

The impact of devolution

Area-based regeneration policies in the UK

January 2010

Dave Adamson

This study provides a personal assessment of the impact of area-based regeneration policies on the experience of poverty in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales following devolution in 1997.

There is a common delivery of area-based regeneration policies in the four devolved administrations, but with considerable divergence in the detail of policy and the structure of delivery mechanisms. This study provides a personal assessment of the impact of policies based on a series of visits to regeneration projects throughout the UK.

The study:

- identifies the relevant policies in each region and considers the formal evaluation evidence of their impact;
- employs an observational framework to assess the impact of policies on the ground;
- explores key factors determining the impact of regeneration programmes;
- reviews the current trends in regeneration policy in the UK.

Contents

Executive summary	5
1 Introduction	8
2 Background	9
3 Methodology	11
4 Key issues	12
The lived experience of poverty	13
Assessing impact	13
5 The devolved policy programmes	17
Northern Ireland	17
Wales	21
Scotland	25
England	28
6 Overview	32
The value of area-based regeneration	32
Striking a balance between the local and the national	32
The relationship between funding and success	33
The centrality of service improvement, mainstreaming and bending services	34
The role of delivery structures	34
The role of active citizens	35
The evolution of policy	35
The need to change horizons	36
7 Conclusion	37
References	38
Appendix	41
Acknowledgements	43
About the author	43

Executive summary

Introduction

This study is concerned with the impact of area-based regeneration policy in the four devolved administrations in the UK. Policy divergence provides an important context for reviewing critical factors in regeneration success. The study is presented as a series of personal observations; it is not a formal evaluation of the policies.

Background

In 1997 the new Labour Government brought poverty eradication to the top of the political agenda. Policy was informed by the concept of social exclusion, used to describe a complex pattern of marginalisation and disadvantage. Seen as primarily deriving from labour market exclusion, government policy focused on re-introducing people to the labour market.

Area-based regeneration strategies were introduced in localities where residents lacked skills and behaviours that enabled labour-market integration. Here, policy focused on social inclusion techniques and combinations of physical renewal and community engagement.

The study employs a combination of policy analysis and literature study with a series of visits to each region, where interviews and informal tours of neighbourhoods were undertaken to derive a sense of the local experience of policy delivery and impact.

Key issues

It is not possible to comment directly on the impact of devolved area-based policies on income poverty, which has become the standard measure of poverty. The issue of attribution of effect at the local level is complicated by UK national policies, including the Tax Credit system, the benefit system and the National Minimum Wage. Additionally, area-based initiatives co-exist with additional devolved policies that also impact on income poverty.

Furthermore, wider economic processes have had a major impact as the labour market responds to economic growth and recession.

Instead, the study has examined what I have termed **the lived experience of poverty**, in an attempt to understand how local policies have changed the social experience of living in a neighbourhood characterised by poverty and social exclusion.

To assist me in this exercise I employed a metaphor based on the perspective of the tourist concerned with the **atmosphere**, **landscape** and **horizon** of a place visited.

In the context of this study the atmosphere of a neighbourhood refers to the feel of the community, including aspects of community safety, community culture, cohesion, diversity, conflict, crime and fear of crime. Landscape refers to the physical and environmental character of the neighbourhood, including housing quality, density and diversity. It also refers to the availability of community buildings, green and public spaces, play and sports facilities and transport links to the wider world. Horizon refers to the points of reference of the community culture. Is it inward looking and locked in peer and community cultures that are passive and fatalistically accept poor housing, health and educational outcomes and economic inactivity as the norm?

Each devolved policy context was assessed at the local level within this framework to arrive at a personal assessment of the impact of policy on the lived experience of poverty in the UK.

The devolved policy programmes

It is not possible in this summary to provide full details of the policies examined, but these include New TSN and People and Place Strategy in Northern Ireland and Communities First in Wales. In Scotland, a more complex policy evolution has occurred, and *Social Justice: A Scotland Where Everyone Matters* is the starting point for examining the transition from Social

Inclusion Partnerships (SIPS) and Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) to the current Single Outcome Agreements within the Fairer Scotland Fund (FSF). In England, the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal sets the context for an examination of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) and the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (NMP) programme leading to the current Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

In Northern Ireland, there was a consensus among those interviewed that the lengthy suspensions of the Northern Ireland Assembly since 1997 had had a major impact on regeneration. The primacy of the peace process has also overshadowed the development of anti-poverty policy, and the continued competition between communities on different sides of the sectarian divide was judged to be a major barrier to area-based regeneration approaches.

In Wales, a continuity of policy allows a longer perspective. The Communities First programme has been very successful at the community engagement process in the majority of assisted communities. Less success has been achieved in the intended programme bending, which lies at the heart of the policy. The Welsh Assembly Government has recognised this failure and established an Outcome Fund to pair Communities First Partnerships and statutory service providers in projects where programme bending can be demonstrated.

In Scotland, a rapid evolution of policy has seen what is perceived at community level as a gradual weakening of community influences over the regeneration process. The transition from SIPS to CPP has seen the spatial scale move from neighbourhood to local authority level. The concerns are amplified by the evolution of the FSF, the move to Single Outcome Agreements negotiated between the local authority and the Scottish Government, and the proposed merger of the FSF with the general non-hypothecated local authority funding settlement. Formal evaluations of the SIPS programme point to similar difficulties with programme bending to those experienced in Northern Ireland and Wales.

In England, formal evaluations of NDC and NMP have generally been positive, an experience replicated in my impressions during

local visits. The importance of physical renewal is demonstrated clearly alongside the value of community engagement. The impacts on health, education and employability outcomes are less clear and demonstrate some of the barriers to comprehensive area-based regeneration.

In terms of the concepts of atmosphere, landscape and horizon, Northern Ireland shows little improvement in any aspect of the lived experience of poverty from policies that have been interrupted by the suspension of the Assembly and which have only recently gained momentum. Scotland and Wales have improved atmosphere, with Scotland also showing improved landscape, largely through associated housing renewal, a process that has not occurred yet in Wales. Only England appears to demonstrate changes in all three domains, with some limited change to the horizon of local cultures and in the provision of bridging mechanisms to further opportunities outside the immediate neighbourhood.

Overview

Eight key points emerge from the comparison of the four devolved policy platforms:

The value of area-based regeneration: both the formal and informal processes of this study point to the benefits of area-based policies. This is perhaps clearly demonstrated by the absence of impact in Northern Ireland and in the area visited in Wales where the Communities First programme has largely failed. A more negative social experience has prevailed here in comparison with those areas showing more active policy delivery.

Striking the balance between the local and the national: this study points to considerable tension between local 'grime and crime' concerns and the more strategic policy objectives of government. A community development process is required to link local concerns with national objectives and to raise the regeneration aspirations of local residents.

The relationship between funding and success: it is clear that accessible and meaningful levels of funding are an essential component of successful regeneration. The level of funding must enable

physical renewal as well as community engagement to demonstrate that real change is possible. In the light of experience in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, reliance on programme bending alone is insufficient to promote regeneration.

The centrality of service improvement, mainstreaming and programme bending:

despite the difficulties of bending mainstream services, this is an essential ingredient of regeneration. However, even where it has occurred it tends not to be in critical areas such as health, education and employability. The higher levels of success in England should be more thoroughly explored to better understand the barriers that need to be overcome.

The role of delivery structures: the regeneration process involves a complex interaction between central and local government and voluntary and community agencies. Central government appears to experience difficulties in delivering more integrated solutions. Local government plays a key role but delivery varies in quality along with the level of commitment to the regeneration process. The voluntary sector can also play a major role, especially where it is thoroughly networked with the community. In practice, a meaningful partnership between all sectors is essential.

The role of active citizens: my visits suggest that active neighbourhood engagement and participation is essential to the regeneration process. Successful engagement is dependent on effective community development practice.

The evolution of policy: it is desirable that policy evolves to reflect interim evaluations and emerging concerns. The experience of Northern Ireland points to the low impact that results from a fractured process of policy delivery. Experience in Scotland illustrates the potential dangers of too rapid a process of policy change, leading to the loss of community engagement.

The need to change horizons: the use of the tourism metaphor has underlined the need for regeneration policy to interact with local cultures to challenge passivity and depressed aspirations.

Delivery mechanisms must provide bridging mechanisms that enable residents to build on community-based experiences and move into the wider worlds of work and education.

1 Introduction

This study is part of a series commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to explore the impact of devolution on poverty in the UK. It is concerned with the impact of area-based regeneration policies in the UK's four devolved countries. Area-based regeneration has been an aspect of social policy that has seen considerable divergence in the ten years since devolution, and the different models of implementation that now exist reflect local policy-making within the devolved administrations. It is timely to study these to consider their impact and to provide an initial assessment of their contribution to the alleviation of poverty in the UK.

It is perhaps the case that ten years of devolution are an insufficient time span to witness and evaluate a process of policy divergence, its full implementation and to discern its impact. Further, more formal evaluation processes are not always conclusive and, in some instances of the policies reviewed here, not yet complete. Consequently, this study cannot be considered to be a full evaluation of the policies implemented in the four nations. It is, rather, an attempt to gain some oversight of a complex and diverse programme of policy development and to develop a limited, personal assessment of what has been experienced in the communities that have been subject to these policy programmes. The scope and scale of the exercise mean that the content of this study is a series of personal observations rather than research-based conclusions. These observations are based on a thorough research process, but the relatively small number of cases sampled and examined precludes the provision of a conventional and full evaluation.

The views expressed in this study are those of the author and not necessarily shared by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

2 Background

Shortly after election in 1997 the new Labour Government brought poverty eradication to the top of the political agenda. The establishment in 1998 of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) within the Cabinet Office sponsored an analysis of a wide range of poverty related social problems. Published as Poverty Action Team Reports, this evidence-based study of the multi-dimensionality of contemporary poverty thoroughly demonstrated the complexity, depth and severity of poverty in the UK (SEU, 2000). The analyses were largely based on a concept of social exclusion that moved beyond conventional views of poverty, seen as a lack of financial resources, to include the pattern of marginalisation and disadvantage experienced by sections of the population. Borrowing from analyses emerging in France and bearing influence on the European Union (Silver, 1994), the concept of social exclusion in the UK was conceived of primarily as a consequence of exclusion from the labour market (Levitas, 1996). Socially excluded populations were identified with large peripheral housing estates, stigmatised by the wider community and characterised by benefit dependency, low incomes, criminality, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. Labour's analysis, although based on radical French social theory, could not escape the flavour of the underclass debates of the late 1980s (Byrne, 1999).

The deployment of the concept of social exclusion, with its stress on a socio-political process of exclusion from key aspects of economic, political and social life in the UK, did much to remove the blame for poverty from poorer people themselves. It also emphasised the structural, procedural and policy-related causes of poverty. Most importantly, it provided a sophisticated understanding of poverty and its consequences in the developed industrial nations. For Room (1995) the concept stressed the relational aspects of poverty in which poorer people suffer prejudicial and negative relationships with civil society and the public services. The consequences

are best summarised by Madanipour's much-quoted definition of social exclusion.

Social exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural process. When combined, they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods. (Madanipour et al., 1998)

The use of this concept of social exclusion also prescribed innovative remedies. Conventional welfare policy promoted redistributive processes through taxation and social security payments. However, a conception of poverty that emphasised the social relations resulting from a lack of financial resources produced social policy that sought to change those relations rather than merely redistribute wealth. Additionally, the legacy of the New Right critique of welfare had enshrined beliefs that welfare payments simply reproduced long-term dependency in welfare recipients. No government could increase welfare payments as the sole solution to poverty. A welfare philosophy emerged that stressed the equation of welfare rights with obligations to work. Labour's response was to actively promote re-entry to the labour market for those who were able to work. Central government focused on the welfare-to-work strategies of the variants of New Deal to move the excluded population back into the workplace. Financial poverty was to be tackled primarily by a system of work-based Tax Credits and the establishment of a National Minimum Wage, both stressing the primacy of work as the route out of poverty.

However, there was also recognition that the socially excluded neighbourhoods in Britain were populated by individuals without the skills required by the contemporary workplace and where long-term economic inactivity had produced cultures and behaviours that collectively challenged the

employability of residents. Residents of such areas were seen as lacking any kind of stake in the social system. The social policy response was to develop area-based regeneration programmes that also employed community development techniques promoting social inclusion, social engagement and behaviour change. Epitomised by the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme in England, this approach coupled the physical renewal of run-down estates with community development strategies to engage and empower local residents in the design and delivery of solutions at the local level.

This study addresses that policy platform. Neighbourhood and community-based regeneration strategies have been implemented throughout the UK. The focus here is on regeneration policies that promote social inclusion through neighbourhood participation and engagement at community level. This study does not address the property-based, physical regeneration programmes pursued by many local authorities, especially in the major UK cities within urban renewal programmes.

While this policy platform was developing, the UK was also experiencing unprecedented constitutional reform as the new government pursued its devolution agenda. Devolved Assemblies for Wales and Northern Ireland and a Parliament for Scotland saw the UK regions acquire new levels of autonomy in which much of the anti-poverty and regeneration policy agenda was transferred to the new administrations.

Although area-based regeneration remained the common focus in the newly devolved governments, from 2000 onwards policies diverged, with significant variation in programme detail. The new administrations wished to reflect regional difference and develop policies appropriate for the specific social and economic issues confronting the region. This policy divergence provides a unique opportunity to examine the impact on poverty of a range of interventions promoted by the administrations in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

3 Methodology

As described in the Introduction, the scope and scale of this exercise has been limited to an observational process that cannot meet the criteria associated with a full evaluation of four separate policy domains. Such an exercise would require extensive time and resources. This report comments on a series of personal observations developed over a six-month period of visits to disadvantaged communities in the UK and interviews and conversations with a range of people who live and work in those communities. More formal interviews were conducted with personnel in the key delivery agencies associated with area-based regeneration policies.

The research methodology employed three main components:

- 1 A study of academic, policy and practice literatures to develop a full understanding of the policies, their commonalities and differences. Policy analysis has been a central activity in order to fully delineate policy divergence. This has been combined with an assessment of the impact from existing policy evaluations.
- 2 A study visit in each devolved region to two key areas experiencing poverty and social exclusion and where the identified policies have been delivered. The visits explored the local experience of national policy patterns. Where possible, there were meetings with local residents, but these was not possible in every location. Visits included opportunities for informal neighbourhood tours. Individual communities are not named in this report to avoid identification of any commentary with key individuals. Brief summaries of each area are provided in the Appendix.
- 3 A series of face-to-face or telephone interviews with key individuals working within the policy structures identified. These interviews focused on critical factors experienced in the delivery of anti-poverty policy. They took place with

local and central government personnel, voluntary and third sector representatives and community development workers practising in disadvantaged communities.

4 Key issues

Assessment of policy impact on poverty is conventionally measured in terms of changes to the level of income poverty. Income poverty is determined by measuring the proportion of the population whose incomes fall below 60% of median income, usually measured after housing costs (AHC). While it is not possible within the scope of this study to provide a detailed examination of poverty trends in the ten years of devolution in the UK, it is worth noting the broad pattern of change that has occurred. This has been characterised by decreasing numbers of households with an income of less than 60% median income (AHC) between 1996/7 and 2005/6. However, since 2005/6 numbers have been rising again, pointing to a stalling effect in the impact of current policies (Brewer et al., 2009). Government attention has specifically focused on child poverty rates. The recent loss of momentum has seriously challenged the target of halving the rate by 2010 and eradicating child poverty altogether by 2020, targets shared by all devolved administrations. With a UK average rate of 31% child poverty (Brewer et al., 2009), Scotland currently has the lowest mainland UK rate of child poverty (25%), which has remained stable for three years (Kenway et al., 2008). Ireland had a similar rate in the less recent study of poverty in Northern Ireland (Kenway et al., 2006). In contrast, in Wales half the progress since 1997 has currently been lost, an outcome that does not yet include the impact of recession (NPI, 2009): the child poverty rate is currently 32% there.

In assessing the impact on poverty in the UK deriving from regeneration policies, this research has encountered the significant problem of attribution: the ability to assign impact to specific policy interventions and to separate them from wider influences in social policy, economy and society. The levels of poverty in society emerge from a complex interaction between macro- and microeconomic influences, the actions of both local and central government, highly localised cultural influences and the behaviours and

choices of individuals experiencing poverty and risk of poverty.

In the social policy domain complex interactions arise in particular between housing, health and education policies, and less clear links with transport, youth and leisure services. In the context of this study there are also the overwhelming influences of reserved areas of policy, which the devolved administrations have no ability to influence but which have a direct impact on the potential success and failure of devolved anti-poverty policies. In the UK, critical central government actions have included the establishment of the National Minimum Wage, the development of the Tax Credit system and reform of the general benefit system.

The impact of these national policies on income poverty in the UK has been considerable. Hirsch (2008) notes the combined effects of the redistributive measures and back-to-work programmes. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG, 2009) claims that over 600,000 children have been lifted from poverty by these combined policies. The key point here is that these policies have been implemented throughout the UK and have had significant local effects on income poverty. It is not possible to distinguish these national effects from the impact of devolved regeneration policies delivered at the local level.

The picture is further complicated by additional areas of devolved policy. The regeneration policies under consideration here are best described as policies that target place-based poverty. Additional devolved actions have targeted people-based poverty and introduced measures delivered universally in the devolved regions. Scotland, for example, in its initial poverty programme Social Justice, had targets addressing children, young people, families and older persons as well as community-based poverty. Again, to separate the impact of such people-focused programmes from the area-based strategies is impossible.

It is also difficult in any assessment of the impact of social policy on poverty to separate

the influence of wider patterns of economic change. In the ten years under review in this study the economy has experienced unprecedented growth, and potentially the worst economic and financial crisis for a century. Increased employment opportunities within a high growth economy has underpinned government back-to-work programmes. Currently, poverty statistics reflect this period while the impacts of the recession are yet to be fully reflected in the measurement of poverty.

Given the pattern of interventions associated with area-based regeneration, ten years of action may not yet have yielded the desired results from local interventions in housing, health and education. Much area-based regeneration seeks long-term change in the social and cultural behaviours in a community: to change skill levels and attitudes to work requires a long-term commitment to education and training. Perhaps only children entering the education system now, with changed parental support patterns, will fully demonstrate the gain achieved as they emerge into adulthood. Changing attitudes to diet, smoking, alcohol and substance misuse may take a generation before their impact is measurable in headline statistics on heart disease or cancer rates.

Finally, a constant question throughout this research was what would this community be like today if this intervention had not taken place? While it is impossible to provide a definitive answer, my strong feeling is that all the communities visited would be significantly worse off.

The lived experience of poverty

These difficulties of assessing impact suggest that any attempt to measure directly the effects on income poverty of area-based regeneration and social inclusion policies are doomed to failure. Income poverty is most easily influenced by national programmes and least easily influenced by local interventions. Consequently, in planning this research it was necessary to consider what it would be possible to comment on in a meaningful way.

The concept of social exclusion points to a multi-dimensional social experience which, while deriving from income poverty, encompasses a broad range of disadvantages that structure

the social experience of individuals, families and neighbourhoods. Typically, neighbourhoods characterised by social exclusion manifest multiple, negative experiences in all realms of social, cultural and economic life. The interactions with wider civil society and state agencies are also characterised by weak or negative outcomes. Processes of stigmatisation occur, and the neighbourhood may become the focus of negative external attitudes, which reinforce poor self-image and low self-esteem in the excluded population (Adamson, 1999).

This study focuses on this overall social experience of poverty and social exclusion and uses the term **lived experience of poverty** to describe the totality of effects derived from living as a poor person in a poor neighbourhood.

The problem for researchers and for more formal evaluations of policy impact is that much of the lived experience of poverty is difficult if not impossible to measure. A more qualitative approach is therefore required, which gives voice to residents' perceptions and subjective views of the quality of life in a given neighbourhood. In terms of methodologies, interviews, conversations and focus groups must replace surveys and opinion polls if we are to fully understand the nuances of opinion about changing experiences in communities subject to regeneration programmes.

Assessing impact

In considering the impact of devolved regeneration policies on the lived experience of poverty in the UK, use was made in this study of work I completed in the mid-1990s (Adamson, 1999), when the term social exclusion was first being employed in the UK and when the full extent of the new poverty was becoming evident to academics and policy researchers.

In responding to the increasing unemployment crisis in South Wales in the 1980s and early 1990s, Stuart Jones and I identified from 1991 Census data the ten most disadvantaged communities in South Wales. We visited those communities to explore the characteristics of social exclusion and developed a categorisation of the impacts of poverty and the types of social exclusion it was causing at that time (Adamson, 1999).

We identified four fields of social exclusion:

1 Material

In this field we included the conventional role of income poverty in determining family and individual life chances. We saw key factors such as housing tenure, work status, benefit dependency, educational qualifications and car ownership as determining the material quality of life. This field closely coincides with conventional studies of poverty, which consider that poor economic resources lead to additional challenges to the quality of life.

2 Environmental

This field referred to the physical and housing environment and included factors such as location, housing quality, housing density, transport links and proximity to key services, including education and health services. Lack of play facilities, community buildings and useable public spaces added to the social exclusion of families and communities already experiencing material social exclusion.

3 Social

This field referred to an individual's overall status in the community including their age, gender, marital, parental, disability and employment status. It also includes the quality of family relationships and wider patterns of community support. Typically, social exclusion was evident where family and community support was weak and where social isolation characterised social experience.

4 Relational

Here we were concerned to identify the social standing of poor families and communities and the impact on their relationships with wider agencies that engaged with them. The focus was on the stigma of poverty, the failing public services being delivered to the most disadvantaged communities and the impact of stereotyping on the interaction between members of communities and the wider community and public agencies. Processes identified included the way that communities with high police and social

services referrals became universally characterised as 'problem' communities, a label which was then applied to all residents of that community. This resulted in negative outcomes from the majority of interactions with external agencies. This field of exclusion closely accords with the 'relational' aspect of social exclusion identified by Room (1995).

Much of the work leading to this categorisation took place in 1995–6. Revisiting some of these communities today to consider the impact of ten years of regeneration policy inevitably requires an appraisal of the continued usefulness of these categories. At that time, the major cause of the material experience of social exclusion in Wales was unemployment. Since then, unemployment-related poverty has gradually decreased throughout the UK as levels of unemployment consistently fell, a trend reversed only recently by recession.

However, the same period also saw the rise of work-related poverty (Kenway, 2008) since, despite the National Minimum Wage, family incomes failed to move the poorest communities out of income poverty even when the rate of employment increased. Fundamentally, the same period is also marked by the stubborn refusal of the numbers of incapacity benefit claimants to change significantly. The variants of New Deal programmes have skimmed off the most employable in marginalised communities and left a bedrock of the most difficult sections of the population whose employability is almost impossible to improve.

Consequently, the forms of social exclusion identified in the four categories outlined above remain true for a significant body of the population. As a starting point for the assessment of the impact of devolved policies on poverty they remained appropriate.

However, in work for this project and recent work for the BBC in Wales (*Week In Week Out*, 2009) I have become concerned with the cultural impact of long-term poverty and the gradual passivity, inertia and disengagement that settles over poor communities – perhaps best summed up as the death of aspiration. I have spoken to young people without hope, ambition or purpose, who live their lives on a day-to-day basis. They

have no concept of personal agency and no resources to apply to any aspiration they might develop. The limit of their social world is the edge of the estate or community in which they live and they enjoy no cultural or social relationships outside their immediate family and peer group.

I wanted to consider this cultural aspect alongside the characteristics of social exclusion outlined earlier. In my opinion it is necessary to formulate an assessment of the impact of devolved regeneration policy on poverty in the UK that encompasses the cultural confinement observed in many people living in poor communities. I also wanted to be sure that the pattern observed in Wales is experienced across the UK and that any model developed to describe the contemporary lived experience of poverty is adequate and robust enough for general application.

During this project I have travelled across the UK extensively, visiting some of its poorest communities. During visits I tried to observe and understand the local experience. I had formal meetings and informal conversations. I walked through communities to gain a sense of perspective on key issues such as housing quality and physical infrastructure. In trying to assimilate this information and the frequent contradictions between formal policy document statements and what people described to me in their communities I borrowed a series of metaphors from the world of tourism:

- atmosphere;
- landscape; and
- horizon.

By **atmosphere** I refer to the feel of a place. What would it be like to live here? How do residents feel about their community? Does it feel safe or dangerous? Does it feel welcoming or hostile? Is it isolated or connected to the wider world? How does anti-social behaviour affect community relations? Are there problems of alcohol and substance misuse? How clear are its boundaries and are they barriers to both insiders going outwards and outsiders coming in? Do residents have a sense of identity and is it positive or negative? Is the community

cohesive or fractured by social division? Is the community celebrated or stigmatised?

The atmosphere of the community combines aspects of the social and relational fields identified above, but more from a sense of the social experience of living in the community than as an objective external analysis. As tourists our attempts to capture the atmosphere of a place is to feel briefly how residents feel. A useful approach in understanding the impact of regeneration policy is to ask residents directly about the impact on their general perceptions of the neighbourhood. This approach has been formalised in the MORI polls deployed by the NDC. Other evaluations, including those of Communities First in Wales, have used more qualitative techniques. The concept of atmosphere used in this study is therefore a simple personal attempt to capture a sense of how it might feel to be a member of that community.

In **landscape** experiences we seek to discover briefly a different view of the world. As tourists this might be a city skyline, the curve of a beach or the line of a mountain range. Here I have applied it to assess the physical nature of a neighbourhood: the layout of its streets and the social divisions they create; the quality and the appearance of the housing and its density and distribution; the gardens and green spaces and the quality and use of public space. I ask whether there are play and sports spaces and an infrastructure of community buildings, schools and surgeries. Is the community well connected to the external world by public transport and road networks? Is the community in physical decay or renewal? Are residents contributing to the evolution of the landscape in community environmental projects, gardening and allotments? This category matches the environmental category in the earlier typology.

Finally, the term **horizon** captures something of the social horizon felt by community residents. Here the concern is with cultural and psychological rather than physical horizons, although the physical isolation of many poor communities as peripheral estates contributes significantly to the sense of possibilities experienced by residents. Another concern is how far residents look outside their community and how far they feel equipped to travel physically and socially outside of it. Do young people live entirely in their family and peer culture

or are there social and cultural experiences that challenge and change them in the process? Do residents accept low educational outcomes as the norm? Are poor health profiles routinised and accepted fatalistically? In other words, what is the relationship between local cultures and more generalised social experiences in more affluent communities? Perhaps most importantly, are there bridging mechanisms that assist rather than hinder engagement with and travel to the wider horizon?

The following assessments apply these terms in an attempt to judge how much has changed in the lived experience of poverty and social exclusion after ten years of devolved regeneration policies.

5 The devolved policy programmes

This section of the report outlines each administration's policy platform and charts its development and evolution. This is followed by an assessment of its impact on the lived experience of poverty through the metaphors of atmosphere, landscape and horizon. One of the tendencies of working in social policy in a devolved UK is that everyone focuses on the policies of their own regional context and tends not have expert knowledge of other regions. The most difficult challenge of this project has been to map and understand the policy development that has occurred separately in each region. I am very grateful to those who have patiently explained this process in their region. However, I am sure that some misperceptions and misunderstandings remain; I apologise for these and for any omissions and errors that follow in my descriptions of the policies.

Northern Ireland

A frequent reaction among academics is to forego analysis and commentary on social policy in Northern Ireland as too difficult, beyond their experience and beset with too many special circumstances arising from the legacy and impact of sectarian conflict. This was indeed my first reaction and I am grateful that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation dismissed my excuses. The visit to Northern Ireland was revelatory in showing the difficult circumstances in which regeneration takes place and the additional barriers that exist for community members, voluntary organisations and government departments in tackling the severe poverty of the region.

Academic fear of commentary on Northern Ireland has some foundation: the region presents challenges for anyone wishing to understand the policy development process and the pattern of delivery of regeneration-related policies. The period of concern in this study covers the momentous

achievement of the Good Friday Agreement on 10 April 1998, the devolution of power to the Northern Ireland Assembly and extensive periods of suspension of devolution when responsibility for policy reverted to the Northern Ireland office. With the restoration of devolution in May 2007, a flurry of policy development occurred, much of which has a bearing on the future pattern and level of poverty in Northern Ireland. It is clearly premature to comment specifically on these emerging policies.

Much of the period in question also saw an overriding concern with the peace process and its maintenance. Only recently is the issue of the poverty agenda arising through the policy process becoming a more central concern. Inevitably, in comparison with the other devolved regions, the design and implementation of regeneration policy has been a fractured process and there was a strong feeling amongst all interviewees in Northern Ireland that delays in delivering the regeneration agenda in comparison with the rest of the UK were evident. Many felt that the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly prevented the early development of a distinctive approach to regeneration in Northern Ireland and that the policies were only now emerging to tackle area-based poverty.

However, despite those beliefs, there is a policy history in Northern Ireland that aims directly at alleviating poverty. The period of concern here begins with the New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) programme introduced in July 1998. This programme was the follow-on from the original Targeting Social Need programme established in 1991. As with the previous TSN programme there was a concern to reduce 'community differentials' as well as recognise the broad distribution of poverty in Northern Ireland (NIA, 2001a).

The New TSN focused on the key objectives of unemployment and improving employability, addressing general inequalities in health, education and housing and in tackling the general social

exclusion experienced by key groups in Northern Ireland. Its social inclusion agenda represented a key concern with the Promoting Social Inclusion programme as a specific policy strand within the New TSN which was separately consulted on in 1998. Consequently, it is not simply an area-based regeneration policy, which is of most interest in this study, but it represents a fundamental policy terrain in which more specific regeneration-focused policies have operated. Consequently, it is important to consider its broad parameters.

Administratively, New TSN was supported by a specific New TSN Central Unit in the Assembly and an Inter-Departmental Equalities and Social Need Steering group was established which included representatives from the Northern Ireland Office as well as the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Central Unit eventually became the Central Poverty Unit in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). New TSN was not a separately funded policy stream but an attempt to co-ordinate actions across all departments of government. Each department was required to produce an annual TSN Action plan that outlined how it would support the TSN objectives in the department's actions and programmes. These were collectively published in *Vision into Practice* in 1999 and updated in the *Making it Work* document (NIA, 2001b). Each plan was reviewed annually and judgements of achievements against the proposed actions were made. The intention was for the programme to influence the policies and spending patterns of all government departments as part of a general improvement in the impact of public services on poverty and social exclusion.

The initiative was thus primarily a programme bending approach in which a centrally determined set of objectives were to influence the work of all departments and impact on key problems underpinning poverty in Northern Ireland. The 2004 Annual Report also added the concept of mainstreaming to describe the process of integrating New TSN 'into the policy and programme development of all departments' (NIA, 2004, p. 1).

The 2003 Evaluation of the New TSN identified a number of problems with this approach. Most importantly, it found little evidence of additionality: few government departments could point to

major actions that 'would not have happened anyway' (OFMDFM, 2003, p. 101). New TSN also appeared at the time of the evaluation to operate within departmental boundaries with little evidence of joint approaches to tackling the housing, education and health inequalities. These tended to be focused on by the main departments but with little crossover into other statutory areas that could support improved equality in these key policy domains. However, individual reports for some departments pointed to evidence of skewing efforts and resources towards the New TSN objectives, although this was in part limited by the relevance of the New TSN programme to the remit of any specific department.

Many of these limitations were confirmed in the 2004 Study of the New TSN (OFMDFM, 2004) which has prompted the late 2006 launch of the Life Time Opportunities policy platform (OFMDFM, 2006). The policy adopts the UK government targets for halving child poverty by 2010 and its eradication by 2020. The policy identified eight key areas for actions within a new anti-poverty strategy. With a strong emphasis on a life-stages model of poverty, the programme proposes targeting early years intervention with the under 4s, a children and young persons programme for 5–16 year olds, actions for working-age adults and for citizens beyond working age. As in the case of New TSN, it is a cross departmental initiative that targets:

- eliminating poverty;
- eliminating social exclusion;
- tackling area-based deprivation;
- eliminating poverty from rural areas;
- shared future shared challenges to reduce sectarian divisions;
- tackling inequality in the labour market;
- tackling health inequalities; and
- tackling cycles of deprivation (OFMDFM, 2006).

Central to the concerns of this research is the focus on tackling area-based deprivation and the link to and reinforcement of the People and Place Strategy which was launched in 2003 (DSDNI). Offering a seven- to ten-year programme of urban regeneration, the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (NRS) outlines a multi-stranded approach to regeneration in the 36 most deprived urban areas. The areas are termed Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and have been selected using the Noble Index and represent the top 10% of deprived neighbourhoods. The policy promotes community, economic, social and physical renewal. Central to the approach is the improvement of public services in the target communities. In government the programme is managed by the Cross-Departmental Group under the leadership of the Minister for Social Development, with representatives from all the other Assembly departments.

The structure and detail of the programme borrow much from the Welsh Assembly's Communities First programme and are an outcome from the Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government joint lead on social inclusion within the British Irish Council. The British Irish Council was established in 1999 following the Good Friday Agreement. Wales has partnered Northern Ireland in the development of its regeneration policy. Key features of the policy include a central role for Neighbourhood Partnerships, supported by a development team where necessary. The Partnership plays a lead role in analysing community needs, developing a vision statement and formulating action plans that take the community forward.

My visit to Northern Ireland coincided with the April 2009 launch of the Rural Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Framework by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). Delivered through a Rural Development Programme, the policy promotes business and job growth and develops projects that 'will enhance the quality of life in local communities and support strong community infrastructures' (DARD, 2009, p. 3). Policy strands include fuel poverty, access to transport and childcare provision and an anti-poverty and social inclusion challenge programme. It represents an attempt to tackle rural poverty

in Northern Ireland and is based on especially commissioned research papers by the Rural Community Network (RCN, 2008) and the Rural Development Council (RDC, 2008). The policy also proposes a programme of community development that recognises the special characteristics of communities and poverty in the rural context.

The policies identified above are the core regeneration policies evident in Northern Ireland since the late 1990s. In addition, there is a wide range of policies in health, education and housing that may have impacted on poverty. The three phases of the Peace Programme have also spent considerable sums of money in some of the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland. This programme was administered through the establishment of local strategy partnerships that operated at district council level and consisted of representatives from private, statutory and voluntary sectors. For Peace III, the partnerships have been reorganised to operate at sub-regional level, comprising a number of council 'clusters'.

Assessment of impact

Among those interviewed in Northern Ireland a consensus emerged that the implementation of regeneration policy had been a fractured process because devolution faltered during periods of suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly. This was believed to have significantly delayed the development and delivery of policy. Some interviewees regarded periods of direct rule as less partisan and as producing policies modelled on good practice elsewhere in the UK. Others felt that it had delayed delivery and given too much power to civil servants who retained a centralist approach. Overall, there was a negative evaluation of the impact of New TSN and concerns about the delays in Lifetime Opportunities being ratified and delivered. Concerns reflected more formal evaluations that New TSN had failed to deliver an integrated approach to poverty and that policy remains locked in silos within the specific departments of the NI Assembly. Some cited the separate DARD Rural Poverty and Social Inclusion programme as a clear example of failure to develop an integrated policy platform that looked at how place conditions poverty throughout Northern Ireland.

There was also a general view that sectarianism provided a major barrier to area-based approaches to regeneration. The divisions between communities ensured that acute competition for resources and jealousies over gains by specific communities effectively meant that any actions on one side of the sectarian divide had to be replicated on the other. This was seen to cause difficulties in addressing specific concerns in particular communities. One interviewee spoke of the predominant view that resource allocations were 'either for us or for them'. It was also felt that Assembly Members reflected this strong community bias and that suspension of the Assembly had prevented a maturation of representation, which would have enabled a more objective and strategic overview of needs in the general community. Recognition of this, and the need to shift the focus from separation to sharing, is reflected in the document *A Shared Future Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland* (OFMDFM, 2005).

In relation to the NRS, interviewees expressed major concerns about the levels of local engagement and the ability of public sector representatives on partnerships to integrate with community representatives. It was felt that the process of delivery remained very top-down with, for example, representatives of the Department of Social Development (DSD) attending all partnership meetings. This is perceived as a control function rather than a support mechanism which documentation suggests it is intended to be. There were also reported delays in approving action plans and of a proliferation of minor projects which were outside the action plan structure. Concerns were also expressed about the proposed transfer of responsibilities for Neighbourhood Renewal to the local authorities in the Reform of Public Administration process.

Some of these concerns can be verified by the more formal study of the NRS by the Assembly Committee for Social Development (2009). The Committee reviewed the progress of the programme and called for a clearer determination of locally agreed targets that would provide a means of checking future progress. Procedures were regarded as bureaucratic and there was patchy buy-in from public sector agencies.

It also argued for some quick wins to boost the confidence of partnerships in the NRS programme following evidence of funding delays. The Committee also made major recommendations to improve the governance of the programme in order to develop a more strategic tier that further engaged relevant departments. Perhaps most damning was the statement in its Executive Summary that 'it could be argued that little measurable improvement has been achieved'.

The formal evaluations considered alongside opinion expressed in interviews paint a clear picture of a significant lack of impact of regeneration policy in Northern Ireland. The suspension of devolution is a major factor but the inevitable predominance in policy of the peace process and continued social division represent major barriers to an approach based on the concept of neighbourhood. Applying the three criteria of atmosphere, landscape and horizon confirms that there is little personal impression of change.

The **atmosphere** in the communities visited did not create an impression of communities emerging from poverty and embracing a more confident future. Conversations were dominated by discussion of seemingly intractable social divisions and continued conflicts, albeit on a scale which is a major improvement on the past. The personal welcome in each community was overwhelmingly warm and friendly but the overriding impression was one of isolation and enclosure. There were also negative trends in the wider atmosphere of the voluntary sector and community organisations, who felt themselves to be challenged by poor funding and its short-term nature. Struggles to secure core funding for support agencies and the failure to establish a compact between government and the voluntary sector helped create a negative atmosphere for wider community involvement. It was perceived that the proliferation of community groups under Peace Programme funding was now contracting, and that key cultural organisations in informal education were losing funding.

This was reinforced at community level by **landscape** characteristics. Housing quality was poor, streets were bare and devoid of furniture, green space or physical ornament. The now internationally famous wall murals spoke of division and conflict and were themselves faded

and worn. Community buildings remained more fortress-like than even their most besieged mainland equivalents. Interviewees spoke of poor public transport links and challenges of travel across sectarian divisions to places of work and education. Car ownership was low and social and cultural life seemed almost entirely rooted in the community. This impression was reinforced by a Belfast which at night was virtually empty of revellers and where the legacy of conflict still confined people to their own communities.

The implications for **horizon** are significant and suggest the impossibility for people in poverty in Northern Ireland to escape even in imagination from the confines of the immediate community. The lack of confidence and inability to develop external orientation found in many poor communities in the UK are reinforced by the fear that sectarianism brings to social relations. Sectarianism adds to the sense of isolation and enclosure experienced generally in marginalised communities. Poverty and sectarianism combine to make regeneration in Northern Ireland doubly difficult compared with anywhere else in the UK.

Wales

Of the four devolved administrations in this study, Wales offers the most straightforward policy context to study. Regeneration policy in Wales has centred on the Communities First policy since its launch in 2000. There have been reviews of the programme and some revision, but the principal policy components remain unchanged and a further three-year programme of funding has recently been agreed. This demonstrates continuing Welsh Assembly Government commitment and cross-party support for long-term commitment to the programme. This long-term perspective in many respects was the most important break with past policies at the time of its launch and acknowledged widespread discontent with the frequent changes of policy and the short-termism of funding for all previous regeneration initiatives in Wales.

Communities First was launched as an area-based regeneration strategy to tackle widespread poverty in Wales. With acute concentrations of poverty in the post-industrial communities of the

South Wales Valleys, the programme also reflected growing awareness of rural poverty in the late 1990s. The National Assembly for Wales made an early commitment to reducing poverty in its *Better Wales* (NAfW, 2000a) document. This identified three priorities: 'sustainable development', 'tackling disadvantage', and 'equal opportunities'. The Communities First policy emerged from an extensive consultation process (NAfW, 2000b), which in itself was a major departure from the previous practice of the Welsh Office and marked a different approach to policy development on the part of the Welsh Assembly Government. The depth and scale of the consultation, and the influence it exerted on the policy, has ensured continued support for Communities First from the voluntary and public sector in Wales.

The newly commissioned Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) (NAfW, 2000c) was employed to identify the areas to be supported by Communities First with the 100 most deprived wards (Electoral Division) automatically entering the programme. Local authorities were also invited to identify sub-ward pockets of deprivation from their own local evidence, adding a further 32 areas to the programme. Additionally, a further ten 'communities of interest' were identified to assist populations with specific disabilities or patterns of poverty. These included, for example, an ethnic minority project in Cardiff and a domestic violence project in Neath Port Talbot. In 2005, following revision of the WIMD, a further 44 communities were integrated into the programme.

Communities First was based on a model of community engagement and the policy has a number of key instruments that potentially give an active role for the community in the regeneration process. At the heart of programme in each area is the Communities First partnership. This brings voluntary sector, public sector and community representation together within a 'three thirds model'. Importantly, one of the thirds has to be drawn from the community and made up of active community members and representatives from community organisations. The statutory sector comprises one-third and the remaining third is intended to combine the voluntary and business sectors. However, there have been few private sector membership partnerships.

Each area was also allocated a support team, which usually consisted of a co-ordinator, a development worker and clerical assistance, although more extended teams were provided in larger areas or where acute need was identified. These teams were to work in a community development model of practice to raise local capacity to engage with the programme. The teams were also tasked with three key initial objectives. First, each partnership had to produce a 'community-led' audit of issues and problems in the community. It also had to create a 'capacity development plan' outlining actions to improve local engagement, participation and influence. These were to be followed in approximately the third year of the programme by a 'community action plan' that would describe the range of actions to be pursued by the partnership in order to tackle the identified problems.

These actions were informed by a 'community vision framework' identifying six areas for potential action. Rather than a target-based approach, the policy was 'non-prescriptive', allowing local communities to determine their own actions within the broad objectives of the framework that identified actions under the following headings:

- jobs and business;
- education and training;
- environment;
- health and well-being;
- active community; and
- crime and community safety.

The funding for Communities First in its first three years was £83 million. The Welsh Assembly Government was clear in its approach that Communities First was not being funded specifically to deliver regeneration. Rather, it would empower communities to work with the statutory sector, which, in turn, was expected to bend its mainstream expenditure to meet the needs of Communities First Action Plans. The intention of the policy was to mainstream social

inclusion activities by changing the patterns of public service delivery and resource allocation.

On implementation of the policy, the Communities First Support Network was established. This brought together a consortium of eight voluntary sector organisations. The Network provided training, information and communication services to Communities First partnerships. The Wales Council for Voluntary Action, one of the lead agencies in the partnership, was also appointed to administer the Communities First Trust Fund, a £9 million budget (for three years) to which community organisations in Communities First areas could apply for support funding. It was a fast track fund which could approve funding within weeks of application with the intention of quickly pump-priming capacity development in often very small-scale community organisations.

Since 2000 the basic structure and approach of the policy has remained largely unchanged. In 2003, the then Deputy Minister for Regeneration, Huw Lewis, completed a Review of Communities First and made 13 recommendations for change that extended the Trust Fund for a further three years, agreed the setting of some limited targets at partnership level and clarified some of the legal responsibilities of Grant Recipient Bodies. A more comprehensive study was conducted in 2008 by the new Deputy Minister, Leighton Andrews, supported by a Task and Finish Advisory Group of external experts, including this author (WAG, 2008). The Communities Next Review addressed concerns that many partnerships had become locked in capacity development activities and were not addressing key themes of the Community Vision Framework. In particular, very little attention had been paid by partnerships to the jobs and business theme, and few interventions were tackling health and educational issues at community level.

It was intended that the outcome of the study should sharpen the focus of partners on more substantive regeneration issue by introducing SMART targets, which partnerships would have to agree with the Communities Directorate that administers the programme. Targets would specifically have to address the key themes of job creation and income maximisation. More fundamentally, the study linked the programme

to the achievement of the Welsh Assembly Government's Child Poverty Targets, which were adopted in 2005 (WAG), and share the same objectives as Westminster's 2010 and 2020 targets. A child poverty heading was added to the Community Vision Framework to facilitate this process. The study also addressed increasing evidence that the Communities First approach was failing to bend mainstream funding by creating the Outcomes Fund to provide matched funding for projects that could demonstrate clear programme bending through a Communities First partnership and a statutory agency working together. The study also abolished the Communities First Support Network and established a tendering process to provide the equivalent services. This reflected concerns in a separate study (WAG, 2007) that the Network had not adequately supported Communities First partnerships.

Assessment of impact

Given my working proximity and constant exposure to the Communities First programme I have engaged in an informal approach to my research in Wales. Previous research examining the Communities First programme was published in 2008 (Adamson and Bromiley). Not wishing to promote research fatigue amongst the sector, my conclusions here are drawn in part from my ongoing experience of the programme, from conversations held in relation to this research and from two incognito visits to two areas I first identified in the 1995 work on social exclusion that have since been incorporated into the Communities First programme. For the purposes of this study I selected one area that has been widely judged to be successful and another that has largely failed – and until recently was at risk of having Communities First funding withdrawn.

Any judgement of the impact of Communities First is initially hampered by the paucity of formal evaluation. The Interim Evaluation by Cambridge Policy Consultants (WAG, 2006) assessed the initial formation of the programme and identified the difficulties experienced during the early years of partnership formation and community auditing, primarily in settling into a functioning relationship between the statutory sectors and the community membership. There were also concerns about

the central administrative resources the Welsh Assembly Government had made available to support the programme, and the knowledge possessed by civil servants and their ability to understand the difficulties of delivering the programme at community level. Most importantly, the Interim Evaluation identified the failure of mainstreaming and programme bending, with only one example evident at the time of the evaluation. In this, the programme was failing in its key approach.

A more recent study of the Communities First programme by the Wales Audit Office also drew the headline conclusion that:

unless the Assembly Government adopts a more robust approach to programme bending, the programme is likely to struggle to meet its objectives. (WAO, 2009, p. 6)

This failure to achieve significant programme bending was confirmed in research conducted with Richard Bromiley for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and published in 2008 (Adamson and Bromiley, 2008). The study examined nine Communities First partnerships to determine the extent to which communities had been empowered by the policy. We concluded that communities had become active and engaged within the Communities First structure, and that in almost all areas there was a core of community activists who were highly active and motivated in the pursuit of the regeneration of their community. They had become skilled and competent in their partnership role and had developed the language and professional practice of partnership membership.

In contrast, we concluded that the statutory sector had not responded with any significant reshaping of services or changed allocation of resources at the local level. In short, the programme bending that was the key objective of Communities First had not been achieved. This research confirmed a widely held view. The Communities Next Review recommended the Outcomes Fund discussed above as a response to this concern. Given that the first allocations from this fund have only recently been made, it is too early to judge its impact. However, without a major shift in public services to programme bending for

Communities First areas the low levels of direct expenditure on the programme is likely to prevent major regeneration outcomes being achieved in the majority of Communities First areas.

In making my personal assessment of the impact of Communities First on the lived experience of poverty I have concluded that the programme has had considerable effect on the **atmosphere** of the majority of communities within the programme. Inevitably, in a policy with nearly 200 partnerships, there is a continuum of success and failure. It is also too soon to make any assessment of the areas added in the 2005 WIMD revision since these are still being integrated with the programme. However, it is possible to conclude that the community auditing, capacity development and action planning processes have had a clear impact on self-perception within communities. This effect is not limited to the community activists engaged directly with the partnership but is experienced by a wider range of community participants who engage with theme groups, community forums, and the many cultural and community events that have characterised the programme in the majority of areas.

Carnivals, summer and winter festivals, sculpture trails, community gardens, revitalised community organisations and even tea dances have all contributed to a changed social experience in the Communities First areas. Many partnerships have been concerned to deliver youth services and provide activities that divert young people from some of the negative behaviours that characterised many of the Communities First areas in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Overall, residents in these areas have lost the apathy and fatalism that seemed the norm at that time. There is also a sense of permanency to this cultural shift, particularly where partnerships have recruited young people who will be long-term active citizens and champions of their communities.

Clearly, this is not a universal effect and there are hard-to-reach groups in Communities First areas that have been largely untouched by the process. Much work needs to be done to extend the impact and major challenges remain in responding to the renewed focus on economic regeneration, job creation and child poverty eradication. Many Communities

First staff point to their lack of training and experience in these fields, and the recession has made these tasks doubly difficult. However, the policy has made irreversible changes to the cultures and behaviours of many residents.

These changes of atmosphere have also had some limited impact on the **landscape** of these communities. Many partnerships have found engagement through environmental projects to be a key mechanism for community engagement. Actions such as litter picking have slowly developed into community gardening and allotments schemes, community arts projects and the improvement of green and public spaces. However, housing quality remains poor. The Welsh Assembly Government has established a Welsh Housing Quality Standard for 2012, which will bring housing to a decent standard and includes improvement to the communal environment. However, the standard applies only to social housing, and the primary mechanism to achieve it has been housing stock transfer. This process is slow and in several local authority areas the tenants have rejected proposals, making it doubtful that the standard can be achieved. Without housing improvement Communities First areas are frequently blighted by very run-down social housing and poorly repaired private housing. Key facilities such as play areas and community centres, where they exist, are also of extremely poor quality and standards of repair. The lack of funding in the Communities First programme for any kind of significant physical renewal has ensured that the physical patterns of social exclusion remain largely unchanged.

A similar conclusion can be drawn in terms of the impact of the programme on social and cultural **horizons**. Communities in the South Wales Valleys have a particularly localised culture deriving historically from the close proximity of the home to the workplace. There is considerable cultural resistance to travel to work and an expectation that cultural and leisure activities will be available in every community. The Communities First programme can be accused of reinforcing this by operating at a spatial level that is often much lower than that associated with area-based regeneration conventionally and where each partnership pursues its regeneration agenda in isolation. There is no strategic component to Communities First, and

the community action plans have generally not connected with the wider local authority community planning process (Adamson and Bromiley, 2008). Critical areas such as health and educational aspirations have been largely unchanged by the programme, and young people are generally still confined by the peer and family culture of the area.

Perhaps the final observation to make is that by visiting a failed area and from familiarity with its history and background it is possible to provide a partial answer to the question posed in Section 2: what would the conditions in a community be if the area-based programmes had not been delivered? In the area visited where Communities First has largely failed to establish itself none of the positive change identified above was evident and the community appeared trapped in conflictual neighbourhood relationships that could not transcend personal differences and disagreements between community organisations. The community was locked in a pattern of social exclusion comparable to its condition in the late 1980s. Fortunately, there is some evidence of change resulting from the threatened loss of Communities First funding.

Scotland

Any analysis of regeneration policy in Scotland has to start with the strategy document *Social Justice: A Scotland Where Everyone Matters* (Scottish Executive, 1999). The document, notable at the time for its high production and presentation quality, set out a clear vision for tackling 'poverty and injustice'. The document identified a set of targets for achievement by 2020 with strategic milestones to be achieved in the interim years. The document adopted a life stages approach to poverty policy which made a clear distinction between 'people and places'. It identified key targets associated with children, young people, families, older people and communities. Central to the concerns of this research was the 'every community matters' (p. 16) component of the strategy, which set out objectives to close the unemployment gap, tackle substance misuse, reduce crime, improve housing quality, encourage voluntarism and improve Internet access. This was an ambitious programme designed to close the

gap between the most disadvantaged communities in Scotland and the wider social experience.

If *Social Justice* is the starting point, the path onwards is less clear. Regeneration in Scotland has undergone considerable evolution since 1999, with major departures from this starting point. While many of the objectives of *Social Justice* have been retained, the mechanisms for their achievement have changed considerably. The *Social Justice* agenda was initially delivered through Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPS). The Social Inclusion Partnership Fund was established in 1998. Implementation of the programme set up 48 area-based SIPS, 14 of which were 'thematic' partnerships, 10 of which focused on young people, for example, the Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership (Winchester, 2003).

The core concern of SIPS was with community engagement (MacPherson et al., 2007). Empowerment was a core theme alongside community involvement.

SIPS ... [s]ought to achieve a more holistic approach; a focus on partnership working and an emphasis on community involvement (Communities Scotland, 2004, p. 2)

It was notable in conversations with the community sector in Scotland that this working practice was now regarded with considerable nostalgia at what was seen as its passing. However, it is worth noting that some interviewees felt that this was a retrospective view, that SIPS at the time had critics within the community sector and that not all SIPS had achieved significant community involvement.

SIPS were supported by Communities Scotland, established in 2001 as a Scottish Executive Agency with the key responsibility for housing, homelessness, communities and regeneration. In addition to its performance and financial monitoring role, it established the Scottish Centre for Regeneration, which is now located within the Regeneration Division of the Housing and Regeneration Department of the Scottish Government following the abolition of Communities Scotland in 2008. The role of the centre was to promote good practice in regeneration, develop learning networks and act as a 'national hub' on regeneration issues.

The outputs from the centre are well respected throughout the UK and have done much to reinforce the belief that Scotland leads the devolved administrations on regeneration issues.

The document *Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap* was published in 2002 (Scottish Executive, 2002a) and signalled the transfer of SIPS into the community planning framework and their integration in 2004 with the Community Planning Partnerships (CPP). This also signalled a move away from local project delivery, which was felt to be too specific and localised in its effect, towards more strategic interventions that sought to link across disadvantaged areas and connect them to more affluent areas. This document was followed in 2003 with guidance on the integration of the SIPS with CPP (Communities Scotland, 2003).

The stated intention was to provide a greater community voice in the community planning process and 'allow decision making on regeneration to be taken at the neighbourhood level within a national framework' (p. 3). However, there was a consensus among those interviewed that the process of integration considerably weakened community influence as the spatial level of the partnership moved from local communities to the local authority area. Each CPP was required to develop a Regeneration Outcome Agreement that linked 'national and local priorities'. In 2004 the SIPS funding was combined with the Better Neighbourhood Services Fund into the (£318 million) Community Regeneration Fund. This fund supported actions that improved employability, education, health, access to local services and quality of the local environment and linked regeneration to the targets in the *Closing the Opportunity Gap* (Scottish Executive, 2002b), which was the budget statement outlining how *Closing the Gap* (Scottish Executive, 2002a) priorities would be met.

The Community Regeneration Fund has since been replaced by the £435 million Fairer Scotland Fund (FSF), which amalgamated it with a further six funding streams to provide an integrated funding source for community regeneration. The objective of the FSF is to assist CPP to regenerate disadvantaged areas. Following the creation of a concordat between the Scottish Government and the local authorities, funding is now provided

to local authorities through the vehicle of a Single Outcome Agreement agreed between the CPP and the Scottish Government. The FSF will itself disappear into the general funding settlement for each local authority. Hypothecated funding for regeneration will merge by 2010 with the general funding profile agreed in the Single Outcome Agreement, which will have to demonstrate support for the 15 National Outcomes established by the Scottish Government. These are:

- business;
- employment opportunities;
- research and innovation;
- young people;
- children;
- healthier lives;
- inequalities;
- crime;
- sustainable places;
- communities;
- environment;
- national identity; and
- environmental impact.

Clearly, many of these national objectives impact on poverty and regeneration and can contribute significantly to their achievement. However, the major concern for interviewees was the new emphasis on the poverty of people rather than place: it was felt that this will not address the high concentrations of poverty evident in Scotland. Additionally, there are major concerns about the competence of local authorities in the anti-poverty agenda and whether these authorities will retain sufficient focus on anti-poverty issues within a non-hypothecated budget allocation. This concern has

been added to by the government decision to focus anti-poverty work on the 30% most deprived, rather than the poorest 20%, which has been the focus of policy to date. This is again seen as diluting effort.

Assessment of impact

There is a widely held view in the UK (and certainly in Wales) that Scotland has generally enjoyed more success historically than elsewhere in regenerating its communities (MacPherson, 2006). With a long history of partnership working that predates New Labour and devolution, it is suggested that close relationships between state and civil society provide for better regeneration outcomes. Interviewees in this project generally felt that considerable progress had been made in regenerating some of the most disadvantaged communities. Although intractable problems remained in some of the large urban estates, there was a very positive appraisal of major changes in key indicators such as the level of crime and substance misuse, compared with the late 1990s. One of the critical factors cited was housing renewal. The link between housing and regeneration in Communities Scotland appears to have been of considerable benefit and ensured that regeneration and housing actions were in close accord. A street conversation with a resident of an estate in Edinburgh spoke very positively of change in the last ten years that had transformed both the quality of the housing and of life on the estate.

Formal evaluations of SIPS at the local and national level point to effective partnership practice, successfully delivered local projects and high levels of community involvement (Communities Scotland, 2004). These appear true for both the area-based SIPS and the thematic partnerships. However, failure to establish baseline data appears to have prevented the identification of measurable outcomes. Evaluators were more confident of 'softer qualitative' improvements to 'perceptions of quality of life' (Communities Scotland, 2006). There are concerns that the achievements of SIPS were variable, and clear examples of good practice obscure the shortcomings of less successful partnerships. There is also a general conclusion that SIPS largely failed to bend mainstream funding and programmes (Communities Scotland, 2006). Civil servants perceive them as having been too localised and project-based and not

sufficiently strategic, and that they failed to create links between deprived areas and more affluent areas with related employment opportunities.

Any ability to evaluate regeneration outcomes since the demise of SIPS is hampered by the extent and pace of change in both funding and management arrangements of regeneration. There appears to have been genuine intent to take forward the lessons learned from the SIPS programme into the CPP, but it is difficult to gauge the extent to which this has happened. Interviewees felt that the community involvement component of SIPS had been severely weakened, and community development workers interviewed felt that community representation had been lost in the CPP structure. As an example, a self-evaluation by the South Ayrshire CPP indicates that all partners believed that, in relation to community involvement in 'decision making and delivery of CPP priorities', the partnership was either in 'early days' (30%), or 'building effectiveness' (70%), with none responding 'performing well' (South Ayrshire CPP, 2007). Currently, the programme appears to be monitored by self-evaluations of this type without a formal national programme of evaluation. It is also likely that evaluation of specific regeneration outcomes will become more difficult as delivery enters the period of non-hypothecated funding within the Single Outcome Agreement.

Some early insight into the workings of the FSF and the Single Outcome Agreement has been provided in a recent study, *Tackling Multiple Deprivation in Communities: Considering the Evidence* (Fyfe, 2009). The report concludes that there are emerging skills in CPP to deal with a 'planning outcomes focus' and that partnership working appears to be improved in the CPP. Many partnerships are adopting themed rather than area-based approaches. Some have skewed targets to improve impact in deprived areas, but there was concern that the 'focus had been taken away from tackling concentrated deprivation in some areas' (p. 15). Additionally, the report confirms concerns about both the loss of community voice and the impact of non-hypothecation after 2010.

In my personal assessment, there has been observable impact on the **atmosphere** of disadvantaged communities in Scotland. In three visits to Scotland I met no one who believed that

things had not changed since 1999. The general alleviation of income poverty in Scotland during that period will have had observable impact in many communities; this, coupled with a clear sense of improvement in key quality of life indicators such as crime, community safety and substance misuse, has considerably improved perception at community level. In North Edinburgh, community workers were proud of past achievements in their community. They were looking into the future with plans to develop social enterprises to tackle employment issues in the community and to provide for a sustainable future for their organisation. Similarly in Glasgow, it was felt that young people were less likely to be involved in substance misuse than previous generations. However, there was a general pessimism about community involvement and the ability to influence emerging structures. Interviewees were especially concerned about the future of regeneration and local anti-poverty projects in the context of a non-hypothecated local authority budget.

Landscape changes have also occurred, largely as a result of housing improvement. The continued link between housing and regeneration in Scotland has clearly brought benefits to the physical renewal of communities. Improvements in community and youth facilities were evident in North Edinburgh as were the development of local shops by the City Council. In Glasgow, housing improvement of low-rise accommodation was also evident in the area visited, but the predominance of high-rise dwellings still presented a challenging landscape. The area was also more evidently 'post-industrial', with areas of dereliction and cleared land. Retail-based regeneration was evident in close proximity to the community, but it was difficult to establish the impact on local residents.

Finally, perhaps as in other areas of the UK, I feel that the regeneration policy programme since devolution has done little to change the **horizon** within disadvantaged communities. Area-based policies have a tendency to focus at the local level and to be project based. In North Edinburgh, waterfront developments had failed to create an employment impact at local level, demonstrating the difficulties of creating linkages between poor neighbourhoods and even relatively local employment opportunities. In Glasgow, the area

had been badly affected by heroin use in the 1980s and there was an aging population with continued heroin dependency. However, it was encouraging that there does not appear to be a similar problem with young people in the community. However, unemployment, poor health and benefit dependency remained characteristics of the area. Again this suggests that local culture and low aspirations can prevent the external orientation that needs to develop in order to enable residents to see beyond the immediate neighbourhood.

England

The examination of area-based regeneration policy in England is also comparatively straightforward given the degree of stability in the key policy programmes. However, a certain degree of complexity is produced by the multiplicity of funding streams that have supported the regeneration process. The new Labour administration made an early commitment to area-based regeneration (Hoban and Beresford, 2001) and the starting point for any account of regeneration policy in England has to be the New Deal for Communities (NDC).

Introduced in 1998 with a projected budget of £2 billion over ten years, the programme started with 17 Pathfinder projects. It was expanded with a further 22 schemes the following year. The NDC Partnerships were required to focus on five areas of intervention:

- housing and environment;
- health;
- education;
- fear and experience of crime; and
- reducing worklessness.

An approach-based in community involvement was required. The programme's pattern of delivery could be seen partly as an attempt to sidestep local government, which was perceived by the new Labour Government as one of the factors contributing to social exclusion through poor service delivery. Although the

relevant local authority was the accountable body in almost all cases, the delivery body was an independent organisation, usually constituted as a Development Trust.

While the first NDC Partnerships were being established, the SEU, newly created in the Cabinet Office by Tony Blair, was identifying the need for a National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (SEU, 1998). Emerging from consultation in 2001 as the National Strategy Action Plan (SEU, 2001), the Strategy set out a vision that 'within 10–20 years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live' (p. 7). NDC was a key element of the Strategy, and the five key areas of intervention identified in NDC were rolled into the Strategy.

The policy identified the '88 most deprived local authority districts' for support and targeted them with an £800 million Community Renewal Fund supported by an additional £45 million for a Neighbourhood Management programme. Additional support to communities was provided through the Community Empowerment Fund (£35 million), and through a minor grant-making programme controlled at the local level, the Community Chest fund (£50 million). This comprehensive policy platform and the associated level of funding signalled an unprecedented faith in the role of communities in the regeneration process as well as the government's confidence in area-based regeneration. This was in addition to the signals that were already clear within the NDC programme. Additional policy strands also supported the overall structure, including the Neighbourhood Warden fund, Skills and Knowledge Fund and Involving Business Fund.

The strategy was also to be underpinned by robust management and support mechanisms. Oversight was by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, which reported to a Cabinet committee. This again demonstrated the centrality of this policy to the government's wider programme. Additionally, Neighbourhood Renewal teams were placed in the regional government offices. The primary delivery mechanism was the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) operating at local authority level to identify need in neighbourhoods and to prioritise actions. LSPs would bring together key local authority departments, health authorities

and police authorities with local communities and the voluntary sector. The policy also introduced the concept of 'floor targets', a standard below which no community should be allowed to fall. This attempted to focus spending and priorities within government departments on addressing their poor levels of performance in the most disadvantaged communities.

The Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder (NMP) programme was also a key element of the Neighbourhood Renewal agenda. The programme commenced in 2001 with 20 Pathfinders with a further 15 added to the programme in 2004. Each Pathfinder is managed by a Neighbourhood Manager with a support team. The delivery vehicle is a multi-agency partnership, with local residents represented at partnership level. The partnerships develop a Local Area Agreement that shapes service delivery in the designated Pathfinder area. Essentially, the programme is a neighbourhood approach to service improvement and places a high value on community engagement as a means to influence service providers.

This overall policy structure remained relatively stable throughout the period under study, with some additional policy additions and funding reorganisation. These have included the Safer Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF), which will allocate, through the LSPs, £265 million between its inception in 2006 and 2010. This includes the funding for the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders. More fundamentally, both phases of the NDC are approaching their conclusion and New Deal Partnerships are planning succession strategies throughout England. Additionally, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund has been replaced by the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF), which also incorporates the Department of Work and Pension's Deprived Areas Fund (DCLG/DWP, 2007). The fund is intended to galvanise 'community actions on worklessness' and is intended to target 'areas of high worklessness by devolving and empowering communities' (p. 5).

Of some concern in the context of this study is the payment of the WNF to local authorities within the new Area Based Grant (ABG) in which the general characteristic is non ring-fenced funding. This raises similar concerns

to those in Scotland following the demise of hypothecated funding for regeneration.

Assessment of impact

Unlike other devolved administrations there is almost an excess of formal evaluations of principal regeneration policies in England. The monitoring and evaluation of NDC has been extensive at the local level and effectively collated to provide a national picture. Both New Deal Communities I visited provided robust evidence of positive change. Similar evaluations are available for all NDC partnerships. The 2005 Interim Evaluation (ODPM, 2005) paints a generally positive picture of change in several key domains of the programme including community engagement and engaging with agencies and environment, with notable progress on crime and fear of crime. However, there was only minor or no change in relation to health, education and employment. Clearly, the evaluation document develops a more nuanced account than can be delineated here, but in broad terms there was an overall positive sense of direction developing from the programme by 2005.

In a more recent and closer view of six NDC areas (DCLG, 2008a) this generally positive evaluation is reinforced. Notwithstanding the authors' caveats about the ability to generalise from six case studies, the report points to a number of factors that suggest an overall positive influence from the programme. For example, 'all six areas outperformed national trends in at least half of 15 instances' where national comparison is possible. All six areas had also 'closed the gap with their parent local authorities'. However, it is worth noting that the selection of the six case studies were from 'better performing' NDCs in order to develop understanding of good practice. Further positive evaluation is provided in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Research Report 39 (DCLG, 2008b), which claims improvement in 32 of the 36 key indicators between 2002 and 2006 and in seven of them by ten percentage points or more. Major gains have been made in 'place based factors' (p. 19) such as crime and perceptions of the neighbourhoods.

However, there is some evidence that for the majority (22%) of the indicators improvement has peaked, and more gains may prove difficult. The

weakest performing areas are health, education and worklessness. This demonstrates the lesser spend on education and health issues in many NDC areas and the more intractable nature of employability issues. It is perhaps also the case that interventions in these fields are likely to require longer timescales before change is evident. The picture is also less impressive when comparing NDCs with the 'comparator' areas, with NDCs exceeding improvement in only 18 indicators and failing to match comparator area improvements in 13 indicators. The full Phase Two evaluation published in autumn 2009 will clearly shape the future of regeneration policy throughout the UK.

It is also worth considering the impact of the 35 NMPs. The programme, described earlier, brought residents and service providers together in an attempt to promote service improvement through partnership. The final evaluation report in 2008 (DCLG, 2008c) points to considerable success in engaging residents. In areas typically of around 10,000 residents they were assessed to have promoted active involvement of 20–60 people in core activities, including Board membership, with wider participation in 'networks, forums and consultation exercises' (p. 5). They also appear to have achieved good representation from different sections of the community, although the evaluation reports some difficulties engaging young people.

Service providers have been variable in their response to the Pathfinders, with police and environmental services demonstrating the greatest levels of engagement. The two agencies also displayed the greatest tendencies to change their patterns of service delivery in response to Pathfinder processes. In contrast to the failure of programme bending in the Welsh context of Communities First, the evaluation identifies 'significant instances of service changes across a wide range of services' (p. 52). Factors that appear to have supported service changes include the level and frequency of contact between residents and service providers and, most importantly, the fit with service provider mission and organisational structure. Some service providers were unable to respond to the Pathfinder process with any major changes to service. The evaluation also reports that:

Influencing mainstream services is clearly not easy nor is success guaranteed; some doors remain closed. Most changes are elaborations or improvements of existing services, not completely new services in themselves. (p. 53)

Overall, evaluations of area-based initiatives in England report a picture of positive change with identifiable impacts on what I have identified here as the lived experience of poverty.

My personal assessment, derived from the limited research for this study, also suggests an overall positive impact on the lived experience of poverty within the two NDC communities visited. In both areas I felt that the **atmosphere** of the communities had been fundamentally changed. My most lasting impression is of the community members I met who were knowledgeable and enthusiastic about NDC and its impact on their neighbourhood. They spoke extensively about improved resources and facilities and I was able to visit several of these. Unlike many such projects in regeneration areas the premises were vibrant and full of people participating in a wide range of activities. Residents spoke of improvements in their sense of personal safety, and a considerable reduction of crime and nuisance in both areas was perceived to have occurred. They also spoke of new resources and activities for young people and their consequent diversion from potentially negative behaviours in the community.

Many of the identified changes were **landscape** changes. Both areas had spent up to 60% of budget on the physical improvement of housing and community buildings. Even to the visitor the effects were discernable. Green spaces were clean and well kept, with new play facilities for children and young people. In one of the areas there had been substantial investment in exercise and sports space as well as play equipment for young children. In the same community housing had been externally improved and back alleys had been gated to create green space and reduce crime. In the other community, a sprawling estate cut in two by a fast spine road, self-identity had been transformed by the creation of a village square with a library and community resource centre, arts performance space and a retail presence.

In both communities there were also examples of potential **horizon**-changing projects in training and employability schemes. Young people were provided with multimedia skills and linked to national media developments in their area. Those at risk of committing car crime were diverted into motor repair schemes. In one area the partnership created 120 jobs for local people and changed the culture of worklessness in the area. Many of those first employed moved on to jobs outside the community once their skills and confidence had been raised, and they then became role models for others. In one area links were made with the local FE college to ensure that graduates from community schemes progressed along a learning programme. All these actions challenged local cultures of passivity and low confidence.

6 Overview

The Introduction to this study identifies the limits of this study and states that it makes no claims to be an evaluation of the four patterns of area-based regeneration that have emerged in the UK. Based on a limited range of examples and a relatively brief project, the status of the views that follow in this section can be no more than personal observations and insights derived from visits to and conversations in places that have experienced the delivery of this range of policies. However, in several key respects there has been remarkable consistency in the views expressed by both those delivering the policies and those recipients who have been involved in the co-production of outcomes at the local level. This consistency has allowed me to comment on some key issues with a degree of confidence that my views are well founded and more generally applicable than the limited sample might initially suggest.

The value of area-based regeneration

My first claim is that area-based regeneration has benefited the communities where it has been implemented. The interviews conducted for this research, the literature read and the local and national evaluations considered all point to a strong conclusion that positive change has been promoted by the various interventions implemented. My personal impressions have also confirmed this finding in the majority of the areas I have visited. This assertion is also evidenced by the lack of change in Northern Ireland, where a consistent and medium-term delivery of area-based intervention has not yet occurred. There, the specific conditions of communities still at the very early stages of a peace and reconciliation process challenge an area-based approach. It is also evident that, in those communities in Wales where Communities First has been widely deemed to have failed, conditions are significantly worse than in more successful areas of Communities First delivery. There is

also evidence in the evaluation of New Deal for Communities that improvements have been achieved compared to comparator communities.

However, the changes recorded here and in the wide range of sources reviewed suggest that changes apply to the lived experience of poverty rather than to the level of poverty itself as measured by income criteria. It is suggested here that the range of activities delivered in area-based models of intervention underpin more direct attempts to alleviate poverty through reducing worklessness, for example. Interventions that change **atmosphere, landscape and horizon** in disadvantaged communities are prerequisites for the success of more conventional strategies of inclusion through the labour market. Without the preparatory groundwork provided by area-based approaches, the changes in local culture, aspiration and engagement that are essential for the success of other initiatives will not be evident.

The overall value that can be placed on area-based regeneration should promote long-term government commitment to maintaining policies that intervene at the local level. Policies that target place are an essential support for targets that more directly target people. Income poverty is best tackled with national policies grounded in more progressive taxation, a supportive benefit system and the use of the National Minimum Wage to reduce work-based poverty.

Striking a balance between the local and the national

The content of this study identifies a degree of tension between area-based strategies and the more strategic interventions favoured by government. Policies grounded in local patterns of participation and engagement inevitably address highly localised issues and concerns and can find it difficult to develop contributions to more strategic objectives of poverty reduction, employability and health or educational improvement. The grime and crime concerns of local residents are often the

product of low aspirations and the absence of wider horizons. It is likely that the general poorer performance of area-based regeneration in the fields of employability, education and health are in part the result of a strong feeling at community level that these are expert areas of intervention and beyond the scope of the local process.

Here the community development process is essential and the support of communities by expert teams is able to bring community representatives to higher levels of understanding of the patterns and causes of poverty in their community. The community members of the NDC partnership I met in England were informed, articulate and more than able to address key issues in a professional and critical manner. This is also confirmed by previous research on community empowerment in Wales (Adamson and Bromiley, 2008). Linking local initiatives to national targets in key policy fields is an effective means of encouraging local partnerships to address issues of national concern. Emerging practice in Wales in response to the linkage of Communities First to child poverty targets will provide illustration of how this might work in practice over the next three years.

However, there is a danger that a strong government focus on strategic gains can shift policy away from area-based models of delivery and overemphasise policies targeted at people rather than place. There is a clear risk of this happening in Scotland currently, and it is essential that the historical role of communities is not diminished or lost. Social policy is subject to trends and fashions and it may be that the trajectory of area-based policies has reached a zenith and is falling in favour of alternative approaches. The development of non-hypothecated funding of regeneration in Scotland and the changes occurring in England in the method of delivery of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund suggest a renewed faith in local government as the main regeneration delivery agency and a financial structure that creates less clear requirements for local authorities to address the spatial concentrations of poverty within their boundaries.

The relationship between funding and success

I have, throughout this report, avoided any attempt to assess the comparative spend in each of the devolved administrations. This is in part because of key difficulties in backwardly tracking initial budget allocations and later supplements, and in part because of difficulties of comparing totally different policy contexts and their relationship with spending in a wide range of associated policies. There is also evidence that:

Relationships between spend and any associated outcomes will rarely be immediate, obvious and 'linear'. (DCLG, 2008a, p. 117)

However, it is worth noting that spending in England, if considered at an area level rather than as a per capita basis of total population, would appear to be significantly higher than in Scotland, Northern Ireland and especially Wales. The wide range of associated policies within the Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, each with a hypothecated budget, has ensured that local actions have been funded. Community members of a NDC partnership confirmed that once they had made a decision, they had funds to make it happen. This is in contrast to Wales, where residents who engage with the Communities First process have no direct funding to implement projects. Instead, they have to write funding proposals to external funders such as the Lottery Fund, often without success, and the consequent disappointment impacts on their future levels of enthusiasm and engagement.

Consequently, the level of funding is important and must be sufficient to enable **atmosphere**, **landscape** and **horizon** changes. Changes to the **landscape** are particularly expensive but are an essential ingredient of the regeneration process. Rapid evidence of physical change promotes community participation since it demonstrates in a very immediate way that change is possible. The lack of this evidence in Communities First areas in Wales severely hampers the ability of residents to accept that change is possible, with negative consequences for the levels of engagement and participation. As we enter a period of potentially major cuts in

public expenditure it is essential that commitment to area-based regeneration is maintained if the progress of recent years is not to be rapidly lost.

The centrality of service improvement, mainstreaming and bending services

The evidence from this study is that bending mainstream public services is very difficult. In Scotland, evaluation of SIPS suggests that this rarely happened. Similarly in Wales, the interim evaluation of Communities First, commentary by the Wales Audit Office and research by this author suggests it has not occurred. Similar conclusions have been drawn for New TSN in Northern Ireland. Evidence from NDC and Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders suggests more success in England: this should be thoroughly examined to discover what facilitated such better outcomes. However, even here the success is associated with particular service providers and success beyond policing and environmental services is less evident. It is essential that this issue is more thoroughly explored, especially in relation to health and education since in many respects poor educational performance and ill-health underpin the difficult relationship to the labour market experienced by poor communities (Adamson, 2009). We need a better analysis of the barriers to programme bending to understand why such service areas are resistant to change. Arguably, locally delivered patterns of educational provision and healthcare are more likely to engage with and challenge the cultural values that prevent engagement with learning and healthier lifestyles. However, this view is not easily promoted among health professionals and educationalists.

The role of delivery structures

Across the four policy models examined there is considerable variation in established delivery structures. Variation in the relationships between central government, local government and community agents is considerable. A study of these different structures can provide useful insights for future policy design.

Central government is perhaps the key player in regeneration in that it frames the policy and ultimately controls the allocated budgets. The commitment of central government is therefore essential to achieving regeneration outcomes. Evidence from the devolved administrations points to certain key factors. In Northern Ireland, the evidence from New TSN suggests that central government departments find it difficult to achieve the joined-up relationships needed to drive the regeneration agenda through all aspects of policy. Similar observations have been made of the Welsh Assembly Government and the failure of several internal mechanisms established to challenge the policy silo structures:

Cross-departmental and joined up working has not emerged. Convention has frustrated initial optimism that, as a small country with clearly defined powers, a new politics and a new way of working would emerge. The optimism was partly grounded in a view that the National Assembly began with a blank sheet and could determine its own internal structures. However, traditional departmental and divisional frameworks appear as solid now as they were in the days of the Welsh Office. (IWA, 2006)

In England, the establishment of the SEU, initially within the Cabinet Office, appeared to have some success in inserting the social inclusion agenda into the mainstream activities of government departments. However, elsewhere in the UK it would seem that most departments have remained primarily concerned with their core activities and have not responded well to regeneration-related links.

Local government has played a key role and, as the front-line delivery agent of the majority of public services, can make a huge impact on local communities. The more confined powers of local authorities in Ireland has made a contribution beyond physical regeneration more difficult, and the lack of a housing function makes landscape change especially difficult.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the local authority delivery route is the achievement of consistency of quality of delivery. There is good evidence from Scotland of variation of performance

within SIPS and CPP, and in Wales Communities First has seen considerable variation of achievement. It seems logical that generally failing local authorities might also experience difficulties in delivering effective regeneration. Consequently, the promotion of good practice is essential and the development of adequate training structures and routes for the professional development of key local authority workers becomes an essential element of achieving greater uniformity of outcome. As regeneration moves more substantially into the hands of local authorities in Scotland these issues will become even more salient.

Voluntary sector organisations also have a key role to play, and as many NDC partnerships move into their succession period and establish Development Trusts, this pattern of delivery will become more common. In Wales, the Communities First programme has in some areas been delivered by Development Trusts and the experience has generally been positive, especially where the programme was initiated by longer-standing community organisations with strong roots in the local community. However, there is a potential danger in this route of diversification and dilution. Mission drift as future actions chase funding can be a real problem, and the perennial challenge of maintaining core funding can drain the energies of the best organisations.

In reality, the success of regeneration will depend on the quality of collaboration between these different sectors: a more integrated and collaborative approach to regeneration will yield benefits.

The role of active citizens

My visits to different projects also suggest that active neighbourhood engagement and participation is an essential ingredient for successful regeneration. Although part of the general delivery mechanism, my observations suggest that structures that deliver real influence for local residents make a significant contribution to the regeneration process. The clear role for local people in the two NDC partnerships visited was a key element of the achievements identified. It was genuinely inspiring to meet local residents engaged in the complex management of significant sums

of funding and working alongside professional support teams to establish regeneration priorities. Similarly, meeting street ambassadors who took their natural pride in their community into a more developmental role and who worked together as a unified team to improve their estate demonstrated the contribution of local engagement.

Communities First in Wales provides the exemplar of community engagement and a clear attention paid to capacity development and the long-term support of residents' participation in partnership mechanisms. This illustrates the contribution of community development practice to the achievement of regeneration. In all visits, the role of local development teams in engaging and developing residents was a critical component of the overall delivery structure.

The evolution of policy

In all devolved administrations there have been notable policy developments since devolution, and area-based regeneration policy has evolved as interim evaluations have fine-tuned practice. Wales demonstrates the highest levels of consistency and sustained support for its regeneration policy. The primary structures remain unchanged but there have been responses to identified shortcomings. The most recent attempts to improve programme bending by the establishment of the Outcome Fund will further refine delivery and, it is to be hoped, move the programme towards the Holy Grail of mainstreamed regeneration activity in all public services. England has also retained a central commitment to the New Deal programme, although a number of related policies have changed around it. As the end of the programme approaches and emphasis shifts even further towards the welfare-to-work agenda, it is essential that the gains from the NDC are consolidated and retained with a continuing area-based approach.

Northern Ireland perhaps demonstrates most explicitly the difficulties caused by a fractured process of policy delivery; it is only now that there is a clear sense that regeneration can find its place in the core policy platform of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Scotland demonstrates the most rapid rate of policy change,

and there are evident risks that learning from past experiences is in danger of being lost.

The need to change horizons

Despite the importance of all these observations, I believe the most important conclusion from this study concerns the way in which regeneration policy needs to promote cultural change. Current area-based approaches are most likely to achieve changes to **atmosphere** and **landscape** and less likely to achieve changes to **horizon**. As important as the first two are, I contend that regeneration will not be successful without changes to **horizon**. By this I mean that regeneration initiatives must also promote changes to local family, peer and communal cultures. There is evidence of some impact, particularly in interventions with young people in Scotland, England and Wales; but it is not a structural component of regeneration, rather an accident of associated activities. In particular, we need regeneration activities that directly target educational and health issues at community level. We need to develop approaches that more consciously raise educational and health aspirations. Many people in poor communities expect to fail at school and expect to suffer ill-health by middle age. There is little point in school improvement or increasing access to healthcare if the underlying values of the local culture prevent behavioural change.

This pattern of change can be achieved by providing residents of all ages with social experiences illustrating alternatives that might not be visible in the local community. Mechanisms can include sports, arts and cultural activities that promote a greater sense of personal agency and self-management. Activities providing and celebrating personal achievements are essential to raising personal and communal levels of confidence. Events promoting communal achievements encourage greater involvement in future provision. All these approaches are evident in the community development activities often associated with regeneration initiatives.

However, we rarely see the **bridging** mechanisms that take forward the learning in these activities into more formal links with opportunities and provision outside the immediate community.

The young person who learns video-making skills in a local project must be provided with a **bridging** mechanism to the local FE college. The community volunteer who develops organisational skills must be facilitated into further employability activities. Levels of quite intense personal support must be written into the structure of future area-based regeneration activities. Currently, it is largely a matter of luck that people who engage with regeneration within their community find a route to the external world of improved health, better educational attainment and, most importantly, to employment. These routes should be designed, structured and routine, rather than accidental.

7 Conclusion

This study has outlined the principal area-based regeneration policies that have emerged in the four UK nations since devolution in 1999. Clearly, policy divergence has occurred; however, despite different titles, funding regimes and models of delivery, two central features of the devolved policies remain constant.

- Multi-sectoral partnership has been established as the primary mechanism for tackling the complex patterns of social exclusion, which the policies all seek to eradicate. The objective is to bring all the key service providers together to better integrate solutions to the many problems that cohere in poor places.
- Community engagement has also been a core component of all approaches to date, and community representation in the multi-agency partnership has been seen as the central mechanism for linking residents' experience to the actions and interventions the programmes have implemented.

As many of these programme reach their full term it is essential that we look to both the ways in which these two features have been implemented and the variations that have occurred in the broader patterns of implementation in order to fully inform the development of future policy. It is equally essential that we learn from the experience of the past ten years in all four devolved nations. We must develop future interventions that capitalise on the positive lessons that have emerged and avoid repetition of the negative outcomes. This will require much research, not simply in government-led evaluation but in independent evaluations by academic and practice-based communities. This study is offered as a small contribution to that process.

References

- Adamson, Dave (1999) 'Poverty and social exclusion in Wales today', in D. Dunkerley and A. Thompson (eds) *Wales Today*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press
- Adamson, Dave and Bromiley, R. (2008) *Community Empowerment in Practice: Lessons from Communities First*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Adamson, Dave (2009) 'Still Living on the Edge: Poverty and Disadvantage in Wales', *Contemporary Wales*, Vol. 21. Cardiff: University of Wales Press
- BBC Wales (2009) One Family in Wales, *Week In Week Out*, 14 April 2009. Cardiff: BBC
- Brewer, M., Muriel, Al., Phillips, D. and Sibieta, L. (2009) *Poverty and Inequality in the UK 2009*. IFS Commentary, C109. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies
- Byrne, David (1999) *Social Exclusion*. Buckingham: Open University Press
- CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) (2009) *Ending Child Poverty: A Manifesto for Success*. London: CPAG
- CSD (Committee for Social Development) (2009) *Report on the Consultation on the Implementation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy*. Belfast: Northern Ireland Assembly
- Communities Scotland (2003) *Integrating Social Inclusion Partnerships and Community Planning Partnerships*. Edinburgh: Communities Scotland
- Communities Scotland (2004) *Evaluation of Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPS)*, Precis. No. 42. A summary series of recent research from Communities Scotland. Edinburgh: Communities Scotland
- Communities Scotland (2006) *An Overview of the Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIP) Programme*. No. 95. A summary series of recent research from Communities Scotland. Edinburgh: Communities Scotland
- DARD (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) (2009) *Rural Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Framework*. Belfast: DARD
- DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) and Department for Work and Pensions (2007) *The Working Neighbourhoods Fund*. London: DCLG/DWP
- DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) (2008a) *Challenges, Interventions and Change: An Overview of Neighbourhood Renewal in Six New Deal for Communities Areas*. London: DCLG
- DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) (2008b) *New Deal for Communities: A Synthesis of New Programme Wide Evidence: 2006–7*. NDC National Evaluation Phase 2. Research report 39. London: DCLG
- DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) (2008c) *Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders: Final Evaluation Report. People, Places, Public Services: Making the Connections*. London: DCLG
- DSDNI (Department of Social Development NI) (2003) *People and Place – A Strategy for Urban Renewal*. June 2003
- Fyfe, Andrew (2009) *Tackling Multiple Deprivation in Communities: Considering the Evidence*. Edinburgh. Scottish Executive and ODS Consulting
- Hirsch, Donald (2008) *What is Needed to End Child Poverty?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Hoban, M. and Beresford, P. (2001) 'Regenerating regeneration', *Community Development*, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 312–20
- IWA (Institute of Welsh Affairs) (2006) *Time to Deliver. The Third Term and Beyond*. Policy Options for Wales. Cardiff: IWA

- Kenway, Peter (2008) *Eradicating Child Poverty: The Role of Key Policy Areas: Addressing In-work Poverty*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Kenway, Peter, MacInnes, Tom, Kelly, Aveen and Palmer, Guy (2006) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland 2006*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and New Policy Institute
- Kenway, Peter, MacInnes, Tom and Palmer, Guy (2008) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Scotland 2008*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and New Policy Institute
- Levitas, R. (1996) The concept of social exclusion and the new Durkheimian hegemony', *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 16, pp. 5–20
- MacPherson, S. (2006) 'Promoting "strategic working" within area-based and thematic social inclusion partnerships in Scotland', *Local Economy*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 180–9
- MacPherson, S., Goodlad, R. and McKenzie, C. (2007) *Learning Lessons from Thematic Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPS). A Report to Communities Scotland*. Edinburgh: Communities Scotland
- Madanipour, A., Cars, G. and Allen, J. (eds) (1998) *Social Exclusion in European Cities*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- NAfW (National Assembly for Wales) (2000a) *Better Wales.com*. Cardiff: NAfW
- NAfW (National Assembly for Wales) (2000b) *Communities First. Regenerating our most disadvantaged communities – a consultation paper*. Cardiff: WAG
- NAfW (National Assembly for Wales) (2000c) *The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation*. Cardiff: NAfW
- New Policy Institute (NPI) (2009) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion in Wales 2009*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and New Policy Institute
- NIA (Northern Ireland Assembly) (1999) *Vision into Practice: The First New TSN Annual Report*. Belfast: NIA
- NIA (Northern Ireland Assembly) (2001a) *New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) by Addressing Objectively Determined Social Need*. Belfast: NIA and Library Services, Research Paper 04/01, August 2001
- NIA (Northern Ireland Assembly) (2001b) *Making it Work: The New TSN Action Plans Reports*. Belfast: NIA
- NIA (Northern Ireland Assembly) (2004) *New Targeting Social Need: Summary Report*. Belfast: NIA
- ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) (2005) *New Deal for Communities 2001–2005. An Interim Evaluation*. London: ODPM/CRESR
- OFMDFM (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister) (2003) *Interim Evaluation of the New TSN: Assessment on the Implementation of Action Plans*. April. Belfast: OFMDFM, Deloitte and Touche
- OFMDFM (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister) (2004) *New TSN: The Way Forward. Towards an Anti-poverty Strategy. A Consultation document*. Belfast: OFMDFM
- OFMDFM (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister) (2005) *A Shared Future Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: OFMDFM
- OFMDFM (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister) (2006) *Lifetime Opportunities. Government's Anti-poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland*. Belfast: OFMDFM
- Room, G. (1995) 'Poverty in Europe: competing paradigms of analysis', *Policy and Politics*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 103–13
- Rural Community Network (RCN) (2008) *Poverty and Place. Defining Rural Poverty: An Issues Based Approach*. Cookstown: RCN

Rural Development Council (RDC) (2008) *Priorities for Action. Challenging the Rural Idyll: Rural Poverty and Social Exclusion*. Belfast: RDC

Scottish Executive (1999) *Social Justice: A Scotland Where Everyone Matters*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2002a) *Better Communities in Scotland. Closing the Gap. The Scottish Executive's Community Regeneration Statement*. September. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive (2002b) *Closing the Opportunities Gap. Scottish Budget for 2003–2006*. November. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Silver, H. (1994) 'Social Exclusion and social solidarity: three paradigm', *International Labour Review*, Vol. 133, No. 5–6, pp. 531–78

SEU (Social Exclusion Unit) (1998) *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*. London: SEU

SEU (Social Exclusion Unit) (2000) *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: Policy Action Team report summaries: a compendium*. London: SEU

SEU (Social Exclusion Unit) (2001) *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal. National Strategy Action Plan. Report by the Social Exclusion Unit*. London: SEU

South Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP) (2007) *Self-Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the South Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership: analysis of responses of the partners*. <http://ww4.south-ayrshire.gov.uk> (accessed 2 June 2009)

WAG (Welsh Assembly Government) (2005) *A Fair Future for our Children*. Cardiff: WAG

WAG (Welsh Assembly Government) (2006), *Interim Evaluation of Communities First*. Cardiff: WAG

WAG (Welsh Assembly Government) (2007) *Evaluation of the Communities First Support Network*. Cardiff: WAG

WAG (Welsh Assembly Government) (2008) *Statement by The Welsh Assembly Government. The Communities Next Consultation*. Cardiff: WAG

WAO (Wales Audit Office) (2009) *Communities First*. Cardiff: WAO

Winchester, K. (2003) 'Research update. social inclusion partnerships', *Research Policy and Planning*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 59–61

Related reports

Bell, D. (2009) *The impact of devolution: Long-term care provision in the UK*.

Bivand, P. et al. (2009) *The impact of devolution: Employment and employability*.

Palmer, G. (2009) *The impact of devolution: Indicators of poverty and social exclusion*.

Wilcox, S. and Fitzpatrick, S. (2009) *The impact of devolution: Housing and homelessness*.

Appendix

Because of the nature of the discussions in this study it is appropriate to anonymise the areas visited during the project. However, to provide the reader with some insight into the nature of the regeneration challenge in each place I have provided short pen portraits of each community.

England

Community A is an inner-city community in north-west England with a broad mix of housing type and tenure. In close proximity to major physical renewal projects it does not appear to have benefited directly in terms of raised employment opportunities. The community is well resourced with physical buildings and community facilities and has both a FE college and university campus nearby. Traditional forms of employment in light industry and manufacturing have significantly diminished, and the area is experiencing ethnic diversification.

Community B is a peripheral city estate in north-east England. It consists almost entirely of local authority-built housing. There has been limited housing renewal but considerable investment in communal facilities. In a classic post-industrial environment, the area has seen high levels of economic inactivity since the early 1990s, and high levels of benefit dependency remain characteristic of the area.

Wales

Community A is a small South Wales Valleys town with a cluster of five related satellite communities. Within the Heads of the Valleys defined regeneration area, the locality was in the past characterised by employment in mining; the local pit closed following the 1984–5 miner's strike. The area has a long history of self-organisation and community activity. Poor health and low educational achievement coupled with high numbers of incapacity benefit claimants represent the key local challenges. Community B is a single-tenure local authority housing estate where there has been little exercise of the Right to Buy. Health is the primary social problem along with poor educational

achievement and a very poor housing stock. Past employment in mining, heavy manufacturing and light industry has largely disappeared from the area, and economic activity rates on the estate are very low, with a correspondingly high level of incapacity benefit claimants.

Northern Ireland

Community A is an inner-city area of mixed tenure with a high component of social housing. Described as an interface community, it has a mixed Catholic and Protestant population and has experienced recent immigration including asylum seekers and Eastern European residents. Income poverty is the key social issue.

Community B is a peripheral city estate with a Catholic population. Unemployment is very high and housing quality very poor. The estate suffers from physical and social isolation, with few local resources and poor transport links to the city.

Scotland

Community A is a peripheral city estate. Economic inactivity remains high, despite improved employment opportunities in the city centre. Local people continue to find difficulties in accessing these and more localised opportunities in waterfront physical regeneration.

Community B is a peripheral city estate. Economic inactivity remains high and there is considerable dereliction, a legacy of past heavy industrial activity. Poor health represents a major barrier to employability.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has supported this project as part of its programme of research and innovative development projects, which it hopes will be of value to policy-makers, practitioners and service users. The facts presented and views expressed in this report are, however, those of the author[s] and not necessarily those of the Foundation.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation
The Homestead
40 Water End
York YO30 6WP
www.jrf.org.uk

This report, or any other JRF publication, can be downloaded free from the JRF website (www.jrf.org.uk/publications/)

A CIP catalogue record for this report is available from the British Library.

© University of Glamorgan 2010.

First published 2010 by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

All rights reserved.
Reproduction of this report by photocopying or electronic means for non-commercial purposes is permitted. Otherwise, no part of this report may be reproduced, adapted, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

ISBN: 978-185935-718-7 (pdf)

Designed by Draught Associates
Project managed and typeset by Cambridge Publishing Management Ltd



Investors in Diversity

www.iiduk.com

Acknowledgements

During the course of this project many people and organisations have given me support, without which I could not have achieved my objectives. Many gave that most precious commodity, time. In order not to challenge the decision to anonymise the communities I visited I will not name any individuals here but simply thank everyone I met in the course of my visits for their warm welcome and for sharing experiences.

About the author

Professor Dave Adamson OBE is the Director of the Centre for Regeneration and Sustainable Communities at the University of Glamorgan. Dave has been active in the field of community-based regeneration for nearly 20 years. He has been a long-term adviser to the Welsh Assembly Government on regeneration policy and was seconded to provide support to the development of the Communities First programme in Wales. He also works closely with communities in Wales to assist local regeneration and has developed a range of participatory action research methods to assist communities' understanding of the challenges of the regeneration process.