



'Inclusive' strategies for race and gender in urban regeneration

Issues of race and gender remain marginalised within regeneration policy, despite an increasing emphasis on social exclusion. A study at Oxford Brookes University reviewed existing research to discover how diversity can inform regeneration strategies. The study found that:

f Women and ethnic minorities are over-represented in areas undergoing regeneration. However, race and gender are rarely prioritised as major strategic issues within regeneration policy at the national, regional or local level.

f The nature of poverty and exclusion in regeneration areas is different for different groups. For example, women may be excluded by lack of confidence, domestic responsibilities and economic discrimination. Ethnic minorities face stereotyped attitudes and in some cases barriers of language or custom.

f Other barriers to 'inclusive' regeneration were:

- partnerships and other regeneration agencies typically failed to involve fully all sections of the population;
- many guidelines and evaluations failed to consider race and gender.

f There is evidence of a variety of approaches placing race and gender in the mainstream of regeneration. **Universal strategies** prioritise issues such as exclusion; others prioritise race and/or gender as **specific** policy targets. Research suggests that projects will need a mixture of universal and specific targets if the needs of specific groups are to be met.

f Innovative inclusive approaches exist, based on:

- strategies which acknowledge the diversity of the population within disadvantaged areas and treat this diversity as an opportunity, not a problem;
- information, targets and monitoring broken down by race and gender;
- involving organisations focused on gender and ethnic minority concerns in strategy, delivery and monitoring;
- supporting voluntary groups at local, regional and national level to facilitate participation and inclusive partnerships.

f The researchers conclude that routes to regeneration are diverse. For regeneration to be sustainable and effective this diversity must be recognised and be used positively to create strategic priorities. §

From the margins to the mainstream of urban regeneration

Although lone parents, ethnic minority groups and recently young men tend to be seen as key 'problems' in urban regeneration, there has been little explicit policy to target initiatives at race and gender issues. Race has been implicit in regeneration policies but has not been translated into explicit practice. Gender has not figured at all.

The recent emphasis on social exclusion in regeneration policy and the move away from property-led strategies presents an opportunity to redress this imbalance. Policy is unlikely to achieve its aims of greater inclusion unless matched by a full understanding of the diversity of experience within regeneration areas and an appreciation of the strategies necessary to ensure regeneration benefits all.

Why race and gender are strategic issues in regeneration

The review found that the meanings and experience of poverty and exclusion are different for different groups within regeneration areas. Social exclusion may be due to unemployment, low pay, low self-esteem, low status within a community or household, stereotyping and discrimination, lack of political skills, the operation of political structures or lack of facilities and support. Race and gender are integral to all these issues.

Research shows that it is important to look at each ethnic group separately. For example, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Afro-Caribbean men are at high risk of unemployment and low pay while those of Indian and Chinese origin have rates similar to or better than white men. Women overall are paid significantly less than men, although the size of the gap and expectations of whether women should do paid work differ by ethnic group.

For minority groups, a supportive culture within the community may coexist with hostility outside it. In some groups, women have low status and are excluded from speaking for their community.

Given that women are generally the primary carers, access to good quality, affordable childcare affects women's ability to enter the job market. Poverty and job loss may be a greater blow to self-esteem for men, but in households dependent on benefits the woman may put her needs last. Women tend to be the money managers but may be trapped in debt.

Such different experiences mean routes to regeneration and inclusion will differ, as will priorities for regeneration programmes. Projects typically emphasise skills to acquire a job, but all paths to employment are not the same: capacities, confidence, childcare, the nature of the local economy are all important.

In Cruddas Park, Newcastle, the Community Development Trust found that the route to employment for men was through skills training while for women opportunities to build self-

confidence through local parenting groups were a necessary first step.

Unemployment is not the only issue. Research reviewed for the study suggests that up to 50 per cent of the population may be unable to participate in employment through incapacity and caring responsibilities. Help to reduce outgoings through, for example, credit unions, cheap heat and food, might best support them.

The Women's Design Service worked with women of Asian origin in the King's Cross area, helping them grow food. This also aimed to improve health and build confidence by valuing their knowledge and skills.

Housing improvements, community safety forums, health advice and playgroups will have differing benefits for different groups. Groups will have differing priorities. For example, research shows that Asian communities frequently place community safety and housing above employment and training.

The skills for influencing programmes may not be evenly distributed amongst the local population. Sometimes voluntary organisations representing particular interests need support in order to create the capacity to take part in a bid or project. Many of the activists in regeneration areas are women, but the significance of this is rarely analysed, neither is its impact on relations with partner agencies whose representatives are mostly male.

Each regeneration area, local and regional, will have its own characteristics and its own patterns of race and gender which will influence its regeneration potential. This implies that understanding these patterns of local diversity is a pre-requisite to effective regeneration.

Strategy and vision

Recognition of race and gender as strategic issues for regeneration is not evenly spread. At the national level, policies such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) include a strategic objective to benefit minority ethnic groups (SO4) but do not mention gender. However, SO4 is not a condition of regeneration funding has been and has been found to have the lowest priority of the seven SRB objectives. Its implementation varies greatly by region.

Some regeneration initiatives have shown that diversity can be addressed at a strategic level by:

- placing an inclusive vision at the heart of their strategies:

Coventry Community Plan explicitly aims to engage all sections of society, combat racism and celebrate diversity.

- promoting 'flagship' projects:

Rich Mix, in Spitalfields, East London, with its history as an area of settlement for groups new to Britain, is a proposed centre housing a museum about

the contribution made by these groups, a market for ethnic goods and food, a genealogical centre and performance space.

- recognising the contribution of the ethnic minority economy to an economic strategy.

Green Street in Newham, with many businesses run by owners of Asian origin, is promoting itself as a major shopping centre for the Asian population of Greater London.

However, a focus on race may not be accompanied by a focus on gender and vice versa. The research showed examples of projects where race had been prioritised, yet the needs of minority ethnic women had been ignored or stereotyped, for example, by the establishment of sewing clubs.

The greater strategic emphasis within regeneration policies presents a challenge to local organisations whose concerns may be more linked to service delivery of specific needs.

In the West Midlands, a successful ethnic-minority led partnership is aiming to build the capacity of organisations in the region to become involved in partnerships within a regional strategic framework.

In setting strategic objectives that recognise different experiences of poverty and paths to inclusion, projects face a choice between goals that are *universal* (for example, to raise the income of the poorest by 20 per cent) and those that are *specifically targeted* (to increase participation by Asian women, to improve educational attainment of Afro-Caribbean boys). Universal targets have the advantage of being readily accepted by regeneration professionals and reflecting policy language. They may, however, fail to benefit all groups as race and gender become subsumed under general headings such as exclusion. Specific targets overcome these shortcomings but may provoke hostility.

This implies that almost every project will need a mixture of universal and specific targets, different in each case according to local circumstances. For example, to achieve the target of increasing the income of the poorest in a regeneration area, information is needed on the make-up of this group, along with measures targeted towards women (see the King's Cross example above) and members of minority ethnic groups. In practice the distinction can be blurred:

Women on a 'problem' estate were helped to organise to improve safety for women and children, developing skills to research and communicate their case. The resulting improvements benefited the whole community.

Partnerships, governance and participation

The review found that both the structures and processes of partnerships could do more to promote inclusivity. There are no government guidelines to ensure balanced representation on partnerships. Few

partnerships are led by ethnic minority organisations and none by women's organisations.

Partnerships in Greenwich have equal opportunity policies which ensure places on partnership boards are reserved for minority ethnic representatives and that all organisations that contract with partnerships must themselves have equal opportunity policies.

Procedures can also inhibit greater involvement. The timescale of projects means that lead partners must quickly gear up to deliver their contracted outputs, rather than studying the area in detail or consulting widely on priorities before bids are drawn up. Styles of operation within partnerships can suppress community representatives. Capacity building should mean that all members examine their impact on processes of decision-making. However, specific capacity building may be needed to ensure wide participation:

Sandwell Borough Council embarked on a community capacity building programme, setting up a women's regeneration forum and an ethnic minority regeneration forum to ensure participation in policy-making and from which to draw partnership members.

The study showed many examples of projects using participatory techniques in the implementation of regeneration. There are also numerous good practice guides on which to draw. One technique that has worked in development projects in the South and which takes an inclusive approach is Participatory Rapid Appraisal, using local residents as fieldworkers. There are very few examples of its use in Britain but it is a tool that could be more widely applied.

Evaluation and research

While there are many examples of projects which incorporate diversity, the review found no evaluations of their effectiveness or of transferable practice. Many reports evaluating regeneration projects omit any assessment of ethnicity and gender in their analyses and recommendations.

Steps towards better practice

The study revealed a number of ways in which the implementation of regeneration can ensure greater inclusivity:

- Draw up community profiles which are broken down by race and gender. This would include not only the statistical make-up of the population, but the extent of involvement in local organisations, whether all sections of the population are represented and the priorities for regeneration within all groups in an area. Using local organisations to research baseline information can be part of the regeneration process itself.

Young Bangladeshi women trainees in London carried out a survey of low achievement among their ethnic group to inform a regeneration project. The

results improved the local authority's understanding of the needs of this group as well as developing skills in the participants.

- Break down targets and monitoring by race and gender, using such baseline information. While there is a requirement in SRB to monitor targets by ethnicity there is no such requirement for gender. The output culture encourages achievement of measurable objectives rather than an evaluation of whether these are the most appropriate goals.
- Scrutinise policies and targets for their impact on different groups. Oxfam advocates a gender and race audit of regeneration policies
- Government Offices of the Regions (GORs) and those leading regeneration initiatives can be proactive.

Staff in one of the government's regional offices helped ethnic minority organisations improve their failed SRB application, which then succeeded the following year. They also ensured all partnerships in their region reflected the ethnic composition of the areas they were regenerating

Some London boroughs have checklists for those drawing up SRB application to ensure that minority ethnic concerns are included in bids.

- Involve organisations focused on race and gender in the delivery of regeneration targets. There are many examples of organisations delivering training to women and ethnic minorities. These organisations can operate inclusively. The Women's Design Service, for example, undertakes consultation in SRB projects with all residents, not just women.

Conclusions

As the emphasis within national policy shifts towards social inclusion, there is an opportunity to promote diversity as a focus in regeneration. The researchers conclude that action is needed at a variety of levels if this is to be achieved:

- At the national level, clearer ministerial and departmental leads are needed including: effective cross-departmental action; ring-fencing resources for specific groups; research to identify the impacts of current policies and identify transferable practice.

- At the regional level, GORs could be more proactive in promoting a culture of inclusivity, influencing the representation on Regional Development Agencies and the monitoring and evaluation of projects for funding. Capacity building may be required to create the potential for diverse involvement.
- At the local level, action should start with baseline information broken down by race and gender; target-setting which recognises diversity as a major regeneration issue; techniques and structures to involve all groups within an area; building capacity amongst all potential partners and creating decision-making structures which are fully inclusive.

About the study

The research primarily reviewed existing findings in writings on regeneration. In addition, interviews were carried out with representatives from local government, regional offices and voluntary agencies. A seminar was held which brought together academics and practitioners.

How to get further information

The full report, 'Rich mix': Inclusive strategies for urban regeneration by Sue Brownill and Jane Darke, is published by the Policy Press in association with the Foundation (ISBN 1 86134 106 7, price £12.95 plus £1.50 p&p)

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