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Understanding the scale and nature of outcome change in area-regeneration programmes: evidence from the New Deal for Communities Programme in England.

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Abstract

The New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme is one of the most intensive area-based initiatives (ABIs) launched in England. Between 1998 and 2010, 39 NDC Partnerships were charged with improving conditions in relation to six outcomes within deprived neighbourhoods, each accommodating around 9,800 people. Data point to only modest change, much of which reflected improving attitudes towards the area and the environment. There are problems in identifying positive people-based outcomes because relatively few individuals benefit from relevant initiatives. Few positive benefits leak out of NDC areas. Transformational change was always unlikely bearing in mind the limited nature of additional resources, and because only a minority of individuals directly engage with NDC projects. This evidence supports perspectives of ABIs rooted in 'local-managerialism'.

Urban Regeneration in England: the policy context

From the mid 1960s through to the end of the 1990s both Conservative and Labour governments instigated area-based initiatives (ABIs) to improve physical, social, or economic conditions evident in English cities². The rationale for, and implications arising from, this strand of urban policy are well documented (Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Kintrea, 2007; Shaw and Robinson, 2010). Interestingly, similar schemes, such as Empowerment Zones, have also been launched in the United States (Oakley and Tsao, 2006), and, with programmes such as the EU URBAN community initiative, in Europe too (Carpenter, 2006). Governments across developed economies have attempted to address particular problems apparent in what are often referred to as 'pockets' of social, economic and environmental deprivation in cities and large towns.

A number of principles have tended to underpin English regeneration policy. It was central, not local, government which drove this agenda. Working with, or through, local authorities, central government designated specific urban areas within which programmes would operate. Some ABIs, notably Urban Development Corporations, were designed to improve the physical environment. Others, including City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget, were intended to achieve more of an holistic impact on urban

² Although many of the problems impacting on Scottish and Welsh cities mirror those evident in England, the policy contexts have increasingly diverged; this paper is about English urban policy.

problems in the round. But whatever their remit, ABIs were given bounded parameters: they were given relatively limited resources, to operate for specific periods of time, in pre-defined 'deprived' localities. Bearing in mind this plethora of initiatives, it is not surprising to see contrasting assessments of success. A government funded 1994 project provided a relatively favourable overview (Department of the Environment, 1994), whereas a 2002 overview perceived regeneration policy as being a 'failure' (Gripaios, 2002). Whatever the merits of these assessments, the whole urban question was in any event to be given a marked re-orientation following the election of Blair's 'New Labour' government in 1997.

One key characteristic of urban policy in the period 1997 to 2010 was that it had more of a strategic 'feel' to it than had previously been the case. An Urban Task Force was established, whose report 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' (Urban Task Force, 1999) and the associated government White Paper (DETR, 2000b), helped 'generate a sense of excitement' and an eagerness to see its recommendations implemented (House of Commons, 2000 xiii). Moreover, even if 'city regions' were to be the main focus of attention during this period, that was not to deny the existence of deprived pockets within larger conurbations. In 1998 the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), a central government agency, outlined a rationale for a National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, the 'most concerted attack on area deprivation this country has ever seen' (SEU, 1998, 12), one central

component of which was the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme.

The New Deal for Communities Programme: an overview

The NDC Programme, launched in 1998, was designed to 'help turn around the poorest neighbourhoods' (DETR, 1998, 1), thus reducing 'the gaps between some of the poorest neighbourhoods and the rest of the country' (DETR, 2001, 2). 39 NDC Partnerships established across England were to attack problems within areas each consisting of, on average, 9,800 people. NDC Programme wide funding was to be about £2 billion, approximately £50 million to each of the 39 areas. The Programme's ten year horizon reflected the concern that previous ABIs had not been given enough time to instigate change. Each NDC was expected to achieve positive change in relation to six outcomes. As will be explored below, there is an important distinction here to be made across these six. Three were intended to improve these 39 'places': crime, the local community, and housing and the physical environment Three were to improve outcomes for people: education, health and worklessness. Taking an overview of the then emerging Programme in 2004 the National Audit Office suggested that: 'the NDC Programme marks a departure from previous area-based initiatives in terms of the significant level of funding involved (and) the length of the initiative' (NAO, 2004, 4).

The NDC national evaluation: 2001-2010

In 2001, the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), later the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), commissioned the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University, to undertake the 2001-2005 national evaluation of NDC. This first phase of the evaluation culminated in the publication of an Interim Report in 2005 (NRU/ODPM, 2005) and associated commentary (Lawless, 2006). In 2006 CRESR was also commissioned to undertake the 2006-2010 phase 2 of the evaluation, final reports from which were published in early 2010 (for an overview see DCLG, 2010a). A number of data collation and analysis tasks were central to the national evaluation, the most important of which was the biennial household survey.

In 2002 a baseline was established across all 39 NDC areas using a survey questionnaire. This addressed socio-demographic, status and attitudinal considerations across all outcome areas. It was based on a random sample survey design and culminated in approximately 500 responses from each of the 39 NDC areas in 2002. 19,574 responses were obtained from individuals aged 16 or over, one drawn at random from each selected household. The survey was repeated in 2004. For the subsequent 2006 and 2008 surveys the overall sample size was reduced to 400 per NDC area, thus providing a sample of around 15,800 responses across the Programme as a whole for each of these two years.

The survey was based on a combined panel and cross-sectional 'top-up' design. In 2004 as many interviews as possible were completed at the same addresses as in 2002. As a result some 10,638 interviews, of the 19,633 completed in 2004, were held with the same respondents as in 2002. The same principle applied for later surveys. Because of sample attrition it was only possible to revisit about 55 per cent of those responding two years previously. As a result randomly selected top up interviews were also held in all 39 areas to maintain a sample in each NDC area. Final evaluation findings exploring change for the NDC panel were based on that group of 3,554 respondents interviewed at all four waves of the survey: 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008 (DCLG, 2010b).

The most critical problem in evaluating ABIs is that of the counterfactual: what would have happened if the initiative had not gone ahead? This issue is best addressed through the use of benchmarks which allow for an identification of the net impact associated with the NDC Programme: change over and above what was happening in other areas. The evaluation benchmarked change across the 39 NDC areas with that occurring nationally and also within parent local authorities. But these are blunt instruments through which to explore change in what are very deprived NDC areas. The decision was therefore taken to carry out the household survey in comparator areas. These are located in the same local authorities as NDCs, but in non-adjacent wards in order to avoid potential spillover effects. The intention was that as far as possible these areas, of which there

were three for each NDC, would be as deprived as the 39 NDC areas. In total 2,014 completed questionnaires were obtained from respondents in comparator areas in 2002, 4,048 in 2004, 3,062 in 2006, and 3,100 in 2008. In addition some 297 people were interviewed in all four waves, and thus represent a 'comparator areas panel'. It has to be stressed that the comparator areas are not 'regeneration free controls'. They too will have benefited from trends which, in broad terms, have apparently led to improvements in many deprived areas throughout England (Tunstall and Coulter, 2006). Having said that few if any will have received more regeneration funding than has been allocated to the 39 NDC neighbourhoods³.

This methodology allows change to be addressed in two, complementary, ways. First, it is possible to report cross-sectional area based change (DCLG, 2009c). Data for all 39 NDC, and their comparator, areas can be compared across four survey periods: 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008. For analyses explored below, change is based on 36 core indicators, six for each of the six core outcomes described earlier. Such an assessment of cross-sectional area based change is an entirely legitimate approach to evaluating ABIs. But there are drawbacks. In particular, this type of evidence is 'contaminated' because of population churn caused by households moving into, within, and

³ To give an indication of this: for 36 local authorities it is possible to compare total Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) allocations against indicative NDC funding. These 36 received about £360m in NRF funding for 2006/07. This investment is to pursue regeneration across substantial parts of these local authority areas. Total NDC funding for 2005/06 amounted to about £240m, or about two thirds of all NRF funding for these districts.

out of regeneration areas, an issue which has attracted considerable recent interest (DCLG, 2009a; Robson, Lympelopoulou and Rae, 2008). Area-based data thus cannot answer a question which it is not clear any previous evaluation has ever been able to address: what happens to those who stay in regeneration areas? Changes occurring to this group are of particular interest because it is more likely that these can be ascribed to the effects of the regeneration programme involved. By adopting the approach of revisiting previous respondents, it is possible to assess the degree to which outcomes have changed for the NDC panel, those staying in one of the 39 areas, against those staying for similar periods of time in the comparator areas. As is flagged up later, even with both area, and panel, data it remains difficult to identify positive change in relation to people-based outcomes. Nevertheless, the depth of this evidence base across all NDC areas from a common base-line of 2002, provides an ideal opportunity through which to assess change for both areas and individuals, a theme of considerable importance not just for those interested in English urban policy, but also for those implementing and evaluating ABIs in other institutional contexts.

Changes for places and for people

As is discussed above, data allows for an exploration of change both to areas and also for residents who stayed in these areas, for that six year period 2002-2008. Table 1 outlines the 12, of 36, core indicators, showing greatest change between 2002 and 2008. Eight of these relate to place-based

attributes and include attitudes to the local NDC Partnership, the area and the community. Educational attainment levels also showed clear signs of absolute improvement.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

However, as is discussed earlier, these indications of change are not especially meaningful. What really matters is the degree to which these 39 areas changed when assessed against other geographies, notably what happened in similarly deprived, comparator areas. Table 2 provides an overview of the 11, of 36, core indicators which showed statistically significant net change over and above that occurring in the comparator areas. All but two of these, both indicators of educational attainment, moved in an 'NDC-positive' fashion. Six positively changing indicators reflect attitudes to the area and crime. There is less evidence for net-change in relation to the three people-based outcomes, although there is considerable positive change with regard to mental health of which more later.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

As is mentioned earlier, the design of the evaluation means that two panels have been created: one consisting of those who lived in NDC, and one in comparator, areas for that period 2002 to 2008. One of the major advantages of panel data is that it is possible to model change in order to take into account individual-level socio-demographics notably age, gender and ethnicity. This is important in understanding real underlying trends. For instance, it is known that older people and women are more fearful of crime.

It may therefore be that unless these effects are taken into account, change data will reflect not real change but rather the fact that there are more (or fewer) women or older people in the sample. When individual-level modelling is undertaken for both panels, then only five core indicators show statistically significant change all of which show NDC panel members seeing more positive change than those who stayed in comparator areas. Three of these relate to improved perceptions of the local place: thinking lawlessness and dereliction had improved; satisfaction with the area; and thinking the area had improved in the previous two years. The other two relate to health: a fall both in those who think their health is not good and also in those who consider their health had deteriorated in the previous year.

Discussion

The key headline finding from data outlined above is that, however the evidence is cut, change is relatively modest. A number of caveats need to be made. Although direct comparisons are fraught with problems, this rate of change is apparently not out of line with that occurring in other English ABIs such as the Single Regeneration Budget (Rhodes et al, 2005) or EU schemes such as URBAN (Carpenter, 2006). It is important too to emphasise that it may take many years for the full effects of NDC sponsored projects to become evident (Atkinson et al, 2006). Nevertheless, on the broad canvas it would be hard to argue that these areas, or those residing within them, have seen transformational change across all six outcomes

when compared with what happened in other deprived localities over the same time period. This raises two questions. Can evaluations capture all of the benefits arising from ABIs? And/or is it simply unrealistic to imagine any ABI can be a vehicle for major change?

Can evaluations ever capture benefits arising from ABIs?

One question to explore here is whether the apparently modest changes attributable to the Programme reflect, at least in part, weaknesses in the design of the evaluation. ABIs are complex programmes to assess (Department of the Environment, 1994). Some of these difficulties are intrinsic to the nature of 'area' programmes. In this case the NDC Programme involved delivering 39 separate 'packages', to 39 different locations, which themselves received other regeneration funding in some cases going back more than 40 years. Any ABI evaluation can only hope to moderate the effects of some of these methodological complexities, informed by central government advice (HM Treasury, 2003). For instance, for this evaluation, as is flagged up above, change in NDC areas was benchmarked against what was happening elsewhere and in particular in other deprived, comparator areas. This helped create a robust counterfactual, not least because the comparators operated in similar broad contexts in that they were sited in the same parent local authorities as NDCs. Other previous ABIs such as City Challenge (DETR, 2000a), the Single Regeneration Budget (Rhodes et al, 2005), and Neighbourhood

Management Pathfinders (DCLG, 2008b), have been subject to national evaluations. But no previous evaluation of any English ABI has been able to explore questions of net change across all relevant regeneration areas and their residents, for all outcomes, from a common baseline.

This depth of data helps explain the nature of change. To give one example. As is outlined in Table 2 one of the, perhaps surprising, findings is that NDC areas appear to be seeing a statistically significant net change with regard to mental health. But few Partnerships instigated many, if any, projects designed directly to moderate mental illness. However, individual-level panel data help explain this apparent conundrum. Individuals seeing an improvement in their mental health were also likely to see a positive change in relation to a wide range of other outcomes such as satisfaction with accommodation, a positive transition in relation to employment, fear of crime and general health (DCLG, 2010b). Substantial improvements in mental health did not arise primarily because Partnerships majored on this as a policy issue, but because better mental health for individuals was associated with other improvements occurring to these areas and their residents. Nevertheless, although the depth of data arising from the evaluation makes it possible to explore change in a robust manner, two key methodological problems remain. Is it possible to identify gains from people-based interventions impacting on small numbers of beneficiaries? Are benefits lost because people leave regeneration areas?

(i) The complexities of identifying people-based change

One key finding from this evaluation is that it is easier to effect positive change in relation to place than to people. It is relatively straightforward to introduce initiatives which help people be more positive about their area and the local environment. Innovations such as environmental improvement schemes, neighbourhood management programmes, more police or community police support officers can all help move local residents from being-say- 'very' to 'quite' dissatisfied with the area, the environment and so on. For many people-based outcomes the transition is more difficult to achieve. The classic example here is getting someone to move from being workless to being in a job. That is a major transition for many individuals to make. In practice NDC funded worklessness initiatives such as training programmes, job mentoring schemes and Information, Advice and Guidance projects, may well help move individuals along that trajectory towards a job. But the ultimate outcome is about moving someone into employment. This is a much harder objective to achieve than, for instance, instilling a more positive attitude amongst local residents towards their local area. It is just harder to achieve people-based outcomes.

Even if individuals do achieve desired outcomes, it is then more difficult to identify these gains through top-down data collection exercises such as household surveys. Virtually all NDC Partnerships instigated the kinds of place-based improvements outlined in the previous paragraph. The great advantages of these sorts of initiatives from the point of view of outcome change, is that virtually everyone can see them and, in general, if areas are

improving then this will be picked up through household surveys: respondents know about place-based initiatives. But this is not the case with many people-based interventions. These tend to be directed at certain client groups: the unemployed, those willing to go onto training programmes, healthy living project participants, the ill, parents seeing improvements in their local schools, and so on. Random surveys of 500 or 400 respondents in each NDC area will not pick up many, if any, of those involved in, and benefiting from, people-based projects.

Moreover, even if some beneficiaries and their outcomes, are identified in household surveys, these ostensible gains will tend to be swamped by what is happening in the wider context. This process is best explored within the context of worklessness. The evaluation team explored this people-based outcome through both case-study work in six NDC areas (DCLG, 2009d) and also a top-down analysis using a range of data sources (DCLG, 2009e). Case-study work pointed to overwhelmingly positive responses towards NDC projects and interventions from local observers including project beneficiaries and project managers. But top-down data sources, in this case both household surveys and government administrative data, showed little in the way of relative improvements in worklessness across all NDC areas. Although some projects might well have moved a relatively small number of people into jobs, these positive effects are tiny when compared with wider processes operating on NDC areas: in 2008 over 50,000 people a year were coming off, or going onto, worklessness benefits across the 39 areas.

In practice it is much harder to effect, and to identify, gains arising from people-based interventions.

But it is worth pointing out that project-level evidence based on change for individuals confirms that positive change does indeed occur. It was never the intention to assess the impact of *specific projects* on individuals, not least because, on average, each NDC implemented around 200 separate initiatives. However, one source of evidence helps provide a handle on links between specific interventions and individual level outcomes. Full details of the methodology involved are available elsewhere (Foden et al, 2010; DCLG, 2009b), key headlines from which are, however, relevant to this narrative.

As part of the 2004 household survey, the evaluation team liaised with all 39 Partnerships to identify four large, well known, local projects. This led to evidence being available for 145 projects across all of the Programme's six outcomes. All respondents to the 2004 household survey were asked whether they had heard of any of these four local projects and, if they had, whether they or anyone in their household had 'made use of, attended, or directly benefited' from any of them. Respondents who answered positively to this latter question were classified as 'beneficiaries' of that particular project. Non-beneficiaries were defined as respondents in the same NDC who did not report that they or anyone in their household had made use of a given named project.

Longitudinal panel data was then used to compare *outcome change* for beneficiaries as a group compared with non-beneficiaries. It was possible, for a range of indicators, to test for statistically significant differences in individual-level change over time between members of these two groups. This analysis explored change between the first (2002) and second (2004) household survey for respondents interviewed in both waves. The key headline is that beneficiaries saw more positive change than did non-beneficiaries in all of the 17 instances where there was evidence for statistically significant difference between changes for each of these two groups. Although many of these relationships reflected change in relation to place, both education and employment interventions also showed beneficiaries seeing more positive change than non-beneficiaries. For instance those who had benefited from an employment related project were much more likely to move from unemployment to employment between 2002 and 2004 than was the case for non-beneficiaries. NDC projects provided direct benefits to individuals. The relatively limited number of beneficiaries from people-based interventions means that these gains are not captured by household surveys: but the benefits are real enough for those concerned.

(ii) Outcomes and mobility

There can be an assumption that areas as deprived as NDCs will always suffer from the dynamics of mobility: those gaining from regeneration schemes leave to be replaced by relatively more deprived people, thus

making it difficult for regeneration bodies to sustain positive change over time. If this were the case, it would have important methodological implications in that benefits attributable to the Programme would be 'lost'. However, evidence from this evaluation casts doubt on these assumptions. Those moving into NDC areas, a process driven in part by migration from EU Accession states, were often less disadvantaged than existing residents (DCLG, 2009a). In addition there was little to suggest that NDC areas characterised by high rates of mobility were generally associated with lower outcomes. And the assumption that individuals gain from projects and as a result leave the regeneration area concerned is open to debate. This argument is often couched in terms of worklessness: individuals undertake training and mentoring schemes funded by regeneration agencies, gain skills, confidence and knowledge, get new or better jobs, enhance their income, and use those material gains to move to better housing in better areas. This evaluation suggests such a model is based on a series of heroic assumptions. For example, as is discussed above only small numbers of people actually get jobs 'as a result' of NDC interventions and even if they do so, these are unlikely permanently and substantially to enhance income for individuals and their households. Of course, people do leave NDC areas. A group of about 300 people who left NDC areas between 2002 and 2004 was traced (DCLG, 2007). Those leavers tended already to be in employment and were generally leaving NDC areas in order to live in better housing in more attractive environments. It may be that some people-based outcomes which

could genuinely be ascribed to regeneration schemes are 'lost' as individuals leave ABIs, but its impact will be marginal.

How realistic is it to see ABIs as vehicles of change?

Even if evaluations were able consistently to pick up more positive, especially people-based, change there are still doubts as to whether it is plausible to imagine any ABI, even one as intensive as the NDC Programme, could ever lead to transformational change. Three issues merit comment here: the scale of regeneration resources; the limited ability of ABIs to reach most people; and the primacy of individual level factors in explaining change.

First, although this is a well funded ABI by historic standards, it has to be remembered that the £50m available to each NDC is intended to help achieve positive change across fully six outcomes, over ten years, in areas each accommodating on average almost 10,000 people. This resource amounts therefore to around a modest £500 per capita per year. And the scale of the NDC resource in these areas is anyway insignificant when compared with mainstream funding directed to these localities. It is notoriously difficult to tabulate public spend going into any small area, especially those which, like NDCs, do not fit neatly within either political boundaries such as wards or census output areas. But one attempt at doing this suggested that NDC spend in Bradford NDC was less than ten per cent of mainstream spend anyway being expended within this particular

neighbourhood (DCLG, 2010c). Additional regeneration funding can be especially useful in helping to effect change because it is often possible to use it flexibly in ways which are generally not possible for mainstream spend. But ultimately these resources are minor compared with mainstream spend.

Second, one issue to emerge from evaluation evidence is that most people are not directly involved in NDC activities. In each of the four household surveys, respondents were asked if they had been involved with their local NDC Partnership. This figure rose slightly over the six year period but still only amounted to 17 per cent of all respondents by 2008. Almost 90 per cent of these saw their involvement as primarily participative, for half of whom this was interpreted as attending an NDC event or festival. It is not realistic to imagine that these relatively low rates of involvement, especially with projects which might plausibly lead to individual-level change, will in turn sustain positive outcomes. Most people do not engage with regeneration agencies in ways which are likely to lead to measurable outcome change, which can in turn plausibly be ascribed to the scheme involved.

Third, there has long been interest in the degree to which change for individuals is due to socio-demographic factors and/or area effects (see for instance Buck, 2001). Because individual-level data was available for those living in either NDC, or in comparator, areas for that six year period 2002-2008, it was possible to explore this issue in some depth (DCLG, 2010b).

Multi-level modelling was undertaken to help explain the relative rates of change for those in the NDC panel, when assessed for those in the comparator areas' panel. In practice well over 90 per cent of the variation in outcomes across the two populations is explained by two sets of factors. Socio-demographics (notably age, gender and ethnicity) were significant. So too was the extent to which an individual was deprived in 2002. Those who were most deprived on any indicator in 2002 tended to see greatest change by 2008: they had more 'headroom'. Hence, only a small proportion of relative change could be ascribed to whether an individual lived in an NDC, as opposed to a comparator, area. Having said that there was evidence of statistically significant better rates of change for those in NDC areas with regard to one place-based indicator: satisfaction with the area. Nevertheless, change for individuals is not generally associated with whether they live in a regeneration area, but rather is rooted in who they are and how deprived they were at the outset. Regeneration schemes are not going to make a huge difference to individual-level rates of change.

In the light of evidence presented in this section, there have to be doubts as to whether any ABI could ever lead to the sorts of change originally assumed of this Programme. Despite early rhetoric, resources were actually quite limited; only a small minority of people directly engaged in NDC projects; and change is overwhelmingly driven by who people are, not by where they live. And all of this within a context, as others have commented, where there are fundamental questions surrounding the degree to which

positive change can anyway be effected at the local level (Ball and Maginn, 2004). Problems may well be manifest at the neighbourhood level but require policy interventions at wider spatial scales. There remains that dilemma central to all area regeneration interventions, and which has been debated for more than forty years: problems may be apparent within, but are not of, areas.

A Concluding Comment: 'locating' the NDC Programme

Debates explored immediately above suggest that change was relatively modest across the 39 NDC areas, although there are important caveats to add to this headline finding such as the fact that it is difficult to isolate people-based gains occurring to relatively small numbers of project beneficiaries, and the importance of stressing the essentially limited nature of additional regeneration resources going into these areas. In this final brief section, these findings are used to 'validate' various debates about how best conceptually to 'locate' ABIs, one of which perspectives has greater purchase on the NDC experience than others.

Observers have in the recent past looked to social pathology arguments (Murray, 1990), 'blaming' residents for their deprivation. Although these arguments retain little credibility, some commentators nevertheless see vestiges of social pathology thinking embedded in urban policy affected by the 1997-2010 Labour government (Cochrane, 2007). However, the idea that communities could somehow be 'blamed' for their predicament was

never an argument used explicitly by NDC Partnerships or indeed by government. Ten year strategies produced by NDC Partnerships consistently pointed to the insidious impact of 'structural' problems, notably declining and changing labour markets impacting on these areas over many years (DCLG, 2008a). A variant of this argument suggests that ABIs may seek to impose physical solutions, notably a restructuring of housing markets, to address complex socio-economic problems. Housing played an intriguing role in the evolution of the Programme. It did not figure at first, the emphasis being placed on the social, economic, and environmental renewal of these areas. It was rapidly inserted into outcomes to be adopted by Partnerships because there were concerns as to what would be visible in these neighbourhoods at the end of ten years. By 2007/8 fully one third of Programme spending had been allocated to housing and the physical environment, more than for any other outcome and three times as much as for each of health, crime and worklessness. This bias towards housing spend inevitably raises spectres of the potential 'gentrification' of NDC areas, a trend apparent in other aspects of Labour's regeneration programmes (Colomb, 2007). And some NDC Partnerships did indeed explicitly seek to instil more of a social mix in NDC areas. But caution needs to be employed in seeing this Programme as a vehicle through which radically to change demographic patterns. Most NDCs never planned for major refurbishment and associated tenure change. As a result tenure patterns hardly changed between 2002 and 2008, the household surveys showing just a one

percentage points increase in owner-occupation over this six year period.

Notions that regeneration policy can be equated with the gentrification of deprived areas, have little purchase on this narrative.

It has also been argued that, after the election of the 1997 Labour government, the 'community' came to be given a more prominent role in initiatives such as the NDC Programme (Hill, 2000). When launched ministers apparently told local residents that this was 'your money'. One narrative central to the Programme is, however, the steady retreat from that position. Through time government instigated a series of measures designed to channel, and it could be argued, de-radicalise, more challenging proposals from Partnerships. More than 40 Programme Notes were produced by central government to guide, and in some cases impose, processes on Partnerships. Annual plans were subject to approval by Government Offices for the Regions and ultimately central government. A performance management framework was developed designed to make Partnerships prioritise delivery and ensuring the spending of annual financial allocations. In any event, the need to engage with other delivery agencies ensured that the vast majority of NDC funded projects were relatively routine: other delivery agencies were not going to use their resources to support untried, and potentially troublesome, initiatives. Community involvement in this ABI was probably greater than in previous regeneration schemes. But it would be wrong to see the programme as an embodiment of 'community empowerment'.

A further perspective is based on relationships between ABIs, such as the NDC Programme, and wider socio-economic, 'structural', forces. Some would argue that area programmes have inherent advantages to governments. They can suggest that, although mainstream services and markets are operating 'normally', there are exceptional problems in certain localities (Cochrane, 2007). ABIs make it possible for governments to seem to be doing something by instigating relatively cheap initiatives through which to moderate problems outside the norm, whilst avoiding more complex narratives linking deprived areas into wider policy and market forces (Atkinson, 2000). Perspectives which see area policy as a veil behind which to hide the impact of wider structural forces have implications for all ABIs including the NDC Programme. Certainly in the early years, central government was happy to 'localise' the Programme, not wishing NDCs to engage with agencies other than those with a neighbourhood level remit. But 'conspiratorial' theses have only limited purchase on this story. The Programme was essentially designed as a laboratory to see what would happen in a relatively small number of deprived neighbourhoods, positive experience from which could then be rolled out elsewhere. There was never any suggestion that the Programme could address wider structural forces. Instead it was part of a raft of 'New Deal' initiatives. Many of these were labour market programmes operating throughout the country and which were designed to address structural issues. The NDC Programme, on the other hand, was explicitly about seeing what could be done in deprived

areas by pooling regeneration and mainstream resources to achieve ten year holistic, 'place-bound', strategies.

If the perspectives outlined above have relatively limited resonance for the NDC experience, one more 'pragmatic' interpretation seems altogether more appropriate bearing in mind the rate and nature of change alluded to earlier. The NDC Programme can be seen as a form of 'locality managerialism' rooted in a centrally imposed framework designed to re-embed deprived individuals within the mainstream through the delivery of routine projects and the spending of annual financial allocations. This was an ABI designed to moderate the scale of disadvantage through the funding of interventions designed to attack, often in ill-defined ways, the scale of deprivation apparent in these 39 localities. This was not a radical attack on deprivation within these areas. Rather Partnerships operated in a political world where priorities and ministers changed and where pressures to 'deliver' became ever more explicit. Ultimately the most illuminating framework within which to locate the Programme is that rooted in what might be seen as a series of 'local regimes'. NDC Partnerships operated within, what in the early days at least, proved to be relatively volatile political cauldrons. Those associated with, governing, or benefiting from, NDCs, had opportunities to develop and influence a local political discourse, driven by rewards arising from a windfall £50m 'locally determined' budget. The notion of locality based regimes emerging out of the evolving and 'messy' narratives of these 39 neighbourhood Partnerships, remains an attractive framework within

which to locate the NDC experience. Central government directives and guidelines laid down frameworks within which the 39 Partnerships were to proceed. But the detailed articulation of strategies depended on evolving inputs from a range of local actors and agencies: NDC staff, key agency representatives, local resident representatives, MPs, councillors, local businesses, and so on. The NDC narrative primarily surrounds mechanisms whereby local actors came to manage this resource within an increasingly constrained delivery framework imposed by the centre. And to bring the debate full circle, there is a complementarity between the generally modest scale of change outlined in empirical findings developed earlier, and these more low-key 'localist' perspectives. Local regimes were able to nuance the nature of these ten year programmes, but the relatively limited nature of additional NDC resources, combined with central government strictures, meant modest outcome change was always the most likely outcome.

Table 1: 12 indicators showing greatest improvement: 2002 to 2008

	Percentage point improvement 2002 to 2008
NDC improved area a great deal/a fair amount	27
Key Stage 4, five or more GCSEs at A* to C	22
Lawlessness and dereliction index, high score	18
Area got much/slightly better in past two years	18
Fear of crime index, high score	14
Very/fairly satisfied with area	13
Feel a bit/very unsafe after dark	12
Key Stage 3 English, level 5	12
Gross household income below £200 per week	11
Key Stage 2 English, level 4	11
Problems with environment index, high score	10
Feel part of the community a great deal/a	10

fair amount

Source: Ipsos MORI NDC Household Survey 2002-2008; SDRC

Table 2: Indicators showing statistically significant change relative to comparators: 2002 to 2008

	Percentage point improvement relative to comparators 2002 to 2008
Lawlessness and dereliction index, high score	9
SF36 mental health index, high score	7
Area got much/slightly better in past two years	7
Very/fairly satisfied with area	6
Taken part in educ./training in the past year	4
Been a victim of any crime in last year	4
Problems with environment index, high score	3
Health somewhat/much worse than one year ago	3
Been a victim of criminal damage in last year	2

Key Stage 2 English, level 4 -2

Key Stage 4, five or more GCSEs at A*

to C -2

Source: Ipsos MORI NDC and Comparator Household Surveys 2002-2008;

SDRC: positive scores indicates more positive NDC change; negative scores

less improvement, or more deterioration, than comparators.

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