students to go out into communities, and part of that might actually be about you know sort of pro volunteering and sort of helping themselves, in the same way as you know coming back to some of those housing movements in the 70s. The kind of nightmare vision for me would be sort of ten, fifteen years down the line, continuing down this role of students as the passive, and it continuing along the line of being about CV building, and continuing about you know sort of consuming volunteering as a means to get credits because we paid for getting a degree and that's part of it and so on, where there's very little thought I think, for what's achieved at the end of that, what's the outcome, what's the community benefit there? So I think you know, whether we go down the sort of positive route of where we might end up with you know a much more active and sort of reinvigorated idea of student community action, or whether we go down the nightmare route, I suppose depends on your sort of faith in humanity, and I tend to be an optimist. So I'm hoping that's where we go.

OK, we'll take Ray and ...

Ray Phillips: I'm just wanting to drop in on branding really. People certainly around again in the 60s, late 60s when there was this interface if you like, between community action and mainstream student politics, there was certainly a lot of talk around the ideas and writings of people like Marcuse and repressing tolerance and how the universities were places that were essentially passive. What we used in the SCANUS days to animate our own activists as well like at workshops, and there was a guy called Saul Alinsky, and produced a lot of films about the way we're burning Kodak factories down and so on, where does he appear now? He appears as part of the brand of the Big Society, he's coming up through the Tory ranks now, the coalition ranks. So I think there's some real, real dangers in the sorts of ideas coming around here, but there may be also opportunities, and you know that's a very, very fine line, that if we walk that fine line carefully, you might be able to take some advantage of those opportunities.

Alan.

Alan Barr: That's an interesting point, and I expect that whole thing of branding I think is risky and at the same time you've got to have an identity, people have got to know what they're connecting with.

Kelly Drake: – Exactly.

Alan Barr: But the point I wanted to make was who do organizers of student community action look to as their partners in order to create the opportunities for volunteering? And I think we've had a convention which certainly goes back to my era, and I've seen it more recently in the trip to Birmingham we still by and large use professionalized agencies. And out there, as a product of genuine community action, community led action, there are numerous really strong community led organisations that are, if you want to use that term, volunteer organisations, they don't talk about themselves as volunteers, they talk about themselves as people who are active in their communities. But they could be the partners, and I don't think we've done enough to look at the potential. Let me give you one very simple example, it's a very unlikely one, but one of the things from the Scottish Community Development Centre that we ran was something called the Scottish Community Action Research Fund, which funded local community organisations to conduct research about an issue that was affecting them. And we had an application from an unlikely organisation called the Inverclyde Tourism Organisation, and we thought what the hell's this, and what's that got to do with community action? It turned

out to be a group of people from some of the most deprived parts of Inverclyde, which is Greenock, an old shipbuilding town, which is pretty depressed to say the least, who had looked at all these cruise ships that come into Greenock, and dropped people off to go to Loch Lomond, Edinburgh, Rennie MacIntosh, you name it, in Glasgow, never stop in Greenock. And they said but Greenock's got a story to tell, and our story, it's a story of a working class community that built the bloody ships that you come in in! So it's about time that you stopped and looked at what we're doing. And the fascinating thing was that that group did its research, connected up with all sorts of other groups, and we discovered entirely by accident they'd got tourism students from the locality helping them to think through what they were doing, they were using their own children, not necessarily directly, but children from their own communities who had gone off as adolescents to university, to gain a skill in something that became relevant to something that activists in disadvantaged parts of that town were trying to do something about. Now they, none of those people would call themselves volunteers, it was part of something that was about identity, heritage, promotion of place, and who you were and your importance in the world. And you go to that town and watch what happened when the QE2 came in, unbelievable, 25,000 people lining the banks of the river, watching their ship come in. That, for them, was their way of getting back if you like, saying you know you, the products that you're consuming in this affluent society, these mega rich people who are going on these cruises, are the products of our work, we want you to see where it all came from. And I do think there's a lot more we could be doing to say, well where are the communities that are doing things, but for which we could add value, because there are students in universities who do have things to offer, that are a bit more, it could be curriculum related but it doesn't have to be. And I just think we need to start much more from the communities we're in than we do from the students.

OK ...

Ray Phillips: We need to use the word empowerment, it's about empowerment.

OK, just, before I take some more questions from the floor, I'd just like to introduce something that we're kind of, clearly this is the start of the research project really, I'm really keen to hear from you, from both the panel and from the floor about kind of the areas, other themes and issues that perhaps haven't been covered today, that you think are kind of really burning things that haven't been mentioned, and whether there are themes that we can sort of take forward, and, in this project, however that may be, through oral history, through testimony or indeed through kind of written literature that people have, I know a lot of people have stuff in their attics, they've been to look in their attics the last week finding this stuff, and it would be fantastic if we can find a way to share that. But if there are particular themes and burning issues, open it to the floor, and I know there's a question or a comment from Caroline.

Caroline Jackson: I was just going to say that when I was working in student community action in Sheffield, we actually worked in academic departments and with the town, well, city for people to highlight areas of research which they felt required to be done, small, I don't know if other groups did that, but we used to do that frequently, and then feed it in to different departments and try and get support. It took a lot of discussion, but we did get some very useful work, of the same sort, but without you know the same, using their own students rather than, as well as their own students, but they were very able students who were able to contribute to what was required as under graduate dissertations or post graduate dissertations. But it did take a permanent member of staff, myself, jointly funded with the university at the time, I was called community liaison officer and worked with both, and, but it was very valuable, and I'm very sorry it's since gone.

OK, are there any more questions from the floor? I'll just take a couple before we wrap up. Mike?

Mike Locke: Yeah, Mike Lock, Volunteering England. Just a sort of feeling the kind of position we're reaching in a way of sort of satisfaction that the kind of the best outcome was the results for the students and there's sort of issues with student identity with that. And I think, having kind of settled on that position today, it's

something we should come back to and examine again really. And also to think about whether there are ways in which, what students did for their voluntary action or community action, took on leadership roles in terms of thinking or of social action, politics, community politics whatever it was. It feels from, to me just kind of from sitting here, a lot as though, that what was going on was working within the context at the time, sort of the leadership ideas might have come from somewhere else and were picked up by the student movement rather than places where the students took the lead. I'd like to just check that out ...

Any more from the floor? Tony.

Tony Cooke: Yeah, Tony Cooke from Lancaster. I was Community Action officer as they called me university and student union. There seemed like a lot of talk earlier on about motivations, and I was community action officer from 77, I'd been a student there from 73. By the early 80s I was saying, well, there's as many motivations as there are student volunteers, and that's, whatever your research topic, that's what it's going to have to be happy with. Don't try and waste any more bloody time on it, because that's the answer. Mike touched on, Mike Aiken touched on some of them, especially when he said guilt, but it's a duty and religion, people's spirituality is another thing you've missed out so far, but there are many motivations. And I also believed by 1980 and I have no reason to change my mind but I would have said that if there were a 100 units of benefit to be derived from a piece of voluntary work, I'd say at least 50% go to student, go to the individual. But I don't think, I mean if, what you were saying though Mike is if it's all looking a little bit self-interested, I don't ...

Mike Locke – I don't think I used the word self-interest.

Tony Cooke – I don't it was, I think it was altruism, and it is the right thing to do to try and help people, and Mike Day put it very well before that you know what we try to do in particular is shift people to the left (laughing). But there are some, I mean you know we always chalked it up on notice board as a score when someone said, I'm not going to do physics any longer, I'm going to train as a social worker (laughing) Or someone would say you know my aim in life is to kill all the rich people. Is it? Exactly 100%! Well done. (laughing) But there are some lasting benefits which have come out, certainly of the Lancaster experience. In 1975 when as a student we had student community action week, we, which was in place of Rag week using the precedent set by Birmingham much earlier. One of the things we were asked to do, and there were six colleges at the time, and people were interested in the sort of college by college, one was a vagrancy survey. And what was borne out of that, social services were particularly interested in that. What came out of that was Night Shelter, it was a voluntary organisation that was set up, I had the great privilege of working in that Night Shelter from 1977 onwards, when I had left university as a student, come back as community action officer ? 85. And that provided temporary accommodation, only for a couple of people, it was before the Thatcher experiment in trying to chuck everyone out their council house! But it lasted for 30 years, and it achieved an awful lot. Another thing that happened is I was approached as community action officer in 77 by a social worker, mental health social worker, who said I've noticed you've been running some films and talks on mental health issues and we did lots of these things? Yes, were they well attended, yes, do you think there'd be an interest in students supporting a notion that we have, us social workers and nurses in a large mental hospital in Lancaster, in setting up a local branch of MIND because we really, really need one, because we've got a huge mental hospital up there, and the lives of patients if we're not careful, are constantly being eroded and also social workers and nurses can't do much about that, but we could via MIND. So I don't know, we'll find out. We did get students involved in that, and thanks to student volunteers who put in a lot of work and a local branch of MIND was set up. And that only folded a couple of years ago because MIND have, like a lot of other third sector organisations, going very private and business-like, and local volunteers couldn't cope with that, it wasn't what they were doing. But out of MIND, the pressure that came from the MIND group and set up group homes, they set up visiting schemes which our students were involved with, and they set up a social group once a week, and many of the service users at the time were expressing a need for a day centre, and that MIND

pressure from service users and their carers was brought to bear with another organisation which was called North West Fellowship and was set up a day centre of which I'm still manager. We've been there for 24 ½ years, we're about to close, the last year has been hell on earth, we've been fighting like bloody hell against these bastards in the county council and the PCT who are slowly commissioning all these third sector, and they're privatizing everything, we're losing it and to be honest with you, some of the users' voices is transmitting back to me, and people say to me. It has saved my life. And there have been knock on effects, there have been permanent, permanent knock on effects for the good, for the good of everyone, not just the self interest of students.

Fantastic, thank you very much. I think I'd just like to finish by just asking the table, the panel just to go round once more and offer very brief, if that's OK, kind of final reflections upon kind of what we've discussed today, whether that be something about themes and issues that we should take forward, or whether it's something about the future for student volunteering and the role of a national infrastructure in that. It would be fantastic if you could just sort of briefly wrap up and then we can have a drink and keep talking.

Debbie Ellen: OK, Debbie Ellen – I think for me one of the most interesting topics this afternoon has been the discussion about coming back, actually it seems to me it's come full circle, and we've come back to something I think Alan mentioned very early on, because I actually wrote it down, and he talked about pushing the idea of community related curriculum to make university relevant to the local community, as something that we were doing in the 1960s. And it seems to me that that actually is what needs to be happening in the future.

Thanks.

Erica Dunmow – I think the thing we haven't touched on is the profile of students who volunteer compared with the main body of students. I mean we talked quite a bit in the 80s and certainly in the 90s about equal opps issues. I mean I'd be interested to see, I mean Annajoy David who was employed through the 1980s as somebody from an ethnic minority background, you know whether having different role models and leadership did impact in a way that we hoped it might in terms of the range of students who volunteered. Or whether it tends to be, even now, students from a kind of more middle-class background who identify with volunteered. So that seems to be something we haven't touched on.

Thank you, Mike.

Mike Aiken: Yeah I was going to say what Erica said! Yeah, I think when I was working nationally, I think gender issues and the kind of women's movement was very strong. And I think race and race development were, had not moved on to the stage of community action level. So I think I was quite influenced by those, and they may be interesting things to explore their way through community action generally. And picking up on, I suppose sort of picking up on Mike Locke's point again. I think the other thing that for me is maybe critical, is I actually don't think it doesn't matter very much what the work that is done, because I think there is 1000s of different ways of doing it. So I think a critical theme is to process a method of participation and leadership and diff, and the way the group works and what the, almost what the ideology is of how they're going to work together. Because actually if it's collective thinking, reflective work, pretty soon people will take their own directions, they won't, they'll do volunteering one to one or they'll do whatever they want. But if there's that locus, and it's what kind of ideological structure there is to the organising and creating the space for people to talk and discuss, I think that is critical, so tracing that theme might be quite interesting.

Thank you.

Graham Allcott: Yeah two comments, one's a sort of practical thing and one's a personal thing. The sort of practical thing that I think we haven't talked a lot about today that would be really useful to spend a bit more

time on would be thinking, or as Mike was just saying the models and the spaces that you were just saying, like I think there's often been a sense of Student Community Action, the student led part of that has been very much centred around the older institutions, the you know the sort of Russell Group, sort of red brick type universities, and the newer universities tended to then adopt other models and more disparate models. And I think student volunteering generally probably now is more disparate, so you've got medicine, medical students, you've got People and Planet that you know has a kind of centre, you know who will rally around that as a brand and want to be involved in that. Read International is another one where it's a very specific thing, St John's, all those kind of things. They're not necessarily institutions under the banner of student volunteering or student community action. So I think just you know the history of some of those almost like sub-groups of student volunteers and where they sit or have sat within the kind of wider student volunteering movement if you like. And my sort of personal thing to take away I suppose is, it's really given me a fire in my belly today actually, because I've spent nine years in student volunteering, both as a student volunteer and also working in that particular sector, movement, whatever you want to call it, whatever's the sort of word to use now. But I mean I suppose it just, you know today has really, really sort of fired up my passion for why I did that, why I got involved, and you know what both I achieved and what was achieved beyond that as well.

Thank you.

Nick Plant: I was going to say something quite similar, because I'd like us to continue these conversations. I've got a bit of fire in the belly from this myself and I think I can see that moving forward, but I can see that as continuing, but I can also see that as something that I can take back to my institution, to link with what I'm doing in these directions that we've been talking about. So the personal and the professional benefits, I can envisage personal and professional benefits through continued participation in this very nice process, very appropriate process. So we talk about participation, I'm a willing participant in this, I said to you during the break, and I meant it, I want to write up my story, and not through nostalgia or loft clearing (laughing) but you know to digitize some of the stuff and to make that available, so to continue the conversation, so that my story can be used, or not, by others, but so that I can help make sense in my own story and to link that with others, as I say both personally and professionally, and that's coming back to that kind of common cause kind of thing that I said way back at the beginning. So let's keep it going.

Thank you.

Alan Barr: There's so many things you could say! One thing that's been, I've been struggling with throughout this discussion, and it's been a fascinating discussion, I've enjoyed it too, is what's happening to the universities themselves, not as locations for volunteering, but as institutions. And having worked in one for a long time or being connected to two of them for quite a long time, I know that our lives were driven by research output and research assessment, teaching was secondary, but it was sort of vaguely of interest to people. And the university's kind of ethos was all about the elite departments get the money because they score 5s and 5*s in the RAE assessment, and what does connecting to the community have to do with any of that? And I say this with a degree of bitterness. And to be perfectly honest, I was obviously entered for the RAE as a member of staff, I was seconded out, and have been seconded out of the university for ten years completely, to work with the Scottish Community Development Centre, which is a development centre, it's a practice development centre, but we do a lot of work which is focused on action based research and so on. And we did some really interesting stuff for Govt, particularly around outcome based planning and evaluation and community development which was, the Govt spent £1million on this stuff. The university would not touch it as something that was relevant for the RAE. And I was just appalled that here we are, university which, I'm thinking of Strathclyde which I've been with for the last two years, calls itself 'a place of useful learning', that's its tag! And I say to myself, so what was not useful about doing something about, is being used across the country by a whole variety of people, hopefully to help them improve the quality of what they're doing. But it was dismissed because it didn't have the conventional academic route to its production. And the fact that we

involve lots of other people, particularly people from communities with no academic qualifications whatsoever in the development of it, brought it out. And I do think we might be facing a situation in the future of loss of funding to the universities which we can exploit, I think we need to be offered some challenges. And I was interested in the, if anybody's been involved in Cumbria, but I was in a session at the University of Cumbria did on its relationship with the community. Why was it doing it? Because it's in a mess, it's in dire straits financially, very interesting.

Can I interrupt you, sorry, I'm conscious of time. So last word to Rich.

Rich Lott: Yeah, I think it's quite, I want to try and be positive about the future of volunteering, student volunteering, especially student campaigning. I think there's, you know the issues of climate change, it's getting closer, the global issues are getting closer to people, more and more people are concerned. And I think there's an opportunity there for more opportunities, giving them meaningful opportunities to engage, and more than just a usual crowd. We've just finished a two year project looking at ways to engage FE and BAME students in, because they, you know we know that these people, just like everybody else that's been involved previously, care about the issues, and so we've had some success in learning new ways to engage people, and I think, I think you know one of the things that People and Planet has done really well is, in terms of this brand thing, is that we almost have to write to the network and ask if we can put a logo on something, it's, they own it, like the student led thing, that has to be, had to be where it is, that's where the energy is, that's where organisations should be led from.

Thank you.

Kelly Drake: The only bit I really wanted to add that we haven't sort of talked about really is what the vision is. I think it's great to talk about what we've all done and what we've enjoyed and what we learnt and stuff, but actually we need to use that to go forward. And you guys who are running the student volunteering body need to set a really ambitious vision, based on some of what these people are saying, what I'm saying, etc, but really what you think, because you're at the cutting edge now, and you're working with young people you know, I know there's academics here as well, but you're working with student volunteers, you know what, the trickiness of timing, all those issues. So it's about being clever I think. And I think the other thing we haven't talked about, so it's about setting a really exciting vision and ambitious vision, but also how that links into Government now, because I think that's where in the 90s I, you know, there was an opportunity, we ran with it and we got some really good stuff from it. I think that's going to be really tricky now. And I think the student led thing might be the thing to revisit really, and get fire in those young people's belly, to reinvigorate it.

Thanks, final comment?

Mike Day: Right, rapidly, rapidly, higher education will fundamentally change within the next ten years, the structure of degrees, the types of student going, it will be mainly home based probably, but that's an opportunity to maybe lock them into their communities a whole lot more and get them involved in, they will be involved in things in the community, but equally you want to get those ones that aren't yet. You may have one year degrees, two year degrees, three year degrees, and maybe the three year degrees will be the slightly wealthier student who can afford that full experience. But there's still no harm in exposing them to this because it will change them. So that's it.

Very succinct, thank you. Ray.

Ray Phillips: Right, I mean again just a small window to open or not, and go back to what I was saying earlier, European structural funds. Interesting thing at the moment, Govt funding all round is contracting, they don't have the same controls over the European structural funds, they're set for seven years at a time. There are

discussions going on at the moment about the relationship between employment and poverty, and they're trying to develop strategies around that. There's a sense, and a radical sense in which higher educational institutions are part of the way in which people develop their professional skills, and that's an important strategy that can also be spread. It seems to me that out in the community there are a lot of very small community-based projects that are funded out of European funds right across the country, that are looking for allies and friends to develop their work, and it seems to me there should be far more partnership going on between students coming out of higher education institutions and those working in the community, trying to develop street level projects.

Fantastic. Well just to say thank you very much to all the speakers today. Just a couple of words about where this is going from here. In terms of this witness seminar, we're going to get the, hopefully good quality digital recordings transcribed, circulate those amongst the speakers just to kind of check people's, that people are happy with what's been said. And then hopefully kind of move to writing this up and publishing this on the web somewhere, so it is available as a public document, provided everybody is happy with that. So that's just the immediate outputs out of this piece of work. Secondly, we are kind of continuing with, both Adam and I, I don't know if I've kind of introduced Adam at the back who's been doing all the IT, well the technological bit, just to say thank you very much, Adam's based at Student Hubs and we've been working together for the last sort of six months really, on trying to develop a project around looking at the history and looking back at the history as a way of seeing how we can move forward. I think we're really, we see it as a way of sort of looking at how we move forward, and it's not just about wallowing in the past and reflecting upon the past, fascinating though that is. So we have a working group that we'd be very interested to hear from other people about joining, which is sort of composed of academics, of research students, of people who have, work in student volunteering, and people who are generally interested, that's been meeting, that's kind of guiding this piece of work. And the next thing that we're doing is having, on the 25th November, a sort of a one day symposium where people will kind of present more academic papers based on their research into various aspects, over a much broader period, looking at it from the late 19th century, as I mentioned at the start. So it would be fantastic to see anybody there, and we hope that will also be a kind of free event, and you'd be welcome to come. And please do stay, have a drink now and then we'll go to the pub across the road. And please stay in touch with us because we're keen to hear about your experiences as well. Very quickly Andrea.

Andrea Rannard: If you're interested to find out about what work we're doing in student volunteering, please get in touch, our cards are at the back, you're more than welcome to come in, meet with us, we'll take you out for lunch! (laughing) And also it's student volunteering week the 21st to the 27th February, it's the 10th anniversary next year, we'd love for everybody here to fill in a pledge to give your support to students volunteering, and student volunteering week. And also we'd love to contact you about being a student volunteering week ambassador. OK. But we can send you more information, but please do get involved.

OK, thanks for the plug there Andrea! OK I'd like to say the formal part of this is over, we've got some drinks at the back, let's go and (clapping) (END OF RECORDING)