

Conceptualising Regeneration: New Deal for Communities in Newcastle upon Tyne

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1.0 Abstract

The New Deal for Communities (NDC), is New Labour’s flagship area-based regeneration initiative. It has been hailed by the Government as a distinctively ‘new’ approach to tackling deprivation, which allows local actors the freedom to set their own agenda for regeneration. The paper examines the ways in which local actors involved in an NDC partnership formulate their understandings of regeneration. It finds that ‘regeneration’ is a term that has been taken up and used by local actors who have not considered its meaning in any substantive depth, which calls into question the extent to which New Labour’s approach to regeneration can be genuinely community-led.

1.1 Introduction

When the Government came to power in 1997, it did so with the intention of radically reworking the state’s approach to regeneration. The Government’s approach to regeneration has three components. First, it is informed by the broad political priorities of the party, including devolution, joined-up government, welfare reform and ‘community’. Second, the policy discourse surrounding regeneration defines deprivation as structural in origin, but portrays the consequences as affecting only very localised areas. Finally, the approach is informed by a critique of previous approaches to regeneration. The Government’s flagship regeneration programme, the New Deal for Communities (NDC) is firmly embedded within this framework.

The NDC is designed to fund projects operating within a clearly identified neighbourhood of not more than 4,000 households over a ten year period. Central Government will provide approximately £50 million over the lifetime of each individual NDC programme, and additional funding is to be levered in through the private, voluntary and other public sectors. The management structures for the programme again follow a partnership approach, but the Government has encouraged bodies who have not traditionally led regeneration programmes in the past to do so. These may include voluntary and community organisations, rather than the local authorities or Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) which have traditionally been placed in charge of regeneration work.

NDC allows for a greater degree of local flexibility in that the aims of the scheme are not too prescriptive, requiring only that bids focus on poor job prospects; high levels of crime; a rundown environment; and poor neighbourhood management and lack of co-ordination of the public services that affect it. This enables increased scope for tailoring bids to suit local needs whilst at the same time adhering to the bidding guidance criteria.

One of the key features of the NDC is that it must involve and engage the local communities affected by the scheme. Failure to engage with local people can lead to a bid being rejected, or having funding withheld if participation is not sustained. The very local focus should, it is argued, enable the community to better identify with the work being undertaken and will, therefore, encourage greater local ownership, and hence sustainability, of the programme.

Although the Government may claim that it has developed a new approach to regeneration, it does not follow that changes in the policy discourses at the centre will result in changes in practice at the local level. The nature of regeneration depends on the framework of ideas and standards surrounding regeneration, including the way in which the problem is defined (the policy discourse) as this determines the scope of the solution (Hajer, 1993; 1995). Thus, while central government may have changed the way that it understands regeneration, it does not follow that the local actors responsible for delivering regeneration will be aware of, or accept, that understanding (Blyth, 1997; Pemberton, 2000). Healey (1999a: 28) argues that:

Apparently successful efforts in the transformation of policy rhetoric may fail to transform policy practice either because the rhetoric does not reach the routines of practice, or the changes leave contradictory cultural assumptions in place.

The 'fit' between rhetoric and practice becomes more uncertain in a programme like the NDC, in which local partnerships are encouraged to set their own agenda for regeneration. Although local actors are required to adhere to the structural elements of a new programme, such as the level of funding and management structures, there is no onus upon them to implement the Government's understanding of regeneration that lies behind NDC, when they have the freedom to implement their vision.

The task of the paper, therefore, is to examine the extent to which the official discourse of regeneration has permeated the local consciousness. The paper will focus on the three key components of the 'regeneration equation': the problems that the regeneration is supposed to address; the causes of the problems; and the solution to those problems as embodied in the regeneration programme (i.e. problems + causes = solution). The paper will begin by identifying how local actors¹ define the problems in their area, how they understand these problems to have been caused, and the ways in which local actors have subsequently rationalised the need for regeneration.

The analysis will draw upon a discourse analysis approach; specifically, discourse in its much more expansive sense, as used by Foucault, which refers an organising framework of ideas (Healey, 1999a), or:

... socially grounded interpretative frameworks which act as powerful forms of knowledge which structure what can be thought, said and done by particular actors (Meinhof and Richardson, 1994; quoted in Hastings, 1999a: 10).

In this sense, discourse produces a 'regime of truth', or a particular way of perceiving and acting upon the world, which both structures what is 'thinkable' and determines what can be included or excluded from debate (Atkinson, 1999; Hajer, 1993). In terms of policy problems such as regeneration, discourse determines how policy issues are problematised, and shapes and structures action in a way congruent with

¹ The chapter will focus on the members of the Interim Steering Group (ISG) responsible for developing and administering the NDC programme for Newcastle West Gate, and on local actors who work closely with the ISG.

that discourse. In examining the take-up of official discourses of regeneration at the local level, therefore, discourse enables us to contrast local understandings of regeneration with those of the centre, looking for similarities and differences in the ways in which central and local actors have both framed the problem and theorised the solution.

1.2 Conceptualising deprivation

The way in which regeneration is defined is dependent on how the problems to be addressed are defined, and how they are understood to have been caused. Although there is a large academic industry based on analysing regeneration policies and programmes, there has been a distinct lack of engagement with the process of defining what constitutes deprivation (Edwards, 1997). The difficulties associated with poverty and deprivation seem almost to be taken as a given, and the focus of academic analyses during the 1980s and 1990s has been the character of the solution. This lack of engagement with the problems to be solved by regeneration was also apparent within NDC West Gate. Local actors did not dwell on the types of problems affecting the area. They alluded to a set of common problems, including crime, unemployment, poor facilities, a degraded environment and ill-health. There were, however, two differences in the ways in which members of the ISG referred to these problems.

When prompted to cite examples of particular local problems, responses were broken down into two groups. The community representatives and the partners (mainly professionals) defined problems as they experienced them personally. The partners tended to frame problems in terms of their professional interests and experiences. Thus, the housing officer talked predominantly about housing issues, the health professional about high rates of heart disease and stress, and so on. Local residents were more likely to define issues in terms of their own personal experiences, and were articulated through more personal accounts – a neighbour who had been burgled, or a relative who was unwell.

A smaller group involved in the partnership, the three civil servants and one partner member, tended to echo the Government's view of deprivation, and did not allude to specific local experiences.

The problems are all there. When you talk about problems, it's crime, health, education, jobs, poor housing (Partner, 02/01, emphasis added)

All of the information, the economic research, the unemployment indicators, says that the West End has it much tougher than other parts of Newcastle and other parts of the country that are similar. In terms of employment, levels of unemployment, also in terms of housing, the standards of the housing, the inadequacies of the housing. I think as well around educational attainment. *All of the relevant trends* (Partner, 02/01, emphasis added).

Lot of poor health, unemployment, *that sort of thing.* All the indicators that the Government were looking for (GONE, 02/01, emphasis added).

The problems here are referred to as though they were a given. Furthermore, they are also described as non-specific, not particular to West Gate, and could affect many other parts of the country. The respondents above have drawn upon a pre-determined list of issues that can be taken and applied in a local context: "the problems are all there"; "all of the relevant trends"; "that sort of thing". The second quote refers to conclusions drawn from an existing (if imaginary) set of data; "all of the information...says", which is quite distinct from those actors who alluded to their own personal experiences. Problems are referred to in a much more detached way. The way in which these respondents have phrased these issues suggests that the nature of the problems has already been defined and declared relevant by some external source.

It is interesting that the majority of the ISG chose not to dwell on the type of problems they experienced, as though it was unnecessary to define precisely what was wrong in the area. This would suggest that it is the *solution* to these amorphous and ill-defined problems that is of interest to local actors. However, the lack of engagement with the specific difficulties faced by West Gate would suggest that the solution is understood by local actors to be somehow *separate* from the problems, rather than being *defined* by them. This raises interesting questions about the ways in which local actors engage with the concept of regeneration. Regeneration is a response to a particular set of problems, and its purpose is in part determined by the ways in which those problems are defined. If local actors have not engaged with, or tried to identify, these problems, then the ways in which they choose to define regeneration must be based on a different set of variables. It is possible that local actors have based their definitions of regeneration on what they understand to be the *cause* of

the problems, choosing not to define the problems themselves because they are so familiar, and seem quite obvious. The following section, therefore, will explore local perceptions of the causes of deprivation.

1.3 The causes of deprivation

Local actors were also asked to describe their own theories as to what caused the problems of the West End. There are several common themes within the responses. These commonalities do not depend upon the respondent's position within the NDC partnership, but can be found amongst a range of actors. The commonalities break down into two types: the breakdown of community cohesion; and ineffective local governance.

1.3.1 The breakdown of community cohesion

One explanation used by respondents for the cause of deprivation concerned the breakdown of community cohesion. Respondents argued that the loss of community cohesion in the West End has affected social and familial networks and facilitated the spread of crime and dereliction, as residents take less interest in the area in which they live. The respondents postulated different reasons for the breakdown of community cohesion, which can be divided into three categories: housing; cultural diversity; and the loss of major industries.

Housing

Several respondents suggested that changes in housing type and tenure over the last thirty years has significantly altered the nature of community within the West End. Although the respondents did not describe the nature of community prior to these changes, it can be inferred from their associations of change with increasing diversity, that 'community' is associated with uniformity, in terms of housing type, and tenure. This breakdown of uniformity is associated with urban decline, and is also alluded to in terms of cultural diversity, discussed below.

Shifts in both housing type and tenure are linked, and are presented as key in the breakdown of community. The changes in housing tenure are variously associated with the construction of the tower blocks on Westgate Road, and the conversion of terraced houses into small Tyneside flats. Respondents argued that, once

converted, these properties became unsuitable for families, who moved out if they could afford to do so, leaving behind only those who could not afford to leave. Furthermore, both the housing conversion and the reduction in social housing provision encouraged the expansion of private sector rented accommodation, which was almost always referred to in negative terms. Several respondents argued that the expansion of private rented accommodation facilitated population movements, creating instability within the community. A second, and more frequently cited argument, is that private sector expansion increased opportunities for rogue landlords to let their properties to 'problem tenants' (portrayed as a separate group by respondents, distinct from the local population), resulting in an increase of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area. The increase in crime encouraged further population movements and urban abandonment, and the increasingly poor reputation of the area further exacerbated the decline.

The loss of major industries

The loss of the industries along the Tyne was understood to be significant in the breakdown of community. Nineteenth century industrialisation precipitated a growth in industry along the river and throughout the West End. With industrialisation came population growth, and workers were housed in rows of terraces sloping from the city down towards the river. The expansion of the population and the resultant urbanisation, therefore, was directly linked to the availability of work in the industrial works and factories.

The closure of these factories in the 1970s was alluded to by several respondents. Two stated that the loss of work, for some people, negated the purpose of living in the West End, leading to a population exodus which left the poorest behind. Housing, built to accommodate workers, was abandoned or neglected creating physical dereliction.

More important, however, was the effect of job losses on the sense of community identity in the West End, which had its roots in a white working class culture based on manufacturing and industrial work. Fowler *et al.* (2001) argue that this link between employment and cultural identity is a distinguishing feature of the North East, stating that "previously, and as part of the internal North Eastern culture still, there was a direct connection between the regional way of life/culture and between its work and ways of employment" (*ibid.*: 128). They suggest that North-Easterners

take great pride in a regional culture that was once, but is no longer, based on large-scale manufacturing and extractive industries. The character of the labour market in the West End was similarly portrayed as being intimately bound up with community identity and a sense of self-worth. The loss of the manufacturing industries during the 1970s was, therefore, believed to be intrinsically linked to the breakdown of community cohesion.

The current characteristics of the workforce were portrayed quite negatively by some respondents. If the previous character of the community was founded on heavy industry, the new character was based on a culture of long-term unemployment. Two respondents in particular, a local authority officer and a non-voting partner, suggested that generational unemployment has created a community that does not expect to work. The non-voting partner suggested that the low expectations of the long-term unemployed led to people caring less about where they live, resulting in anti-social behaviour, particularly amongst the young. They further suggested that young people lacked the aspiration to work.

I've worked in this part of the city for six years, and I'm seeing kids now who are adults who were young teenagers when I started working here, who haven't changed. They're exactly the same, they don't have any more aspirations to get a job. They were saying at twelve years old "I'm not going, I'm never going to get a job", and they're at eighteen and they're right. But it's a shame that they've not had the aspiration to get a job (Non-voting partner, February 2001).

The local authority officer also argued that the experience of long term unemployment has engendered a 'culture of worklessness' within the West End.

If we can actually get sufficient jobs to change the culture of the West End, because at the moment in a large number of areas, the culture is worklessness and has been for generations now. People don't know how to work, they're not used to it... The jobs aren't there, they haven't been for a number of years, so the culture isn't there for people to get up at 6am to get out to work and do a day's work. A lot of suggestions from SRBs to try to get people back into work are, when people get jobs, give them alarm clocks because they're not used to actually getting out of bed and getting to a job in time. They've never had to do it before (Local authority, 02/01).

Both respondents, to some extent, pathologised the characteristics of the workforce. They suggested that the concept of work is alien to the mindset of the workforce –

people neither aspire to work, nor know how to work, and both are portrayed negatively as contributing to unemployment, crime and anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, the characteristics of the workforce are portrayed as being particular to the West End. The non-voting partner later suggested that residents in other parts of the city expect to quickly find work if they find themselves unemployed, and do so. The second respondent suggested that those people in the West End who are motivated to find employment do so, leaving behind those who 'struggle' to find work.

However, both respondents portray the culture and the mindset described above as being the consequence of earlier large scale unemployment. So, although the behaviour is portrayed as pathological, it has only become so since the mass unemployment of the 1970s. While this pathological behaviour contributes to the problems of the West End, it is in itself a *problem* and not the *cause*.

Cultural Diversity

The West End has one of the largest black and minority ethnic (BME) populations in the city. Respondents did not suggest that the large BME community was directly responsible for deprivation in the West End, although one respondent believed that the local authority neglect of the area was due, in part, to the large number of black and Asian residents. Some members of the ISG believed that the increasing numbers of non-white residents in the area contributed to the loss of cultural uniformity, and thus the loss of white working class community, in the area. Local actors suggested that the indigenous white population was uncomfortable with the growing BME community, leading to some white residents moving to other parts of the city. The residents left behind were then unable to integrate the BME residents into the community, leading to a breakdown in 'community spirit'.

The Elswick Triangle has a very high ethnic minority population. But you've got the other side of the road, it's a bit like the Berlin Wall actually, you've got Tweed Street which has the Bangladeshis. You then have the Triangle and running between that you've got Mill Lane and Sceptre Street. On the other side of that it's like little Britain. It's all white, council houses, and never the twain shall meet. You're never going to get community spirit on that simply because of the fact that there's racial tension between the two.... you're not getting the mix (Partner, 02/01).

The fact that the area has a large BME community is not portrayed by local actors as a problem in itself. It is rather the lack of integration between the BME and the white 'communities' that is portrayed as problematic. Rather than having 'one' community based on white working class culture, there are now several distinct and, at times, separate communities in the West End.

1.3.2 Local governance

Other than believing it should be more 'joined-up', the issue of local governance does not feature in the Government's analysis of the cause of deprivation. Local actors, however, strongly believed that there have been serious problems in the way in which the area has been governed, particularly by the City Council. A significant proportion of local respondents identified local government apathy or ignorance as a pivotal factor in the decline of the West End. The majority of the respondents who blamed local government for failing the West End were local residents. However, local councillors and some of the partners on the ISG also felt that local governments across the years had failed to respond adequately to the needs of local people.

At the heart of the perceived inadequacy of local governance is the lack of respect with which local actors believe the City Council has treated residents in the West End over a number of years. As a result, local people claim to have received sub-standard services and facilities, the former contributing to a sense of isolation, and the latter producing high crime, particularly juvenile crime, due to a lack of amenities for young people. The lack of facilities for schools, poor quality housing, and a degraded environment were attributed to a local authority that is perceived not to be interested in the problems of the West End.²

In Newcastle we pay a lot of council tax and we are getting very little in terms of facilities. Our council has done nothing for us, especially the young and the elderly (Resident, 03/00).

² Several respondents attributed the lack of political interest in the West End to the division of power within the City Council, which purportedly lies in the East End. Of the twelve councillors who sit on Newcastle City Council's newly formed Cabinet, only one is a councillor in the West End.

What you have is a local authority which has failed to respond to the needs of the local communities, all communities, and you can see that in the way that the place has been set out (Resident, 03/00).

Furthermore, many respondents believed that the City Council, through apathy or ignorance, did not adequately respond to problems once they had arisen. Local councillors suggested that the City Council had failed to properly identify the problems of the area, and relied on poorly thought out solutions with no track record of success: an over-reliance on a single large employer in the manufacturing industry was cited as one example. The partner representatives suggested that a lack of political will prevented the City Council from making the effort to rectify solutions that either failed, or created additional problems.

You has those flats that were built on Westgate Road that from almost the day they went up they became slums, and I think there was a recognition that it was happening, but “we’ll just leave it because it suits” (Partner, 02/01).

Although respondents varied in terms of the level of blame they apportioned to the City Council for the problems, many agreed that the level of neglect in Newcastle has been exacerbated by the power of an unchallenged Labour-led authority. Respondents argued that the local authority has become complacent in its power because there is no serious opposition party within the city. As a consequence, respondents felt that the City Council was able to conduct its business unchallenged either by political parties or the electorate.

We have a Labour-led authority which is now complacent in its power and they don’t feel sufficiently questioned, and they don’t feel that they need to be questioned because they know that, at the end of the day, nobody’s going to vote anything other than Labour (Resident, 03/00).

Local actors felt that the main consequence of this neglect has been the fact that local residents feel abandoned, excluded, and unimportant.

You’re talking about communities which have had years of neglect, years of feeling alienated and detached from decision-making, and not feeling that anything they’ve ever said has been taken on board, and nothing will ever change. That has been perpetuated for years and years (Resident, 03/00).

We have been left to our own devices. We have been abandoned by the system and by the Government (Resident, 12/99).

Many of the members of the ISG felt that this sense of exclusion had sapped residents' self-confidence and self-esteem, because people have felt unappreciated by those in positions of power. This had engendered bad feeling towards the local authority amongst certain sections of the community. The majority of respondents described the neglect of the West End as being more careless than wilful, the result of apathy rather than intent. However, a small group of residents involved on the ISG³ believed that this neglect was deliberate, a calculated act of abandonment from which the City Council believed it could profit.

They [the local authority] have leached off us for years. They have kept us down on the ground because if we got up, got a bit of dignity for ourselves and got jobs, there would be no need for these people. They would be out of a job. That's what they're scared of. They don't want to see us prosper, just "keep them down from the cradle to the grave" (Resident, 12/99).

This is an extreme point of view, but is indicative of the depth of suspicion with which these dissident residents regard the City Council and others in positions of power. They believed that the problems of the West End are almost entirely attributable to the City Council, and caused in one of two ways: by the City Council either *ignoring* problems, or by *creating* them. First, they believed that the local authority has chosen not to act over problems which they described as easily preventable. The dissident residents cited an example of an elderly resident being beaten to death by a gang of local youths. They argued that the City Council had been warned that such an incident was likely to take place if young people were not given constructive distractions. The fact that the incident occurred was attributed to the local authority ignoring their advice, and they have subsequently blamed the local authority for both the death of the resident and the imprisonment of his killers.

Second, the dissident residents believed that the local authority had *created* problems. The rate of unemployment, for example, has been directly attributed to the local authority: "they have kept us down on the ground...". They also argued that

³ This small group is comprised of three residents. It is a coherent group who feature regularly in the 'story' of NDC West Gate. Given that they often stand out as a dissenting voice on the ISG, they will be referred to in the text of the thesis as the 'dissident' residents.

crime is something that residents do against their will and have been forced into, because the local authority has abandoned them.

They've [residents] been forgotten, pushed aside like a piece of muck. And they've *had to* steal and do criminal activities. They don't want to go out stealing and doing these kinds of things. They don't want to go to prison. It's survival... People have to keep doing the activities to survive. We don't want to do it. We've got an excuse. They [the local authority] haven't got no excuse at all (Resident, 12/99, emphasis in original).

This view represents a kind of displacement previously encountered in the social pathological framework, which attributed the cause of deprivation to the deprived themselves (Wootton, 1959). The views presented above represent the other extreme, *completely* exonerating the deprived and the perpetrators of criminal acts of any responsibility for their circumstances. Any blame is displaced onto the local authority. Although not representative of the feelings of all of the local residents involved in NDC, the group represent the depth of bad feeling and anger amongst some sections of the West End residents towards the local authority.

Many respondents were concerned with issues of local governance, and had serious issues with the local authority that have not been addressed. This is a problem that central government has not chosen to engage with in its regeneration programmes and, as a consequence, ABIs are not structured to deal with the problems of local governance which members of the ISG clearly feel are important. Furthermore, the ways in which local actors perceive local government poses a problem for the direction of the regeneration itself, and is also significant in shaping the ways in which participants in a multi-sectoral governance partnership might relate to each other.

1.3.3 Summary and conclusions

Local actors have critically engaged with what they believe to be the cause of the problems in the West End, which have been attributed to two key factors. The first factor is local authority mis-management: the failure to respond to particular problems or to prevent them from arising. This has engendered feelings of alienation from, and hostility towards, the City Council. The second factor is the loss of community cohesion. Underlying the 'breakdown' of community are concerns about

the loss of the white working class identity that characterised West Gate, undermined by unemployment and compromised by the increased racial and ethnic diversity of the area.

Significantly, however, local actors consistently and quite strongly believed that the main cause of deprivation in West Gate was local authority mismanagement. This analysis does not feature at all in the Government's conception of the causes of deprivation. If local actors define regeneration in response to what they believe to be the *cause* of problems in West Gate, therefore, we might expect efforts to address this mismanagement to be a distinguishing feature.

What is also striking about the local analysis of deprivation, is that many respondents talked about the effect of the experience of deprivation on *people*: how the experience of living in a deprived area made people feel, and how this has in turn affected their self-confidence and sense of identity. This focus on deprivation as it affects people personally does not feature in the Government's analysis of deprivation, which relies on hard facts to both describe the experience of deprivation and exclusion, and to rationalise the need to take action (see Chapter 5).

The local analysis of the cause of deprivation is, therefore, quite distinct from that of the Government. The causes of the problems are portrayed as being predominantly local in origin. Very few respondents sought to relate massive job losses to the functioning of the national economy. The economic concerns that pervade the Government's analysis of the nature and cause of deprivation, such as industrial restructuring, and the financial costs of deprivation, do not feature at the local level. The level of unemployment is referred to largely in the context of community identity. Only two respondents talked about unemployment in the same terms as the Government, as generational unemployment and a culture of worklessness.

The following section will explore whether and how these perceptions of deprivation have influenced the ways in which local actors conceptualise regeneration. The section will begin by examining how local actors have sought to define regeneration, and what they believe regeneration should aim to achieve.

1.4 Conceptualising regeneration

Local actors involved in NDC were asked to describe their own views on the rationale for regeneration. The most striking aspect of the responses given was that interviewees found the question “what is regeneration?” a very difficult one to answer. In the course of the interviews this question posed the most difficulties, illustrated in Box 1.1 below.⁴ The initial responses to the question were also very varied, and it appeared that it would be difficult to establish a clear local definition of regeneration. However, further analysis revealed more coherent storylines which will be further discussed below.

Box 1.1: What is the rationale for regeneration? Interviewees' responses

LD: And what do you think is the purpose of regeneration?

R1: [coughs] I think (.) erm [sighs] (...) [laughs] (..) [sighs] that's votes, elections (...) councils, governments, I'm not sure (.) I'm really (.) not sure at all you know? You know, why (.) for instance this area? (.) Cos (...) most (.) every fairly poorish area, you know (.) it seems odd that there are certain regeneration schemes as opposed to, you know, just trying to (.) you know, Newcastle as a whole (.) to have people involved and stuff and getting skills, confidence and experience which hopefully transfers to (.) to all of your life. I don't know (.) why regeneration programmes. There's the obvious reasons like “let's make this place a better place to live”, but it just seems like (.) and it *is* from a certain point, the Government now are more central but at a local level, getting area committees together and want local involvement (...) But why regeneration? (...) I'm not entirely sure, you know, I'm not...[tails off] (ISG support 02/01).

LD: What do you think the point of regeneration is?

R2: (...) I th, (..) hmm (..) I think it's trying to address imbalances (Partner 02/01).

LD: What do you think the rationale for regeneration is?

R2: [sighs] (.....) Wha, why, why doing regeneration?

LD: Yes.

R2: (...) Er (.) I think at, at (.) at the heart of it, regnera (.) re (.) communities that need regeneration (.) are (..) er (.) I suppose a drain on the country's resources. Not just an economic drain, but in the basic fairness sense (GONE 02/01).

⁴ For the purposes of conveying the difficulties respondents experienced answering the question, repeated and half complete words have been included in the transcription, and all pauses have been timed.

(.) = pause of 1 second or less

(..) = longer pause, with each dot representing one second.

LD:	What do you think is the purpose of regeneration?
R3:	(...) Well (.) The point [laughs] The \$64,000 question [laughs] (Partner 02/01).
LD:	What is the purpose of regeneration as you see it?
R4:	[sighs] (...) Well, that's an interesting question (.....) In the minds of Government and authority, it's about achieving stability (Councillor 02/01).

Regeneration, then, is a term which has been taken up and used by local actors, who have accepted its legitimacy, and have not considered the meanings inherent in the term in any substantive depth. Given that regeneration seeks to produce considerable social, physical and economic change in a given locality, the fact that local actors have not sought to question its meaning is significant. The chapter has argued that local actors see the solutions offered by regeneration as being somehow separate from the problems, rather than being defined by them. The fact that local actors have struggled to rationalise regeneration would suggest that the solution is simply taken as a given, demonstrating the power of the discourse that surrounds area-based regeneration.

Where respondents later went on to offer their own interpretations of the term, the responses fell into three broad categories. First, respondents alluded to the *philosophy of regeneration*: the principles that should underlie any regeneration scheme, and a critique of what they saw as the Government's philosophy of regeneration. Second, respondents identified their ideal *programme design*: how the regeneration should be structured to produce the best results. Again, responses often included a broader critique of the Government's strategy. Finally, respondents outlined their ideal *outcomes*: what, in an ideal world, regeneration should aim to achieve, and the types of project that respondents would fund.

1.4.1 *The philosophy of regeneration*

'Re': once more, again, afresh, especially in order to alter or improve or renew back, with return to previous state after lapse or cessation, or occurrence of opposite state (Oxford Concise Dictionary, 7th Edition).

The prefix 're' implies a return to something, an old order or previous state of being, either to revisit it in its purest form, or to reinvent and improve it. However, in interpreting 're'generation, few respondents advocated a return to an old order, which

is surprising given that many of them alluded to the 'good old days' of community in their diagnoses of the area's problems. Only two respondents stated that regeneration should aim to recreate or revisit the past. The first, a local resident, suggested that regeneration should return the area to its previous economic status, so that those who have invested in the area could be reimbursed for the money that they have lost as the area has declined. The second respondent, a partner, argued for a return to an old style community, where people wanted to live, work and die in the same area. Although several other respondents felt that a sense of 'community spirit' needed to be re-established, few advocated a return to community in such a traditional form.

One respondent argued that regeneration cannot revisit the past because many residents in the area do not remember 'the good old days'.

This area has never been 'generated' for most people living in the area. So it's not regeneration... it's been a deprived area all their lives (Partner [NV], 02/01, emphasis in original).

The implication here is that the area has been in such decline for so many years that many residents cannot remember what the area was like previously. Central to the philosophy of regeneration, therefore, is the idea that regeneration should focus on transforming the *people*. This type of regeneration had three key elements. The first involves generating for residents a *vision* of what the area could become. In order to realise this vision, regeneration should aim to build the *confidence* of residents, and instil a sense of self-worth. Many respondents argued that the experience of deprivation, of residents being told that they are deprived, and the lack of respect with which they feel that they have been treated, has undermined residents' belief that their situation could potentially be different. The final element is that increased confidence, and better skills – life and employment skills – should then be *transferable* throughout the rest of people's lives, producing a more sustainable regeneration which will have an impact reaching far beyond the scope of the programme itself.

Regeneration is thus understood as an initial spark which will set in motion a virtuous cycle of improvement. This cycle is, however, seen as being independent from the actual regeneration programme itself, a by-product of regeneration rather than an explicit goal. Local actors suggested that the virtuous cycle of improvement should

be set in motion by involving residents in the process of decision-making, as opposed to the programme funding projects specifically aimed at building confidence and self-esteem. This fits very closely with the local conceptual framework for regeneration, of which the effect of deprivation on local people was a defining feature.

Local actors' views on physical regeneration were also very striking. Respondents made a very clear distinction between social regeneration, which was always presented as positive, and physical regeneration which was almost unanimously presented very negatively. The two types of regeneration were seen as more or less mutually exclusive, and respondents constantly emphasised the virtues of regenerating the social fabric of the area. It is almost Orwellian in rote: "social regeneration, good; physical regeneration, bad". This strongly resembles the Government's approach to regeneration in terms of its criticism of physical regeneration. This is particularly interesting because local actors argued that some of the key outcomes of regeneration should be physical, such as clean streets, parks, and retail development (see 1.4.3 below). This would again suggest that the current government discourse of regeneration, which emphasises the virtues of social regeneration (at least in rhetoric) and the previous failures of physical regeneration, is particularly powerful.

Where the local understanding of regeneration truly differed from that of the Government, however, was in the lack of emphasis given to encouraging the unemployed back into work. Whereas the Government argued that paid employment is one of the main routes out of poverty, such a strategy has barely featured at the local level.

1.4.2 Programme design

The most common theme emerging from respondents concerning project design was the cynicism levelled at the area-based approach to regeneration. Respondents consistently argued that time-, space-, and resource-limited programmes were insufficient to overcome the difficulties faced by the West End. Respondents felt that the problems of the area were too deep-seated and too widespread to be effectively tackled by a spatially bounded, ten year programme in which only £50 million has been made available.

I think it [NDC] can allow a narrowing, but I don't think it can get anywhere near the gap that exists. £52 million sounds like a lot of money, but over ten years, it's not... [it is] a mere drop in the ocean when you've had years of deprivation and feeling neglected and feeling left behind (Partner 02/01).

I believe in regeneration, but it's got to be long-term. It's more than ten years (Partner, 02/01).

You also come up against, with NDC, a feeling that we can fiddle around at the margins making the area better, but unless government tackles the underlying problems... there is a problem (GONE, 02/01).

Furthermore, a minority of respondents argued that the problems of the West End are caused by processes that originate outside of the area. The weaknesses in the national educational, health and economic infrastructures, for example, were believed to have a significant impact on the West End. This small group of local actors further speculated that in a globalised world, local solutions to broader economic and social problems are unlikely to be sustainable.

They are just sticking plaster regeneration initiatives over far wider structural and economic problems... We live in a global market and the Government has no control over these global forces. The extent to which we can affect things like poverty and unemployment with bits of sticking plaster, we can't (Local authority, 01/00).

Globalisation is a major problem that stands in the way of a lot of regeneration work. You can make changes and try to make a difference only to have the forces of globalisation render them obsolete (Independent Consultant, 10/99).

For those respondents who were sceptical about the impact of ABIs on urban deprivation, regeneration programmes were perceived simply as a means by which central Government tries to appease or placate the electorate, a public demonstration of the Government's social conscience. ABIs were variously described as "a way of winning brownie points" (Partner, 02/01), and "Government trying to demonstrate to its heartland supporters that it hasn't neglected them" (Partner, 02/01).

In spite of this scepticism, however, none of the respondents posited an alternative solution to the problems of deprivation. The members of the ISG argued that area-

based programmes need to be linked to statutory services, to deliver services better suited to local needs. They suggested that projects should be better designed and thought-out, and should include more and better community participation (believed to be essential to the success of ABIs). Despite their criticisms of ABIs, however, local actors suggested improving, rather than replacing, the model, indicating the strength of the policy discourse surrounding area-based regeneration. Only one respondent, a high ranking regional civil servant, suggested that it was the responsibility of the Government to improve statutory service provision, and that this needed to be driven by the centre rather than by local regeneration partnerships.

1.4.3 The specific outcomes of regeneration

The members of the ISG were also asked to outline what they hoped to see emerging from regeneration programmes. Initial responses to the question were framed in broad terms, such as raising the level of local employment, reducing crime, improving health, and so on. Respondents often elaborated to include more locally specific outcomes, such as improving the educational and transport infrastructures of the West End. However, local actors often went further to include highly specific outcomes, which fell into two categories: high-visibility outcomes; and support for existing small-scale projects, referred to by one local resident as the 'rafts and dinghies'.

High visibility outcomes

Outcomes were often specific to the respondent's particular needs. Residents, in particular, argued that regeneration should deliver very specific outputs, such as a park for the children, a net for the goal in a particular park, a mosque, the conversion of a particular building into a supermarket, and so on. One of the residents' greatest criticisms of previous regeneration schemes in the area was that they were not aware that they had taken place. Thus, residents were more likely to expect larger high-visibility projects with a visible impact that made an immediate difference to their lives.

This presents an interesting paradox within the discourses used by residents. On the one hand, residents adhered to the Government's view that physical regeneration is inherently a 'bad thing', and should rather aim at regenerating the *social* fabric of the area. On the other hand, residents expected regeneration to have a high visibility

impact, achieved largely through projects which regenerate the *physical* fabric of the area. There is a contradiction between what residents state the overarching goal of regeneration should be, and what they expect regeneration to finally deliver. This becomes more problematic a paradox when viewed in light of the Government's views on regeneration. Given that the Government wishes to devolve more power to local regeneration partnerships, the paradox would raise some interesting questions should partnerships wish to proceed with a regeneration that does not fit with the vision set out by the centre.

Small-scale projects, or 'rafts and dinghies'

Many of the respondents, particularly those who lived or worked in the area, felt that it was important to support existing projects with a proven track record that were already making a difference to the communities who use their services.

They talked about flagship projects. The only flagship I know was the Titanic and it sunk. But you've got all these little dinghies and rafts spread around the community, beavering away on incredibly small amounts of money and producing huge, enormous results. I'd rather fund the rafts and dinghies... I'd make sure that if we built a flagship and it sunk, that there was enough dinghies and rafts to be able to go and save everybody on it (Resident, 02/00).

Several respondents felt that there was a need to link to existing projects and voluntary and community organisations, to build on existing good practice, and to ensure the sustainability of the programme beyond the lifetime of the funding. Furthermore, a number of local actors stated that there was a need to re-examine the ways in which local statutory service providers spend their money in the West End, to re-orientate funding in a way that is conducive to reducing the extent of the deprivation.

The desire to fund existing projects with a proven record of success does not strictly match the Government's claim that NDC should represent a new approach to regeneration. Indeed, it is questionable the extent to which regeneration *can* be 'new' if projects that were part of earlier regeneration schemes are absorbed into the structures of a new programme. Again, this may present a dilemma should increasingly powerful local partnerships not wish to adhere to the views and vision of the centre.

1.5 Summary and conclusions

The analysis of the process of regeneration revealed that local actors did not share in the Government's structural analysis of the cause of deprivation. They instead placed the cause of the area's decline at the local level. First, they believed that unemployment, housing change and greater ethnic diversity undermined the sense of community cohesion in the area. Second, they clearly and strongly articulated that local government mismanagement not only had a major influence in the decline of the West End, but was also responsible for the perpetuation of this decline over a number of years.

However, while members of the ISG were quite clear about the causes of local problems (and, in some cases, felt quite strongly about them), their own understandings of what regeneration should aim to achieve did not reflect this analysis. This is particularly significant in the context of NDC, as the agenda for regeneration is supposed to be based on a *local* analysis of the causes and consequences of the problems in the area. Significantly, while local government mismanagement was believed by local actors to be the root of the problems of the West End, the members of the ISG did not suggest that this be challenged or changed by regeneration. Furthermore, while residents, in particular, argued that regeneration should generate more visible physical outputs, in terms of buildings (nursing homes, health care centres and so on), shops and facilities, physical regeneration for its own sake was almost unanimously understood by the members of the ISG to be a 'bad thing', and a key factor in the failure of previous regeneration initiatives in the area. Thus, while local causal theories were quite distinct, the local rhetoric of regeneration merely reflected taken-for-granted knowledge about the business of regeneration, even where this conflicted with local people's own concerns. The members of the ISG did not seek to question accepted wisdom about regeneration, despite being deeply critical about the ability of ABIs to address the problems they faced.

The paper earlier established that regeneration is defined by two factors: the type of problems in an area; and how they were believed to have been caused. However, this equation for regeneration does not apply at the local level. The local rhetoric of regeneration is not based upon the type, or the cause, of the problems in the West End. Much of what local actors believe to be the cause of the difficulties does not feature in their definition of regeneration. Regeneration is simply taken as a given.

Thus, although respondents wanted physical changes in the area, they believed physical regeneration to be an inherently 'bad thing'. Although they believed that the source of the problems was local government mismanagement, correcting this problem was not articulated as a goal of regeneration. Although local actors argued that ABIs cannot solve the problems in the West End, no one sought to challenge or fundamentally change the instruments through which regeneration is delivered

This contradictory local definition of regeneration is arguably the result of the powerful policy discourse surrounding area-based regeneration. This discourse has come to be accepted as the 'fact' or 'truth' about regeneration: that poverty and deprivation should be tackled through area-based initiatives which involve the 'community', and which, in rhetoric at least, emphasise the social, rather than the physical, facets of regeneration. Furthermore, powerful policy discourses are able to structure what is thinkable or possible about regeneration schemes, and marginalise thoughts and actions not congruent with that discourse (Atkinson, 1999; Burr, 1995; Hajer, 1993). Thus, in spite of having greater freedom to implement a local vision of regeneration, local actors have not sought to challenge the current framework for regeneration – to redefine or change it to suit their own needs, as NDC encourages them to – because it has not occurred to them to do so. The official discourse of regeneration has structured the ways in which local actors think about regeneration to the extent that they accept as a given a particular approach to regeneration, even where this conflicts with their own understandings of how regeneration should be defined and rationalised.

Problems + causes = solution?

The fact that local actors have not sought to challenge or question the concept of regeneration is perhaps symptomatic of a broader lack of engagement with the substantive principles underlying the concept of regeneration amongst academics and practitioners. The recent literature on regeneration programmes has tended to focus on the patterns and processes of regeneration, particularly in terms of the level of participation and the relationships between participants. Very little research has examined what we understand by regeneration itself, specifically, the ways in which poverty and deprivation are defined and understood and what, as a consequence, regeneration should be aiming to achieve. The analysis of regeneration in the thesis is an attempt to unpack the term 'regeneration', to examine each step in defining regeneration, from examining how problems are conceptualised, how they are

believed to have been caused, and what, as a consequence, regeneration should aim to achieve. In this way, the research aims to contribute to a re-orientation in thinking about regeneration, so that it is understood as a solution to a particular set of problems – one that is defined by those problems – instead of being somehow divorced from those problems (Edwards, 1997). Indeed, Wick (1977: 63) argued that:

By using phrases such as ‘urban deprivation’ or ‘inner city decline’ and words such as ‘co-ordination’, ‘community’, and ‘participation’ in the language of change, it is suggested that there is a broad consensus and agreement about what needs to be done. Indeed there is a tendency to shy away from too profound a discussion about the nature and causes of the problems as being merely academic. It is suggested that we should get on with the job of implementation, come to grips with the problem, tackle the snags, and so on. Yet the history of strategies over the last ten years suggests that a failure to articulate the causes of deprivation and an unwillingness to present clear objectives leads to confusion and failure.

Central to the reorientation of regeneration is the need to view deprivation and social exclusion as processes, and not simply states in which people find themselves. The focus on deprivation as a process, rather than simply an outcome, allows researchers and policymakers to look at the causes of deprivation – the means and mechanisms through people become deprived – and to examine these causes at the local, national and international levels. This allows researchers and policymakers to focus on all facets of deprivation – both cause and effect – from which a solution to the problems of poverty and exclusion can be developed.

Implications: to what extent is NDC a ‘bottom-up’ approach to regeneration?

Academic analyses of area-based regeneration initiatives have increasingly argued that there is a need to devolve greater powers of decision-making and responsibility for regeneration down to the local level (Healey, 1998; Mayo and Craig, 1995; Smith, 1996). Specifically, researchers have argued that local residents, the ‘community’, should have greater powers to determine the agenda for regeneration, based on their experiences of living in a particular locale (Birch, 1993; Healey, 1998). However, such research has also demonstrated that local people are often unable to implement their own agenda for regeneration, and have speculated that this might be the result of central government control over regeneration, or the more powerful players within

regeneration partnerships pushing their own agendas (Bloomfield, 1998; 1999a; 1999b; Kintrea, 1996).

This research has identified a new possibility, based upon the ways in which the members of NDC West Gate formulate their definitions of regeneration. The thesis has demonstrated that local actors have not attempted to implement a regeneration that addresses local concerns, because their own definitions of regeneration are not formulated in response to those concerns. Thus, even if local actors were granted complete freedom to implement a local agenda for regeneration, it is conceivable that this would simply replicate current practice. This calls into question the extent to which NDC West Gate can be considered to be a localised, 'bottom-up' regeneration programme if it fails to adequately address the concerns of local people. There is a need, therefore, not only to rethink the ways in which researchers engage with the practice of regeneration, but also to examine new ways of encouraging local people to devise and implement their own agendas for regeneration. It is not enough to argue that local actors be given greater control over the process. The research has shown that the local people involved in NDC West Gate are unclear about the ways in which regeneration should, and could, be defined and redefined. There is confusion about what regeneration should aim to achieve and, furthermore, they have not attempted to define regeneration based on their analysis of the types of problems in their area, and how they are understood to have been caused. If the Government is committed to a localised, grass roots regeneration, then more time, funding, and development work is required to enable local people to identify more clearly what they would like to accomplish through regeneration, and the best means of meeting these goals.

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