Article

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‘People just dae wit they can tae get by’: Exploring the half-life of deindustrialisation in a Scottish community

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Abstract

This article practically applies Sherry-Lee Linkon’s ‘half-life of deindustrialisation’ thesis in examining a deindustrialising Scottish community. Linkon contends that, while the most visibly toxic impacts of deindustrialisation have dissipated over time, its lingering effects continue to cause harm in more subtle ways. Utilising qualitative research from a national study on the community impacts of organised crime, I consider the ways in which the long-term legacies of deindustrialisation and disinvestment manifest in the lived experiences of residents of Tunbrooke (pseudonym). I assess three areas where Linkon’s half-life can be observed in Tunbrooke: the physical environment; poverty, addiction and mental ill-health; and external stigmatisation. I argue that, for those living in Tunbrooke, these processes shape their day-to-day lives, along with the omnipresent threat posed by organised crime and regular episodes of violence. However, rather than passively accepting this, there is opposition to the external view of the locality as ‘a violent shithole’, with an emphasis on the kinship and solidarity through adversity. I argue that the responses of Tunbrooke residents are framed through a lasting communal working-class identity, which has been strengthened as the area experienced the fallout of the half-life of deindustrialisation and the recent impacts of political austerity.

Keywords

austerity, deindustrialisation, half life, Scotland, solidarity

Introduction

In this article, I deploy Sherry-Lee Linkon’s (2018) concept of the ‘half-life of deindustrialisation’ as a theoretical framework to understand contemporary life, emotional attachment and belonging in a peripheral urban community in Scotland. For Linkon, the socio-economic problems caused by deindustrialisation continue to cause subtle but

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significant harms within deindustrialising communities long after closure. Due to the nature of the study, the area under investigation has been completely anonymised, referred to here as 'Tunbrooke', a pseudonym for a real place in central Scotland. Through an analysis of respondents' perspectives on the dilapidated physical environment, underinvestment, substance abuse and poverty, I argue that the long-term harms caused by deindustrialisation are worsening, and this has had a significant impact on the emotions of class and place-based identities, five decades after the tsunami of industrial closures.

In an effort to conceptualise the lingering effects of deindustrialisation, Linkon draws a theoretical comparison with toxic waste. In nuclear physics, the 'half-life' is the time it takes for the 'slow decline of toxicity' in radioactive material. Once this decline has completed, the remaining material remains toxic, but in less obvious and visible ways. Applying this to deindustrialisation, Linkon (2018, p. 6) asserts that:

> In its half-life, deindustrialization may not be as poisonous as radioactive waste, though high rates of various illnesses as well as alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide suggest that it does manifest itself as physical disease. Equally important, though, the half-life of deindustrialization generates psychological and social forms of disease, as individuals and communities struggle with questions about their identities and their place in a global economy that has devalued workers and their labor.

In this framework, deindustrialisation is not a historic event, but continues to be a significant force in shaping contemporary society. She argues convincingly that, as the material conditions of the present are shaped by the material and social remnants of the industrial and deindustrial past, communities that suffered from economic rupture are 'not post anything': deindustrialisation is as much a factor in shaping the *present* as it is a historic process. Jay Emery (2019, p. 6) argues similarly that, within communities impacted by closure, 'the process of ruination is ongoing and extends out to . . . housing, institutions, social spaces, and topographies'. In this article I deploy respondent narratives through the half-life framework. I consider its toxicity in shaping life in a peripheral deindustrialising community, to provide a snapshot of life in a community that has been 'consigned to theoretical irrelevance' (Preece, 2020, p. 828) in the post-closure period. To do so, I focus on three aspects of life in Tunbrooke as expressed by respondents: the decaying urban environment; addiction and substance abuse; and poverty/lack of opportunity. I argue that the half-life framework is crucial in understanding deindustrialising communities and the emotions of those who continue to live among ruination. Crucially, the research suggests that, rather than dissipating over time, the effects of deindustrialisation's lingering toxicity are *worsening* in Tunbrooke. Whilst the structural violence of deindustrialisation is crucial in explaining the problems faced by Tunbrooke residents, its political (mis)management and legislative attacks have compounded these further. (see Bambra et al., 2019). As a result, I argue that there is a vicious 'cycle of the half-life' that is worsening the structural violence of multiple socio-economic problems in Tunbrooke, and this is likely replicated in similar communities globally (see High, 2018). They are now so embedded, and seen as so incurable, that those who live in the areas do not expect their improvement, and the agencies with the ability to make meaningful

change do not dare become involved as it is seen as an impossible task. For those living in communities like Tunbrooke, the problems initially caused by deindustrialisation are becoming worse during the half-life. This has had a substantial emotional impact on the working-class residents of Tunbrooke, expressed through shame, anger, resistance and the formulation of place-based identities.

Methods: Anonymous narratives of deprivation and ruination

The methodological approach in this study offers an interesting perspective in analysing experiences of the half-life. Many authors have detailed the significance of community stigmatisation for those living within the ruins of deindustrialisation, and the accompanying issues of crime, deprivation, health inequality and poor environment (for a further discussion see Emery, forthcoming; Jones, 2012; Russo & Linkon, 2003). These factors can make it difficult for researchers to engage with respondents due to a valid concern that projects will compound popular stigma and reinforce the external perspectives on their communities. The research outlined here emerged from a Scottish Government-funded project examining the community impacts of serious organised crime (Fraser et al., 2018). The 'Community Experiences of Serious and Organised Crime' project (2016–2018) was one of the first studies to gather local perspectives within areas with a significant organised crime presence. Eight geographic fieldsites were selected across Scotland to capture the range of experiences based on urban/rural localities, geographic differences vis-a-vis proximity to Scotland's metropolitan centres, historical traditions of criminal enterprise, and the mobile routes of organised crime across county lines. I was the sole full-time researcher and was responsible for the majority of community-based ethnographic fieldwork. The data collection was qualitative, utilising interview approaches from sociology, criminology and oral history to record narratives of day-to-day life within the fieldsites, gain perspectives on the historical changes over time, and understand the pervasiveness of organised crime in shaping these. In Tunbrooke, we interviewed 49 respondents in total, comprising 24 current/former residents and 25 local service providers (for more discussion, see Fraser et al., 2018). The age and gender demographics of community respondents are shown in Table 1.

Due to the focus of the research being on organised criminality in areas with embedded crime groups and known nominals, as well as an atmosphere of intimidation and violence, layers of anonymisation were crucial at all stages in the research and dissemination process. Individual anonymity has been guaranteed, and respondents are identified by false names. Due to the level of risk for researchers and participants, it was also necessary to anonymise the localities. As a result, all of the fieldsites have been given pseudonyms and their social, economic, environmental and geographic descriptions are sufficiently vague to prevent identification. The protocols of geographic anonymisation were discussed at length with everyone who participated in the research, as there were genuine concerns over being identified by organised crime groups as taking part. As discussed more fully in the sections below, 'Tunbrooke' is a well-known area in Scotland's central-belt that has become a byword for a range of social problems. These

Table 1. Demographic profile of community participants.

M	F	< 18	18–30	31–50	51–75	Total
10	14	2	4	13	5	**24**

perspectives emerged as a contentious issue for many of those interviewed, and participation was often hesitant until the protocols of geographic anonymisation were explained fully. For many, there were understandable concerns that a well-publicised report focused on the area, and the problems of crime and deprivation, would further compound stigmatising discourses. Anonymity helped to allay these concerns. Another aspect that facilitated participation and the development of rapport was my own background, coming from the town of Greenock, a severely deprived and similarly renowned, stigmatised community.[1] When analysing the data, it became apparent that this rapport, the open-ended style of interview questioning, and the guarantee of community anonymisation, allowed for extensive discussion on the problems in the areas that would have been less likely had Tunbrooke been named. Rather than an identifiable locality, the role of Tunbrooke in this article allows for an examination of narratives collected without concerns over the reputational risk to a community frequently referred to in the national press as a 'warzone' (interview with Barry, West Tunbrooke resident).

As a result of this approach, the article offers important insights into the contemporary lived experience of a peripheral deindustrialising neighbourhood, shifting the focus away from the large, well-known cities that dominate the majority of the literature (Preece, 2020, p. 828). Whilst the research did not explicitly set out to examine the legacies of manufacturing contraction in its design, as Tomlinson (2016, p. 77) argues, deindustrialisation in Britain has been 'so significant in its effects, economic, social, and political, that it should be central to our narratives'. Throughout the fieldwork and data analysis, it became apparent that many of the social and economic problems in all of the communities we worked with could be traced back to the brutality of deindustrialisation in the later twentieth century, and had been accentuated through the 'political attacks against the working-class' in the subsequent decades (Bambra et al., 2019). The rich narrative data allowed us to analyse experiences of the half-life 'through the eyes of individuals, people who are living with the effects of economic restructuring' (Linkon, 2018, p. 130).

In the sections below, I have presented the narrative of respondents in the dialect they were spoken during the interview, to maintain the 'meaningful marks of regional, class, or personal identity and history' present in how people speak (Portelli, 1991, p. 83). This is an area of tension in Scotland, and I agree with linguist Ally Heather's (2019) argument that Scots language is 'derided as incomprehensible . . . contributing to a complex pattern of code-switching in which a speaker might use Scots with friends' but shift when feeling the need to 'speak properly'. In publishing from the interviews collected, I do not feel it is my place to 'polish' the language of my narrators. However, in recognising the accessibility issues that this might cause for those for whom English isn't their first language, I have put each quote into standardised England online.[2]

Deindustrialisation in Scotland and Tunbrooke

Deindustrialisation has played a significant role in Scottish society since its effects were first felt in the latter part of the twentieth century. Throughout the 1980s in particular, the west of Scotland's experience of industrial decline was more brutal than most other areas of Britain (Fraser & Clark, 2021), which Phillips attributes to a failure of government policy in managing manufacturing closures. Between 1960 and 1975, 10,000 Scottish men were losing manufacturing jobs every year, and this doubled to 20,000 between 1979 and 1987 (Knox, 1999, p. 110). Women's employment in textiles and clothing manufacturing similarly collapsed; importantly, three of the most militant battles fought against closure in Scotland in this period were led by women manufacturing workers in 1981 and 1982 (Clark, 2022). Throughout the first half of the 1980s, 613 manufacturing sites closed across Scotland, leading to the loss of 164,000 jobs (Dickson & Judge, 1987). This tsunami of closure caused unemployment, poverty and deprivation to skyrocket in communities where industrial production dominated. For example, in Greenock – a town historically centred on shipbuilding, sugar refinery and textiles – there were 43 unemployed people per advertised vacancy in 1986, the result of decades of manufacturing contraction (Clark, 2022).

These experiences have played a significant role in shaping the narrative of Scotland's recent past. As Gibbs (2021, p. 1) notes, 'deindustrialisation's impact was as keenly felt in cultural and political terms as it was economically'. The manifestations of the half-life of deindustrialisation are evident in a number of communities across Scotland. Former industrial areas have been found to have particular concentrations of poor health, including high levels of addiction, poverty, unemployment and suicide. For example in Greenock, in the County of Inverclyde, the town's long-term trajectory post-closure maps closely with these trends. Throughout the 2010s, unemployment in Inverclyde remained higher than average and, in 2020 (pre-pandemic), the area had the third-highest rate of unemployment in Scotland. In 2020, Central Inverclyde had the highest number of drug-related hospital stays in Scotland, demonstrating the impact of addiction and substance abuse throughout the district (BBC News Online, 2021). Drug addiction is one of the clearest manifestations of the half-life across Scotland, and the country has the highest rate of drug-related deaths in Europe. With the map of deprivation in central Scotland aligning closely with that of industrial decline (Fraser et al., 2018), the story of drug abuse, poverty and deprivation is concomitantly that of deindustrialisation and its half-life.

Tunbrooke shares many similarities with towns like Greenock. The area is a peripheral urban conurbation in Scotland's densely-populated central-belt, with a population of approximately 14,000. Tunbrooke is comprised of two bordering areas, referred to here as East and West Tunbrooke, and these have different historical trajectories in regard to industry and urban development. East Tunbrooke was built up during the nineteenth century following the opening of a large foundry on former farmland. A programme of housebuilding was undertaken to accommodate the workers moving into the area, transforming it from rural hinterland to major industrial centre. Population rocketed from fewer than 50 to over 10,000 in a 20-year period at the end of the nineteenth century. As was common in industrialising Scotland, housing demand outstripped supply, and East

Tunbrooke suffered from high levels of overcrowding and slum conditions. Throughout the early twentieth century, the foundry continued to provide steady, albeit dangerous work for East Tunbrooke's male population. As well as the foundry, other opportunities for industrial employment were available nearby. Similar to many areas built up around industry in the period, leisure facilities were developed along with population growth including greenspace, a high street, two cinemas and a number of pubs and cafes.

West Tunbrooke was planned and built following the Second World War, when a number of initiatives were undertaken to disperse population and industry away from overcrowded urban centres in central Scotland. The area of West Tunbrooke was selected for extensive council housing development due to the availability of land, its close proximity to employment opportunities in East Tunbrooke and existing public transport links. Housebuilding began in 1946, with the construction of 500 cottages followed by 1000 new dwellings in 1950. Further expansion and development, particularly the construction of high-rise flats in the 1960s and 1970s, significantly increased its area and population.

Over the last half-century, Tunbrooke has suffered the brunt of deindustrialisation's impacts in the short, medium and long term. The foundry that dominated East Tunbrooke closed in the late 1960s, and this left the area with vast swathes of contaminated land, high unemployment and a declining population. The closure of the foundry was compounded by the downsizing of other industries in the nearby area that could have absorbed some of the labour force. The crisis of unemployment in Scotland throughout the 1980s increasingly restricted opportunities for people in Tunbrooke to gain steady, regular employment without the need for relocation. The immediate impacts of closure, the 'destruction of working class towns and neighbourhoods' (High, 2013) through the process of deindustrialisation, and the growth in gang-related activity, contributed to Tunbrooke becoming regarded as one of Scotland's most notoriously deprived and dangerous places (Fraser et al., 2018). According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) in 2016, when the research was undertaken, Tunbrooke was recorded as being 'generally very deprived' across all health, social and economic indicators. The area comprised 17 SIMD datazones in 2016; all were in the top 20% of Scotland's most deprived areas, and 11 were in the top 5%. For people in Tunbrooke, their lives are shaped by the ruins of deindustrialisation, *as well as* the social ruins that have permeated the community in the decades since closure. Through analysing the interviews with those who live and work in Tunbrooke, this toxicity is evident in four interconnected areas: poor urban environment, substance abuse, poverty and lack of opportunity.

From industrial ruination to community dilapidation

The first area where the lingering toxicity of the half-life becomes apparent in the narratives of Tunbrooke's residents is its physical, environmental legacies. The deterioration of the built environment is a fundamental physical manifestation of deindustrialisation's half-life in working-class communities. Whilst there is extensive literature on the uses and misuses of former industrial sites (see High, 2013; Strangleman, 2014) I am concerned here about how the physical environment impacts those who live among these

ruins. As Mah (2012) argues, such sites are not merely places to be ogled at, photographed and debated; they are communities where people continue to live and work. Linkon (2018, p. 18) positions the decaying environment as central in her half-life thesis, demonstrating how people's life experiences are shaped by living 'amid boarded up store fronts, abandoned factories, crumbling houses, and empty spaces'. Pre-fieldwork analysis revealed that Tunbrooke suffers from the physical scars of deindustrialisation, particularly waste ground, crumbling buildings and toxic land. An environmental report illustrated that there was waste ground within 500 m of any geographical point in Tunbrooke. When walking through the area, you immediately encounter extensive derelict spaces, deteriorating or abandoned buildings, and a decaying high street. As with many characteristics of the half-life, this is not unique to Tunbrooke; in areas across deindustrialising Scotland, communities have been left to ruin following the closure of industry, with investment focused on newer ventures as opposed to maintaining those 'left behind' (Mah, 2010; see also Preece, 2020).

The physical state of Tunbrooke emerged as a central point of reflection during the interviews. When asked about what it was like to live and work in the community, respondents' attention was not focused solely on violence and crime, but on the general environment of Tunbrooke as a place. It is important to note that in these discussions, the respondents are not primarily discussing abandoned *industrial* sites, as those had mostly been demolished decades earlier. Rather, in deindustrialisation's half-life, experiences are shaped by 'the more ordinary deterioration of surrounding neighbourhoods' (Linkon, 2018, p. 104). Fiona, a charity worker in East Tunbrooke, reflected on her experience of the area having been based there for a few years:

> We [charity] moved here a few years ago. I suppose what I've noticed is how much derelict space there is. . . There's a big care home that's closed down in the last six months, it's all boarded up and it's next to a big bit of derelict grounds that no-one's doing anything with, it's just an overgrown jungle. . . there's lots of big gaps, it's like teeth have fallen out. And there's lots of old buildings that are looking derelict. . . So, to me, it feels like it's getting a bit more empty, things have closed. . . it still feels, there's a lot of tumbleweed areas. . . there's a lot of rubble, and things have been flattened and haven't been cleared away very well. . . That must have an impact on children and families growing up in the area.

In this excerpt, the perspective of someone with no historical attachment to Tunbrooke, and who did not live there at the time of the interview, illustrates the severity of physical abandonment throughout the community. Importantly, in Fiona's relatively short time in Tunbrooke, it had become increasingly empty and derelict. Her use of language is important, and her imagery encapsulates the impacts of the poor environment. Her comparison with an 'overgrown jungle' illustrates a wild, uncultivated landscape rather than an urban conurbation in Scotland's densely populated central-belt. Her phrase that it is like 'teeth have fallen out' shows how uncoordinated destruction has left the area looking messy, dirty and unclean. And where deteriorating buildings *are* demolished, the detritus remains. Tunbrooke, like many peripheral neighbourhoods, is not undergoing processes of regeneration or gentrification; what is destroyed is not replaced or tidied up to improve the general environment, but the mess is left behind, making whole areas appear 'like

tumbleweed' would roll past, the classic cinematic image to depict emptiness and wilderness. This perspective also dominated the reflections of Maria, a lifelong resident of West Tunbrooke, who was in her mid-20s at the time of the research:

> There's so much spare groon in West Tunbrooke, there's so many places that are dilapidated. . . only recently ah've seen new hooses go up. It was as if they were rippin everythin doon for ages and naw putting anything up. There wis so much spare groon. Ripped down the high school, primary schools, ripped doon the special needs school, ripped doon the community centre. And it was just as if they wurnae building anything in its place for a long time. . . It does just look kinda forgotten aboot. It looks as if naeone is putting the effort in tae make it look better. . . It feels like it's just pure spare groon everywhere. It's like a self-fulfilling prophecy: we think that people think it's bad, so we think it's bad, so naebody really bothers tae dae anything aboot it.

Maria's narrative shares many similarities with Fiona's. Again, the use of language is illuminating. Her experience is of constant destruction, of buildings being 'ripped doon' and growing emptiness. The places that were 'ripped' out in Tunbrooke were key infrastructure, such as schools and community centres. The 'development' of Tunbrooke was not regeneration, improvement of place image (Clark & Gibbs, 2020) or gentrification. In Maria's experience, Tunbrooke has witnessed constant destruction and demolition, with growing swathes of waste ground and dilapidation. Through the interview, she made reference to nearby areas that had witnessed regeneration efforts and environmental improvement. The lack of these in Tunbrooke makes the area seem 'forgotten aboot': a community belonging to a different historical period and undeserving of improvement. This feeds into her notion of the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' – insiders and outsiders believe that Tunbrooke is bad, an area to avoid and where investment does not go beyond destruction, therefore nobody bothers to do anything about it. Tunbrooke, and the community who remain, are 'forgotten'. This sense that no energy is spent on improving Tunbrooke, contributing to negative external perspectives, was discussed by Luke, another lifelong resident of West Tunbrooke in his mid-20s at the time of the research:

> The [empty houses] along here, their windaes are aw smashed so, somebody like yersel that's naw fae Tunbrooke, tae walk doon the street, it looks rough. . . this place could be better.

In this excerpt, Luke clearly positions me as the outsider, the visitor to Tunbrooke who will have been forming opinions during my walk to his house. This is despite a pre-interview conversation where I talked about my own background being from a working-class area in Greenock, and the similar issues in our communities. At this point, though, he signals the extent of dilapidation in the area, and that someone 'naw fae Tunbrooke' would walk along the street and instantly form an opinion that the area looks rough, rundown, and not a place where you'd choose to spend much time. These excerpts are representative of many conversations had during the research process. For those living and working in Tunbrooke 'the deterioration of the built environment is a defining feature of the half-life' (Linkon, 2018, p. 18). Despite the focus of the research being on organised crime, and the harms caused by criminality, when asked about their experiences of living and working in Tunbrooke, its poor physical condition dominated the

discussion. For the respondents, Tunbrooke is neglected, abandoned and dilapidated. These issues are not purely historic, but are ongoing, and were accentuated as a result of the austerity agenda of the UK Government post-2010. In Tunbrooke during our research, large swathes of the area were still being demolished, and there appeared little inward investment to replace what was being taken away. There are many former industrial areas in Scotland that have been regenerated – such as on Glasgow's Clydeside where concert venues and hotels have replaced shutdown shipyards – but for communities like Tunbrooke, there is no capitalist imperative for inward investment or improving place image. Those who remain are fully aware that their communities 'urnae nice' places.

The half-life and the body and mind

The physical legacies of the half-life also manifest themselves on the bodies and minds of those who live amid the ruins of closure (see McIvor, 2017; Storey, 2017). In her discussion, Linkon (2018, p. 2) argues that, as well as the environmental impacts, 'high rates of various illnesses as well as alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide suggest that it [half-life] does manifest itself in physical disease'. Bambra et al. (2019, p. 39) similarly assert that, in the US, deindustrialisation has played an important role in explaining higher rates of mortality when compared with European countries. In the period since accelerated deindustrialisation, drug addiction has caused substantial harm across Scotland and, in the research conducted for this project, its impacts in former industrial communities were clear. This situation has been exacerbated in recent years. The country has the highest number of drug deaths in Europe, with 1339 in the 12-month period to July 2021 (BBC News Online, 2021). The map of drug abuse aligns closely with that of deindustrialisation's lingering toxicity. A Scottish Government report found that the three local authority areas most severely impacted by manufacturing closure – Dundee, Glasgow and Inverclyde – had the highest drug-related death rates in the country between 2016 and 2021 (National Record of Scotland, 2021). Deindustrialisation is inherently linked to deprivation, and reports demonstrate that drug deaths are inextricably tied to deprivation. Those living in the most deprived areas of Scotland are 18 times more likely to have a drug-related death as those in the least deprived (BBC News Online, 2021). As a result, drug abuse was a dominant issue in shaping the lives of our respondents. Senga was in her 70s when she reflected on her life in Tunbrooke, and explained:

> The drugs started. . . you had been findin needles everywhere at one point. . . they're aw intae the tablets now. . . you see people in their 40s and 50s in wheelchairs [and] walkin sticks.

Whilst the point at which 'the drugs started' wasn't specified by Senga, based on previous research on addiction in Scotland, we can reasonably assume she's discussing the '*Trainspotting* generation' of heroin addiction in the 1980s and 1990s, so-called due to Irvine Welsh's 1993 novel *Trainspotting* and the critically acclaimed 1996 Danny Boyle film adaptation. Welsh directly linked the situation of his heroin-addicted protagonists to manufacturing decline, stating that preceding generations 'might have been heavy drinkers but there was work in the shipyards, so they had a reason not to get wasted' (Edemariam

& Scott, 2009). The lingering toxicity of deindustrialisation has meant that the generations born long after the period of closure have also been significantly impacted and harmed by addiction. Megan was in her early 20s at the time of the interview, and she gave a detailed account of the prevalence of drugs and addiction in Tunbrooke:

> [Drugs are] the worst thing aboot [living] here, they're everywhere. . . Aye. I'd say that's the worst ooty everything, ooty aw the gangs and aw that, [it's] the drugs. . . it's naw as if it wid be hard to, like, try and get a haud of, like, green and Valium and aw that, they aw take it noo. . . Like, smack and everything, anything you wanted, just, just definitely, so, you could go along Main Street [pseudonym] and get it.

Every respondent that we interviewed in Tunbrooke discussed the multiple problems caused by drug abuse and the related issues of dealing (discussed below), petty crime and violence. Megan's testimony demonstrates the severity of the situation for a young person living in the community. For her, the issues caused by drugs are by far 'the worst' thing about Tunbrooke, and she deliberately makes the point that it is a more significant issue than gangs, which the interview had been focusing on up until this point, as she had had previous involvement in gang activity. The ease with which anyone can get a hold of any type of drug is clear, and this again was dominant across the interviews. The brutality of deindustrialisation in places like Tunbrooke, Leith (the setting for *Trainspotting*), Inverclyde, Dundee, and several other areas across Scotland played a major part in the origins of the country's drug addiction crisis. This has become a fundamental physical impact of the half-life. In these communities, a poor urban environment and lack of inward investment is compounded by the severe addiction problems that emerged following industrial closure when workers 'lost the narrative of their lives' and have become embedded in the communities in the subsequent decades (Linkon, 2018, p. 68). And, rather than dissipating, the continuous lack of investment in necessary infrastructure and the impacts of the UK Government's politics of austerity since 2010 have left many reflecting that these problems are increasing:

> Obviously the increase in drugs in the community. . . alcoholism's increased. . . increased selling drugs on territory. Ah think that's mair prevalent in the community the day than actual gang fighting. (Sarah, West Tunbrooke resident)

In this excerpt, Sarah outlines her perspective that drug addiction, alcoholism and street-level drug dealing have become more prevalent in recent years. This is a fundamental aspect of the half-life in Tunbrooke: as with the physical environment discussed above, many of the issues are worsening for those who experience them daily. There is little sense that the problems are being resolved, or the toxicity of the half-life is lessening over time. Crucially, both Sarah and Megan deliberately make the point that drug addiction in Tunbrooke is more problematic than gang violence, in an area synonymous with visible and high profile gang warfare, and during a research interview primarily concerned with organised criminality. They stress that the end product of drug dealing is a more pertinent issue for the community than the harms caused by those controlling the supply chain.

Poverty and lack of opportunity

As stated above, the map of deprivation across Scotland aligns closely with the map of deindustrialisation. The areas most renowned for being blighted by high levels of poverty – such as Greenock, Paisley, Motherwell, large sections of Glasgow and Tunbrooke – have never recovered from the contraction of industrial production. Since the closure of the foundry in Tunbrooke in the 1960s, and the shutdown of industries nearby in the subsequent decades, opportunities for good paying jobs nearby have decreased significantly. For Linkon, this is a key aspect of the half-life. She argues that, long after the contraction of industrial employment, the continuing lack of good work constitutes one of the 'often hidden injuries of deindustrialisation' (Linkon, 2018, p. 5; see also Clark, 2022; Preece, 2020). Emery (forthcoming) demonstrates that, in deindustrialising areas, as 'relatively plentiful, secure and well-paid industrial jobs have been replaced, there is a more polarised landscape of service sector roles offering lower pay and higher precarity'. As these excerpts from Tunbrooke residents illustrate, the only `good jobs' available to people require commuting or relocation:

> Tunbrooke doesnae huv much tae offer. The only draw ah've got is ma family is close by. There is nae opportunity for jobs, ye huv tae commute. . . It drives people away. . . there is nae opportunities. There's nae industry that Tunbrooke is right on, supplying workers. It is a place that there isnae really any community infrastructure. . . So a lot is, the working generation are movin on fae the place. (Maria)

> There isnae enough opportunity, generally, for anyone of working age. And again, it goes back tae that [lack of] investment. The community's been forgot aboot. There is very little opportunity for employment. (Mags)

> There's nae opportunity for them [school-leavers]. . . There's naw really any workin facilities here, ye'd need tae go ootside Tunbrooke. There's the industrial estate, but there's very few things in there noo. . . Ye need tae travel. And tae travel, ye need tae huv money. (Sarah)

These narratives demonstrate the ways in which manufacturing closure was only the beginning point in the social and economic harm of deindustrialisation in Tunbrooke. In the following decades, with nothing to replace the jobs lost, opportunities have become scarcer. Due to a lack of investment and poor urban planning, community infrastructure is crumbling or closed, the built environment is dilapidated, and there are significant problems of drug addiction and unemployment. All of these issues link together in shaping the lives of those who participated in this research. With scant opportunities for good work, coupled with the austerity agenda of the UK Government since 2010, poverty has become a major issue for many people living in Tunbrooke. When asked about what had changed over time, Mags responded that: 'Poverty's the same, it's naw got any better than it was when I was young. In fact, I think there's mair poverty related issues noo than there ever has been.' The worsening poverty was demonstrated in this conversation between me and Barry, a self-titled 'community activist':

Me: What's the main issues you face in West Tunbrooke as a community activist?

Barry: If you asked me five years ago, I'd have said definitely drugs. Now, ah say poverty. My own focus, as an activist, would at one time have been fighting criminality, often drugs – now it's getting food to people. Criminality is still a big issue, but I'm now more focused on poverty.

The shift in Barry's focus from fighting against criminality to challenging poverty is crucial in understanding the impact of legislative decisions made post-2010 that have compounded the problems in the half-life. No longer is his primary concern as an activist the removal of drug dealers from community centres or campaigning against the involvement of known criminals in local politics (experiences he discussed extensively), but it is the 'simple' matter of getting food to people. In this aspect, we again see how the situation in Tunbrooke was deteriorating in the period leading up to the research. As with waste ground, poor environment and addiction, poverty was becoming worse in Tunbrooke as time moved further away from the contraction of industry and the initial 'destruction' of areas built up around industrial work.

With the lack of good work and increasing unemployment, the ongoing harm of the half-life of deindustrialisation can become entangled with the harm of organised criminality. With so few opportunities in the licit economy, it is clear to see how people become involved in the illicit where opportunities present themselves. Barry, despite an extensive discussion of how he has spent much of his life fighting against serious crime in Tunbrooke, recognised that spiralling poverty has made him unable to 'blame' individual low level criminals:

> To be fair to people that get involved in low level crime, if you've got a choice of sitting without any power and food, or doing something about it, I don't blame them for doing something about it. It's logic, I'd hate to think what I would do if faced with that. You either die, or you do something about it. . .

Matt and Stiv are both residents of Tunbrooke who do diversionary work with young people, and they similarly drew links with poverty and the lack of opportunity for younger people in explaining how many become involved with organised crime:

> There's too many people oot there on the border of the poverty line that will take the wee fiver here or there, their ma and da might be struggling. We don't know the ins and oots ae it. . . Some can earn anywhere between £50 and £150 a day. You're talking about a 14-15 year old. That's mair than a good job [pays]. (Matt)

> Ah remember meetin a wee guy, he wis aboot 6 or 7, who used tae spend him nights on Main Street, directin people tae the hooses tae buy drugs. . . And that wis his opportunity tae make money, he'd get five pound here or there. His mother wis an alcoholic, his dad wisnae there, he hud a wee brother and sister, he wis makin the money. . . There's young people getting pressured intae it, there's opportunity tae make money. Ah've offered young people offered young people apprenticeships, and they say 'you're offerin £120 a week when ah can make £100 in an hour on the street'. (Stiv)

In both of these excerpts, Stiv and Matt illustrate the relationship between poverty, the lack of employment opportunities and young people's involvement in the illicit economy. With the lack of good work in deindustrialisation's half-life, many find themselves pulled towards involvement in organised criminal activity out of economic necessity. Lack of investment, rising unemployment and deteriorating infrastructure have caused substantial harm to the community in Tunbrooke and, as a result, a vacuum has opened. Organised crime groups are often more adept than state or 'licit' organisations at recognising and filling these in the 'forgotten aboot' places like Tunbrooke (see Leask, 2018). The financial possibilities offered by organised crime were stressed by Megan:

> [Teenagers] probably think 'why would you want to go tae a job that pays half the money if you can only stand along there and make double it in wan day and you're no really daein anything, you're just standing aboot'. . . I work and I'm pure skint aw the time. . . if I didnae have this job I'd probably have done it, to get money.

Maria, also in her early 20s, was similarly aware of the lack of opportunities and the precarious nature of life and existence in Tunbrooke:

> When yer livin haun tae mooth, it's tough bein fae an area where there's nae opportunity. Ye don't really realise it tae yer older that there isnae the opportunity tae move up in society, there's nae upward social mobility. People just dae wit they can tae get by. And folk just get put doon, when yer so close tae [neighbouring affluent area] and, ye could drive tae the supermarket there and ye drive past fancy hooses, flash cars and ye think, well, why should ah naw huv that?

Community solidarity

Maria's narrative eloquently surmises the situation faced by many living in Tunbrooke, and across the deindustrialised world. While it is impossible to prove causality with scientific certainty, the relationships between sharp industrial decline and high unemployment, urban dereliction, substance abuse, poverty, deprivation, criminality and lack of opportunity are evident in areas formerly reliant on industrial work. Communities in disparate localities like Youngstown, Detroit, Montreal, Sheffield, Belfast, Dundee, Greenock and Tunbrooke face the brunt of underinvestment, poor urban planning, lack of community infrastructure and ill-health. However, it is important to recognise that issues of poverty and poor housing are not purely the products of deindustrialisation, and Tunbrooke suffered from these since its construction in the nineteenth century. The difference in the half-life is that these problems are multiplied and compounded by subsequent political decisions. Tunbrooke is not post-industrial – it is not post-anything (Linkon, 2018, p. 6). And in listening to those who live and work there, free from a fear of compounding stigmatisation, we see how the toxicity of the half-life shows no signs of dissipating. Conversely, in many ways, it is accelerating.

In considering the built environment, Tunbrooke is not an area undergoing gentrification, as is the case in many communities investigated by deindustrialisation researchers. There are no old industrial buildings that retain enough grandeur to be attractive for housing development. Buildings are left to fall into such disrepair that they must be

demolished on public health grounds, with no impetus from local planners to replace them, and so large parts of the area have become an urban wilderness. Many former industrial areas in Scotland have been developed and regenerated; however, these tend to be close to tourist centres, such as the former docks in Leith, Glasgow and Dundee. Tourists – and outsiders more generally – have little reason to visit Tunbrooke due to its geographical location. The only people who really engage with the area are the people who live there. As Stiv reflected: 'West Tunbrooke's a bywater, there's nae through traffic. If yer in West Tunbrooke, yer either visitin somebody or daein something ye shouldnae be. Ye don't go tae West Tunbrooke tae socialise.'

There is minimal financial impetus for the local authority to invest in community infrastructure, as that is unlikely to lead to increased 'footfall' and visitor traffic. Instead, schools, libraries and community centres are closed, demolished, and the amenities merged with those that exist in neighbouring areas. These processes shape the sense that Tunbrooke is forgot about, and its physical appearance reinforces this daily to those who remain. As Rhodes (2014, p. 57) noted in his research in Youngstown, Ohio, continuous lack of investment transforms these communities to 'sites of loss, abandonment and failure'. High rates of addiction, visible on-street drug dealing and the detritus of substance abuse compound environmental issues. As Mah (2010) demonstrates in her research in the former shipbuilding community of Walker in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, industrial contraction created a vacuum in deindustrialising communities. In Tunbrooke, this vacuum was filled by organised crime groups and the drugs trade. With unemployment rising, and the area becoming increasingly derelict and forgotten, there was a rapidly growing illicit market that established crime groups could penetrate. This has been replicated in deindustrialising communities across Scotland (see Perchard, 2014). The impacts of drug addiction shape the daily lives of the interviewees in Tunbrooke. And this then shapes the perspectives of those outside Tunbrooke on the community. As Michelle, a charity worker in East Tunbrooke, reflected:

> There is some level of stigma, because the press is always full of the negative stories. . . I think people do feel the stigma of that. . . it's an easy sell to say there was a drugs raid in Tunbrooke. . . [people reading these stories think] 'oh well, that's just Tunbrooke'.

The cumulative impact of these factors over time is that Tunbrooke is now one of the most deprived communities in Scotland. And crucially, many interviewees reflected that the situation had worsened in the years before the research was conducted in 2018. The austerity agenda of the Westminster Government post-2010, and the dismantling of the welfare state, has acted as an accelerant for the toxicity of the half-life. In the view of Barry, poverty is now more pressing an issue for community activists than the organised criminality that remains 'a wee bit of a folk legend' in Tunbrooke (Maria). The community is now trapped in a vicious 'cycle of the half-life'. The structural violence caused by accelerated deindustrialisation continues to harm the community, and these harms are increasing due to the historic and contemporary political choices to continue abandonment. Fifty years ago or more, deindustrialisation caused sharp increases in unemployment, addiction and poverty. In the decades following, there has been minimal intervention by private capital, the state, or a combination to radically address the issues caused by

rapid contraction. Tunbrooke is *just far enough away* from centres of tourism and the service industry not to demand urgent intervention. All that remains in Tunbrooke are people and, for many looking from the outside, those people have failed to adapt. When community infrastructure crumbles beyond the point of salvation, they are bulldozed and merged with existing sites in neighbouring areas. Tunbrooke becomes increasingly empty and decaying, and this is clearly visible to anyone who finds themselves there. As Rhodes (2014, p. 57) argues, these 'signifiers of decay and decline [mark] these locations and their inhabitants as being on the wrong side of an irreversible . . . march towards a "post-industrial society"'. And simultaneously, organised crime groups have become embedded, using Tunbrooke as a base for illicit activity, including taking over the homes of the vulnerable, capturing the growing market for illegal drugs, leaving burnt out cars on the street for weeks at a time, and engaging in violence when deemed necessary. All of these factors fuel the sense of those who participated in this research that their community is forgotten. And the cycle of the half-life is complete when external agencies ultimately refuse to intervene because the challenges have become too great to resolve. As Helen, a local authority worker, reflected:

> It's not helpful when you see murders, gang fights on the front page [of newspapers]. . . it's very difficult to get other groups to come into the area, based on the reputation. . . it's not just crime, it's incomes, health. . . other groups know that the area has a reputation, and they won't come in.

However, it would be a misrepresentation to portray Tunbrooke – and those who live and work there – as passive in the problems that their community faces. Like many deindustrialising areas there is a significant community collectiveness in Tunbrooke. In her fascinating study of neighbourhoods in Sheffield and Grimsby, Preece (2020, p. 827) demonstrated how people maintain a belonging in deindustrialising communities, arguing that 'places perform a crucial function in anchoring people's lives and identities'. A key manifestation of this in Tunbrooke was the extent of community solidarity through hardship. During the research, this was most evident in the growing crisis of food poverty. Between April 2017 and September 2018, 480,583 food parcels were given out by foodbanks across Scotland, a year-on-year increase of 23% (Armour, 2019). Communities like Tunbrooke are those where foodbank use is greatest. The community solidarity emerged as important in the reflections on life in Tunbrooke:

> I've seen so many people donating food in this area. [There are] a lot of good people, that don't have much, they'll find a wee bit to give. There's a woman about half a mile away, walks up here with a shopping trolley, she's about 80, to drop off a couple of tins. That's there. (Barry)

These structures of solidarity that remain decades after manufacturing closure are crucial in resisting the full brunt of the half-life's increasing toxicity. In Barry's narrative, he stresses that those who don't have much will find something to give. These donations are not philanthropic gestures, born from a moral imperative to help those who are poor. In Tunbrooke, it emerges from the solidarity generated over decades of underinvestment and growing poverty. The community has been 'forgot about', so those within do what

they can to protect one another. Maria felt that the number of people getting involved in Tunbrooke to improve the community was increasing:

> Ah think people are more involved in the community as well, people are mair involved. There's certain people standin up and sayin they want better. . . There's some individuals do take it on. Ma papa campaigned a lot, wis on the community council. . . See tae be fair, ah think it's getting better.

For many interviewees, there was also an important sense of pride in their community, and a connection with those who also live in Tunbrooke. Despite extensively detailing the problems faced as a community activist, Barry stressed that 'there's a lottae good people in Tunbrooke. I'm happy to say I love Tunbrooke.' Similarly, Fiona reflected that:

> There's a lot of brilliant work, brilliant people, but you never hear that good news story. . . And, as much as there are issues going on in the community, it is a thriving community. . . Ah could quite easily have left, and went to live somewhere else. But ah chose not tae.

As with many deindustrialising areas, many of those who remain in Tunbrooke have a heightened connection with the place and its people. This has been evidenced extensively elsewhere (see Linkon, 2018; Rhodes, 2014). What remains, among the decay and decline, is a community solidarity and a class and place-based pride of what has survived the assaults of deindustrialisation and neoliberalism. As Luke reflected:

> [When] Yer fae a scheme, yer startin fae nothin, yer ma and dad don't own businesses. Ah take pride in where ah come fae. Ah'm the first tae say it's a shitehole. But it's ma shitehole. Ye walk aboot and ye know the people in the street, haulf the families, and ye can go an huv conversations wi them. So ye can take pride, but ye huv tae take it the other way as well, that this place could be better.

Conclusion

Throughout the latter part of the twentieth century, Tunbrooke suffered the immediate harms of deindustrialisation. Into the twenty-first century, the community has been hammered by the accelerating toxicity of the half-life. In this article, I have provided a snapshot of life in a community reeling from the long-term impacts of socio-economic rupture. In her half-life thesis, Linkon has provided a useful lens through which we can understand the lingering social, economic, political and cultural problems in communities that had been built up around industrial production. Through the analysis outlined above, I suggest that this should shape future analyses in deindustrialisation studies that focus on contemporary experiences. However, I argue that rather than dissipating over time, we can see the growing toxicity of the half-life as communities become increasingly removed from their industrial pasts, and that political choices have made this worse. In every measure of Linkon's concept of the half-life of deindustrialisation, the situation was worsening in Tunbrooke. The area is representative of many working-class conurbations that have 'failed' to adapt post-closure. The community is easily forgotten about by those outside, only being discussed in reference to bad things happening. Agencies and government

actors are now reluctant to intervene due to the severity of the problems created, in part, by their decades of abandonment. For those who live in Tunbrooke, their sense of place is shaped by the harms of the half-life. Their community has been deteriorating for decades; what remains is an overgrown jungle in urban Scotland, where people do what they can to get by, move away, commute, or succumb to addiction and ill-health. The young have little opportunity that does not involve relocating, which requires some degree of financial independence, and ignores their desire to remain close to their families and communities. Whereas Perchard discussed Thatcher's children, young people in deindustrialising communities like Tunbrooke are now Thatcher's grandchildren, who are suffering the effect of prolonged 'political attacks' waged particularly by unpopular Conservative governments during their stints in office since 1979.

Beyond academic writing, there is a 'moral and political imperative' to include the longer history of economic violence in attempts to understand contemporary experiences in deindustrialising communities (Emery, 2019). Scholars of deindustrialisation should ensure, where possible, that our historically informed perspectives contribute to governmental and third-sector analyses of deprivation, inequality and other social issues. This work is vital in understanding contemporary experiences in communities like Tunbrooke, and to make sure that the violence of deindustrialisation is central to the discussion. In our 'Community Experiences of Serious and Organised Crime' report, this longer history was stressed in explaining the prevalence of criminality and deprivation in particular localities across Scotland. The framework of the half-life, as well as the residual community solidarity, must be central to any government efforts to understand, and improve, working-class life within deindustrialising areas. The extensive research that has been, and is currently being conducted globally by deindustrialisation scholars, should play a significant part in informing these perspectives.

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Notes

1. As a result of my own background, I also use Greenock as an identifiable, named community for comparison throughout this article.
2. Available here: https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/andyclark/2022/12/09/standard-english-for-quotes-in-title/

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