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From area-based initiatives to strategic partnerships: have we lost the meaning of regeneration?

Abstract

For forty years area-based initiatives (ABIs) were the primary tool used by UK governments to tackle problems of concentrated deprivation and dereliction. The last decade has seen these initiatives end, replaced by new forms of city or region-wide governance; Local Strategic Partnerships in England and Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland. It has been argued in both policy documents and policy analysis that these would deliver more effective regeneration for all communities. Challenging this narrative, this paper presents this policy shift as a change in the meaning of regeneration policy using the methodology of interpretive policy analysis. The evidence from Scottish experience suggests that for a key policy actor – community activists in deprived neighbourhoods – the approach of ABIs had a great deal of meaning as regeneration. Furthermore, this was still present a decade after an ABI had ended. Meanwhile the newer strategic partnerships were delivering little meaningful change. This difference in meanings is used to re-imagine strategic regeneration as a more positive process.

1. **Introduction**

Over the decades that urban policy has focused on concentrated deprivation there has been an ongoing policy analysis debate as to whether policy should be delivered through concerted activity within neighbourhoods, area-based initiatives (ABIs), or through broader policy action (strategic, citywide partnerships) (Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Hall, 1997). This debate reflected different definitions of the policy problem (Stone, 1989). Simplistically, the ABI approach saw the policy problem as inherent to the neighbourhood and thus policy aimed to "turn it around" within a period of time. Strategic approaches accepted the role of wider social inequalities in producing concentrated deprivation and aimed to alleviate some problems at a citywide level and enhance service provision in deprived neighbourhoods. This approach was implemented in the neighbourhood renewal approach in England and in community regeneration in Scotland. The last ABI policy in Scotland, the Social Inclusion

Partnerships, was ended in 2004 and the ambitious English ABI the *New Deal for Communities* ended in 2010 (Batty, Beatty, Foden, Lawless, Pearson and Wilson, 2010). The strategic approach to regeneration has largely replaced ABI programmes as it is seen to be more sustainable and effective (Carley and Kirk, 1998; Social Exclusion Unit, 2001; Scottish Executive, 2002).

This paper will present two policy stories. The first is the story of policy analysis outlined above – the continuous improvement in regeneration policy over the past 40 years. The second story is how this has been felt in two Scottish neighbourhoods. These were chosen for the ambitious ABI, *New Life for Urban Scotland*, between 1989 and 1999 and now have their regeneration delivered by strategic partnerships, Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). In presenting these stories the paper has two aims. Firstly, it shows the contribution of interpretive approaches to policy analysis. Here, this change in the delivery of urban regeneration policy is understood as a change in the *meaning* of regeneration. The interpretive approach shifts our focus towards the longer-term outputs, outcomes and meanings of policy and policy as a "thing" (Latour, 2000). It also allows the different policies to be compared and contrasted, building on the local knowledge of participants who were acutely aware of the policy changes between 1999 and 2005. Secondly, this analysis is used to reassess experience with the use of ABIs adding to debates about the aims and role of an effective regeneration policy (Kintrea, 2007; Porter, 2009; Shaw, 2009). Learning from the experience of ABIs, it is argued that to be socially just a regeneration policy must have meaning for community activists.

The subsequent two sections discuss the policy analysis and policy change in regeneration from ABIs to the strategic approach in a UK and Scottish context. The fourth section

describes and reflects on the interpretive methodology. The fifth section discusses the very difficult experiences of the ABIs in the case study neighbourhoods, but ultimately how they had meaning a decade later. The sixth section discusses how the strategic approach to regeneration was not delivering a policy community activists could recognise as "regeneration" from their past experience. This leads to the new understanding of regeneration developed in the conclusion and discussion.

2. A narrative of regeneration policy

As areas of concentrated deprivation have become problematised in many societies, area-based approaches to urban policy have proliferated (Friedrichs, Galster and Musterd, 2003; Dekker and Van Kempen, 2004; Agger and Larsen, 2009). These initiatives range from large scale physical renewal and redevelopment to wider social policy to improve outcomes for individuals. The UK experience with spatial targeting began with the Urban Programme and Community Development Projects launched in 1968-9 (Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Atkinson, 2000). For 40 years the geographically bound ABI was the primary tool for delivering urban regeneration through various guises and acronyms: Urban Development Corporations, *New Life* partnerships, Housing Action Trusts, City Challenge Partnerships, Single Regeneration Budget Partnerships, Priority Partnership Areas, Regeneration Partnerships, Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) and New Deal for Communities, to name but a few (Scottish Office, 1993; Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Turok and Hopkins, 1998; Scottish Office, 1999; Lawless, 2004).

Among policy analysts there has been a consensus that ABIs were not effective dating almost from their inception. Successive evaluations and analyses have shown that ABIs:

- Were not producing sustainable change, with many neighbourhoods subject to successive or even parallel initiatives, and many possibly "standing still" (Tunstall and Coulter, 2006);

- Were not succeeding in bending mainstream expenditure or tailoring mainstream services to the needs of deprived neighbourhoods (Dabinett, Lawless, Rhodes and Tyler, 2001);

- Were focusing too closely on the neighbourhood itself and not its outward links (Hall, 1997);

- Were not providing a strategic spatial approach to deprivation, acknowledging the city, or region-wide economy (Carley and Kirk, 1998; Gripaios, 2002);

- And had difficulty in engaging communities (Hastings, McArthur and McGregor, 1996);

Part of the reason for these flaws was the policy narrative of ABIs (Stone, 1989). This found the problem to be inherent to the neighbourhood and so '[i]t followed that action was based on the idea that, after some temporary special treatment, unacceptable neighbourhoods could be returned to a non-problematic condition.' (Kintrea, 2007: 267). In reality, the meagre catalyst funding could not overcome local problems let alone challenge wider structural spatial inequalities (Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Hall, 1997). The argument that followed from this analysis was that regeneration needed to be outward looking to be successful (Hall, 1997). This would recognise a neighbourhood's role in the wider urban economy and link this with local action (Hastings, 2003). The policy response within urban management was to develop partnerships to use a strategic approach to spatially target and tailor policies to redistribute resources over the longer term (Carley and Kirk, 1998).

This was recognised by the UK Government through a series of reports produced by the Social Exclusion Unit, particularly that produced by Policy Action Team 17 *Joining it up Locally* (2000). The *New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* (*NCNR*) implemented the SEU recommendations in England, setting up Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to place

neighbourhood renewal and social exclusion at the heart of mainstream public service

agendas (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001; Morgan, 2002). The very ambitious ABI, the *New*

Deal for Communities (Lawless, 2004) continued in England running alongside regeneration

delivered through LSPs (Coaffee, 2004).

The Scottish context

The policy narrative in Scotland is very similar. Since the 1970s Scotland had its own urban

policy due to "administrative" devolution (McCarthy, 1999; Mooney and Johnstone, 2002;

Keating, 2005). From the mid-1970s, Scotland had pioneered area-based approaches to

regeneration as a response to deindustrialisation in programmes such as the Glasgow East

Area Renewal (McCrone, 1991). Individual local authorities also carried out their own area-

based regeneration activity (Gilloran, 1983; Strathclyde Regional Council, 1988). From the

late 1980s ABIs proliferated under the political agenda of the Conservative UK government,

with the four *New Life for Urban Scotland* partnerships and Priority Partnership Areas

(PPAs) and Regeneration Partnerships (Scottish Office, 1988; 1993; Turok and Hopkins,

1998). These initiatives focused on peripheral social housing estates around major towns and

cities that were particularly affected by deindustrialisation (Mooney and Johnstone, 2002).

These ABIs were continued by the new Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition Scottish

Executive after devolution in 1999 as Social Inclusion Partnerships (McCarthy, 1999;

Scottish Office, 1999).

A small number of these later ABI partnerships acknowledge criticisms of the approach and

were "archipelago" bodies covering a number of smaller neighbourhoods across a local

authority with a more strategic approach (Taylor, Turok and Hastings, 2001). Fourteen SIPs

were "thematic", targeting groups such as the young jobless across a local authority area

(Macpherson, Goodlad and McKenzie, 2007). In the 2002 policy document *Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap* the Scottish Executive announced that the SIPs were to end and their regeneration role to be delivered by strategic Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). *Closing the Gap*, like the *NCNR*, aimed to produce a spatial focus in Community Planning, to deliver enhanced services to the most deprived neighbourhood identified by the new Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Hastings, 2003; Matthews, 2010; Scottish Executive, 2002; 2005).

3. Interpretive policy analysis and regeneration

The narrative above is taken from existing analyses of regeneration policy that fed into policymaking processes. This change in policy delivery from ABIs to a more strategic approach has arguably been driven by the constant analytical and evaluative focus on urban regeneration (Edwards, 1997). However, evaluation of the new strategic approach to regeneration has not fully considered its role in delivering community regeneration or neighbourhood renewal. For example, within political science LSPs in England have been understood as a new partnership adding to the cluttered institutional landscape of local governance (for example: Sullivan and Lowndes, 2004). Within the public administration there have also been studies on neighbourhood management as a concept and practice (for example: Durose, 2007). LSPs and associated neighbourhood governance structures have also been understood as a development of the 'new localism' in policy (for example: Coaffee and Healey, 2003). There has also been consideration of the difficulties faced in having ABI partnerships and strategic partnerships running simultaneously in the same region (for example: Coaffee, 2004). Overall, analysis to date has not recognised that many neighbourhoods had ABIs and these have been replaced by strategic partnerships.

To understand this policy change this research employed an interpretive policy analysis methodology (Yanow, 2000). This seeks to understand policy through ethnographic methods and the anthropologist's gaze (Yanow, 1996; 2000; Shore and Wright, 1997). The analysis aims to uncover the myriad ways a policy can *mean* – through metaphors used by policy actors; buildings or environmental change as symbols; myths (in the anthropological sense); and any number of tropes, synecdoche or symbols (Yanow, 1996).

This requires access to local knowledge created by policy implementation in case studies (Yanow, 2000; 2003). Two case studies were chosen that represented the shift from ABIs to a more strategic approach as theoretical cases (Yin, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Wester Hailes in the City of Edinburgh and Ferguslie Park in Paisley, Renfrewshire had been chosen for the *New Life for Urban Scotland* programme between 1988 and 1999 and were now covered by the Edinburgh Partnership CPP and Renfrewshire CPP. During fieldwork both CPPs also began local level engagement with Neighbourhood Partnerships in Edinburgh and Local Area Committees in Renfrewshire. The methods used to collect the data were overt observation (Gans, 1976) and narrative interview (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). In total 44 meetings were observed in both case studies. These ranged from meetings of local community groups, such as tenants' and residents' associations, to meetings of the strategic CPP. The fieldnotes of these meetings complemented the transcripts of 43 interviews with community activists, local community development workers and local authority policy officers (Table 1). The narrative interview technique used a small number of very open-ended questions to elicit broader narratives reflecting individual's biographies. This provided access to the meanings participants had developed through their lives and careers, particularly by looking at the narratives and stories they told (Labov and Waletsky, 1966; Kaplan, 1993; Diamond, 2005).

Interviews	Total	Meetings	Total

Community activists	16	Community groups	18
Community workers	11	Local partnerships	12
Policy officers	16	Strategic partnerships	12
		Training sessions	2
Total	43	Total	44

Table 1 - Interviews and meetings observed

The output of the analysis was "thick description" of the various meanings used and created by policy actors (Yanow, 1996; Geertz, 1974). These meanings should resonate with broader theory and are analysed hermeneutically through 'a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously' (Geertz, 1974: 43). In this case, the broader theories being spoken too are those outlined in the policy narrative above – that ABIs were fatally flawed and the strategic approach to regeneration was better. This analysis therefore takes a different stance to some criticism of regeneration policy that, for example, see it as an extension of neo-liberal governance (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002). The interpretive approach, as used here, aims to find critique in the mismatch between actors' meanings, and very local meanings and wider theory (Yanow, 1996). The interpretive approach does not necessarily preclude other forms of critique from a structural perspective, for example critical discourse analysis (see: Matthews, 2010, for an example of this approach applied to this research).

The interpretation provided below has to be considered as one among many because of the epistemology of the methodology (Yanow, 1996; Hatch and Yanow, 2008). There are many possible challenges to validity: for example the community activist participants were those

who had lived in their neighbourhood and been active for many years. This was the case even though mobility was high in both neighbourhoods, as in other deprived neighbourhoods (Bailey and Livingston, 1998; Robson, Lymperopoulou and Rae, 2008). However, these individuals continued to be those contacted by community planning as representative of the community. Further, these were often the few people who had lived through the policy changes in the same neighbourhood. The forward-looking orientation of policy (Pollitt, 2008) meant most policy-makers did not have a history of regeneration policy. The interpretive approach reveals this history and uses it to focus on meanings (Yanow, 1996): what does "regeneration" mean to policy actors and how has this changed over time. Presenting "thick description" within the constraints of a journal article is a challenge. The approach taken here is that used by Clifford Geertz (see for example the classic essay 'Deep play: notes on the Balinese cockfight' in Geertz, 1993), focusing on specific meanings that resonate with the wider research question – the change in regeneration from ABIs to the strategic approach.

4. Understanding regeneration – the area-based approach

Local and historical context

The history of the two case studies neighbourhoods paralleled experiences with social housing estates across the UK (Tucker, 1966; Hanley, 2007). Ferguslie Park was an interwar slum clearance estate. There were a small number of very good quality 1920s four-in-a-block tenements, but the vast majority of the housing had been constructed cheaply and poorly in the 1930s; described as 'cuts housing neglected even before it was built' (CDP Interdisciplinary Team, 1976: 81; see also: Damer, 1974). By 1969, it was selected as the only area of local authority housing for the Community Development Project (CDP). The

decline of local industry, poor housing and stigma had produced a concentration of deprivation (Paisley CDP, 1978). Between the end of the CDP in 1977 and 1999, the neighbourhood was subject to a number of initiatives led by Strathclyde Regional Council and then the *New Life for Urban Scotland* partnership, the Ferguslie Park Partnership (FPP) (Strathclyde Regional Council, 1988; FPP, 1989). Wester Hailes was the last large local authority housing estate built in the UK, constructed between 1968 and 1971. From completion the homes were difficult to let due to their poor quality and an over-supply in the city. The 23 blocks of high rise flats were constructed poorly using non-traditional prefabrication and marked the neighbourhood as physically different from others in Edinburgh (Gilloran, 1983). By the late 1980s, successive projects led by the Lothian Regional Council nurtured latent community activism and developed a large network of autonomous community groups. The Wester Hailes Partnership (WHP) took over regeneration activity between 1988 and 1999 as part of *New Life*.

Both neighbourhoods were part of the regeneration narrative above and their experience of ABIs has been that they had "failed" (see also: Matthews, forthcoming). In 2009, Ferguslie Park still had one of the highest concentrations of deprivation of any neighbourhood in Scotland. In 2006 one datazone[1] within the neighbourhood was ranked number one in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Wester Hailes' datazones are all still within the bottom 15 per cent of the SIMD (Table 2). Despite this, a decade after ABI-led regeneration had ceased, this process had left a deep meaning. This was felt in two particular ways: firstly the massive physical renewal was visually symbolic of regeneration. Secondly experiences of community engagement allowed the community to capture this meaning.

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[1] Datazones are standardised areas with an average population of 750; 6,505 datazones make up the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Year		Population	% Unemployed	% Workless	% Social rented homes
1971	Ferguslie Park	12,300	22*	n/a	97
1977	Ferguslie Park	9,500	27*	n/a	n/a
1981	Wester Hailes	16,021	n/a	n/a	n/a
1988	Ferguslie Park	6,000	17**	48†	99
	Wester Hailes	12,000	12	27†	95
1998	Ferguslie Park	4,500	18**	24†	47
	Wester Hailes	11,000	19	24†	64
2005	Ferguslie Park	4,161	7.81	39.4	57.35
	Wester Hailes	8,747	6.68	35.08	69.03
	Scottish average in 2005		2.9	13.8	29.41

* unemployed and seeking work at 1971 census and 1977 CDP survey

** claimant count

† economically inactive

Table 2 - Statistics for the two case study neighbourhoods

(Paisley CDP, 1978; CPC, 1999, SIMD 2006)

The symbolism of the physical regeneration

The Ferguslie Park Partnership aimed 'to achieve sustained improvement in the supply and

quality of housing and its immediate environment' (FPP, 1989: 28) and Wester Hailes

Partnership aimed 'to improve physical standards…[and] to reduce the current high level of

turnover' (WHP, 1989: 29). These housing improvements were the priority of both communities:

> 'Interviewer: You sorta said that those were the five themes in the strategy, was that very much what the community wanted as well?
>
> Participant: Yeah very much so they wanted the houses modernised or demolished an' new houses built at the end of the day they wanted to get away from the tenemental properties an' some buildings could house a hundred and five children, which was totally crazy'

<div align="right">(Community volunteer, Ferguslie Park)</div>

Within residents' biographies, overcrowded tenements in Ferguslie Park contrasted to the difficult-to-let flats in Wester Hailes. Edinburgh residents vowed to never move to the 'concrete jungle' (community activist, Wester Hailes). These stories entwined residents' biographies and neighbourhood history. The majority of these activists moved into their homes during periods of low demand because they were in housing need. Large families or lone parents were allocated home in Ferguslie Park because of a lack of suitable housing elsewhere in Paisley (Paisley CDP, 1978); those in greatest housing need in Edinburgh, for example fleeing domestic violence, found themselves in the unpopular homes in Wester Hailes (Gilloran, 1983).

The focus on physical regeneration meant that between 1989 and 2002 in Ferguslie Park 1151 homes were demolished, 932 improved or rehabilitated and 1060 new homes constructed; in Wester Hailes, 18 high rise blocks were demolished, a total of 1600 homes, a further 2321 homes rehabilitated and 700 new homes were constructed. This was led by new community housing associations funded by the national agency Scottish Homes building on community

activism in housing cooperatives and community groups (Kintrea, 1996). As with other ABIs this physical renewal represented a quick win for the *New Life* partnerships (Lawless, 2006).

The physical renewal was a common part of residents' biographies. For example, stories began with a description of the very different neighbourhood of the past. The transformation would often then be explained in terms of a friend or relative returning after many years and not getting lost:

> 'people who were here, visiting … who lived here a long time ago who come back often get lost because the road layouts have changed and the plan of the area has changed and if they come to visit then they have to phone and say oh I'm at Clovenstone but I can't find my way because the road layout's changed you know how do I get down there now'.

>   (Community volunteer, Wester Hailes)

The obvious physical transformation meant that similar stories appeared in biographies even for those who had been marginal to the regeneration process. Long term residents could easily recognise that "regeneration" had happened in their neighbourhoods, providing new and better homes and improving the environment on their doorstep (Manzi and Jacobs, 2009).

The symbolism of physical regeneration was not always linked to positive transformation. Given the continuing problems in both neighbourhoods some residents also shared the opinion that little had been achieved beyond new housing and that there was more that needed to be have been done:

> 'too much of the investment went into making the place look good a good place to live it is nae a bad place don't get me wrong it is not a bad place to live at all but I think the investment went into making the place look good'

(Community volunteer, Wester Hailes)

In Ferguslie Park, the new community centre The Tannahill Centre, opened by the Queen in 1995, was particularly symbolic. For community activists it was a white elephant and an example of the regeneration breaking its promise to regenerate the community. The centre was run as a social enterprise and charged high rents to community groups. Other groups had been pushed out of office space by statutory organisations as they grew. This failure was again structured within activists' biographies and their knowledge of the former community centres which were:

> 'genuinely community managed ... the community organised all the different activities that went on within the centres they were opened seven days a week from morning till night ehm a lot o' the lets were subsidised ehm the local authority'

(Community activist, Ferguslie Park)

Although these examples are of the physical changes being symbolic of regeneration failure, that they had still had meaning within people's lives and could be readily applied to the abstract concepts of regeneration suggests that the approach of ABIs was distinctly meaning-full.

Community engagement and ownership of regeneration

The long term impact of community engagement weaves in greater richness adding meaning to the "regeneration" delivered by the ABIs. The two partnerships aimed to engage the community intensively; partly as the original policy had a negative agenda of making communities responsible and ending dependency (Hastings, 2000). The web of community organisations that emerged from earlier community activism were represented by the Ferguslie League of Action Groups (FLAG) and the Wester Hailes Representative Council (the RepCouncil) (Paisley CDP, 1978; Gilloran, 1983). These community organisations and

project were also part of activists' biographies. This story had a beginning of the resident complaining about a specific problem, or setting up their own project to help neighbours. Activists would then get increasingly engaged through community development and the investment of the *New Life* partnerships, and up to the present day when many of the projects were threatened as they were not strategic. This connection between biography, local problems and activism structured these experiences as an extension of the domestic sphere (Jupp, 2008).

The *New Life* partnerships were not examples of communicative planning or dialogic community engagement (Hastings, McArthur and McGregor, 1996; Healey, 1997; Fischer, 2003). Particularly in Ferguslie Park, previous experiences meant the partnership exacerbated existing local tensions and created new ones. Eventually relationships between FLAG and the other partners broke down completely and they were no longer part of the partnership (Kintrea, 1996; Collins, 1999). In Wester Hailes, although community engagement with the RepCouncil was sustained, it was fraught and the relationship was unequal (Hastings, McArthur and McGregor, 1994). The years of partnership community engagement in Wester Hailes were described as a 'very intense democratic process' (community worker) and policy officers who had been involved with it prided themselves on this experience of partnership making with the community.

The experience of a tense, real relationship in engagement (Barnes, 2008), linked to the experience of physical improvement, enabled a narrative to be constructed that placed the community's activism at the forefront of regeneration. For example, in Wester Hailes a community activist argued:

'Wester Hailes's the way it is is due to all the hard work of the people in the local ehm neighbourhood councils [that were part of the Wester Hailes Representative Council] they're nae willing to sit back and take what's been dished oot you know they're like you cannae have this you cannae have that I'm sorry but what do we pay council tax for is the way I look at it'.

(Community volunteer, Wester Hailes)

These stories would be presented publicly in meetings and shared, corrected and retold, particularly to encourage continued fights for improvement. It therefore acted as an anthropological myth – a narrative used for a cultural function (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Yanow, 1996). This was also linked to a deeper feeling of injustice – the poor housing was a result of residents being ignored by public services and looked down upon by wider society. The continued activism of the communities got them noticed by national and local government and the new homes responded to this injustice.

Regeneration was therefore part of these residents' biographies (Diamond, 2005). Through the symbolism of the built environment, captured through stories of community activism, the ABI approach also created very strong meaning and a tangible sense of regeneration having occurred. As the neighbourhoods had been neglected by their local authorities and stigmatised by the wider community, this was also importantly linked to a sense of justice. The next section will address what meanings were being created by the strategic approach to regeneration and whether these created a sense of regeneration.

5. The delivery of regeneration through strategy

The implementation of a strategic approach

ABIs were replaced by citywide partnerships as the former were not seen to be *strategic* (Hall, 1997). In the policy document *New Life for Urban Scotland* it was stated these partnership would take a strategic approach (Scottish Office, 1988). However, this meaning of strategic was from the frame of the New Public Management (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994). Strategic management would broaden the focus of regeneration to tackle the social and economic deprivation as well as physical dereliction (Turok, 1992; McCarthy, 1999).

The *strategic* approach to regeneration of community planning was managerial and spatial. CPPs would identify the role of a neighbourhood in the wider city systems and bring public sector agencies together to focus and tailor their services (Scottish Executive, 2002). This change was evident in both case studies. Scottish Government policy and funding) targeted at the most deprived neighbourhoods (the Community Regeneration Fund and latterly the Fairer Scotland Fund, meant services were prioritised and enhanced. For example, in Wester Hailes, local authority officers went on regular walkabouts with community activists to identify environmental improvements and discuss localised problems with anti-social behaviour. These happened four times as regularly in Wester Hailes than in less deprived neighbourhoods. In Renfrewshire, environmental officers used handheld computers to monitor cleanliness and target cleaning. This data was then used to identify when concerted partnership action was required to support a neighbourhood. In both case studies, partnership working between the local authority and the police to tackle and prevent anti-social behaviour led to extensive targeting of resources.

The meaning of strategic

Although changes were happening they were not obvious to community activists as community planning or regeneration. What was most striking about community planning was

the almost complete ignorance as to what it was or what it was delivering. This was a typical

exchange:

'Interviewer: What do you understand by the term Community Planning.

Participant: To be honest [interviewer] I don't think much about it at all that's awful I

sound really ignorant it's just … so you need to please excuse my ignorance on that,

I'm not a hundred per cent.

Interviewer: You don't need to excuse yourself for anything.

Participant You know, I just I do feel mebbe I should I read a lot more'.

(Community activist, Wester Hailes)

Officers asked activists to 'look up' to the strategic level so they would understand

community planning, with no recognition that the officers might also need to look down to

the local level. This difference was more than 'alternative conventions about the day-to-day

business of debate and decision-making' (Sullivan and Lowndes, 2004: 65) it reflected very

different meanings at the local and strategic levels.

In comparison to the local action of ABIs, community planning existed at a "strategic level",

as with LSPs in England, joining up large public sector organisations across a large area to

focus broad strategic issues (Munro, Roberts and Skelcher, 2008). This strategic role was

formalised in the ten-year Community Plan and the Single Outcome Agreement (Scottish

Government, 2007; Midwinter, 2009). This difference between the local action and strategic

policy became apparent as both local authorities developed neighbourhood governance

structures. These new Neighbourhood Partnerships (Edinburgh) and Local Area Comittees

(Renfrewshire) struggled to engage neighbourhoods because of institutional barriers (Coaffee

and Healey, 2003) and, as the interpretive approach suggests, different meanings of the local

and the strategic. For example, in a meeting of Edinburgh's strategic partnership

Neighbourhood Partnerships were described by one manager as 'delivery arms' of the central partnership. This was a very different view from that of the nascent Neighbourhood Partnerships. They were struggling to have an impact on local policy implementation and actively change strategic policy, such as funding and transport priorities, to help their neighbourhoods.

The different understanding of the nature of policy action manifested itself in the everyday power dynamics and clashes of community planning. An example of this was the launch of the 'clean renfrewshire' campaign. The Renfrewshire CPP had carried out a series of consultation workshop and a key issue raised was problems with littering (Renfrewshire Council, 2008). The local authority developed a strategy to tackle the problem which sought to change the culture of Renfrewshire residents. As was explained in presentations to community planning meetings, the campaign's slogan 'do your bit' reflected the desire of the local authority to work in 'a partnership with you, the community' and that the policy would lead to 'civic and economic regeneration'. This was the strategic meaning of 'clean renfrewshire', it would build on existing partnerships and help support the strategic aim of regeneration across the local authority.

At successive meetings, community activists understood one aspect of the policy very differently as it had a local meaning. Since 2003, Renfrewshire had employed Neighbourhood Wardens in deprived neighbourhoods to tackle antisocial behaviour. A key part of the implementation of 'clean renfrewshire' was that these Neighbourhood Wardens would now become Community Wardens. In this new role they would work throughout Renfrewshire and their powers were extended to fining people for littering. The local experience of activists was that Wardens developed trusting relationships with local

communities, including the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. These wardens were tangible regeneration. The concern of activists was that these good relationships would be eroded by this new enforcement role. Officers gave repeated reassurances that wardens would be trained in conflict resolution, but these failed to appease the very concerned activists. From the strategic level, the local authority maintained that 'clean renfrewshire' would be effective and that this was a priority that could not be disagreed with. Community activists understood 'clean renfrewshire' as an imposition of control that would be resisted by people in their communities. They welcomed the wider campaign, but vociferously opposed this part of the proposals, fostering conflict.

This could be interpreted as tokenistic and poor community engagement (Arnstein, 1969). This example also highlights: the problems of democratic deficit in strategic partnerships (Munro, Roberts and Skelcher, 2008); the removal of conflict through the primacy of partnership ethos (Davies, 2009) (ironically, also a problem with the original Ferguslie Park Partnership (Collins, 1999)); an unequal power balance (Sullivan and Lowndes, 2004); and the tension between national and local priorities (Cowell, 2004; Sinclair, 2008). Focusing on the meaning of regeneration, and contrasting this example of community planning to the experience of ABIs, highlights how local knowledge and meanings are an added dimension of these problems. The 'clean renfrewshire' policy was linked to a very nebulous idea of what "regeneration" was – as a partnership between public authorities and communities working to tackle wicked issues and meeting the aims of the Community Plan. Strategy was attempting to close down conflict and debate as nobody could argue that tackling litter was a bad thing. However, the tangible action for local activists was the changed role for Neighbourhood Wardens, which could make their everyday lives worse, not better.

6. Conclusion – new meanings of regeneration

This paper aimed to demonstrate what an interpretive approach could add to the analysis of regeneration policy and then use this analysis to reflect on strategic regeneration. By focusing on the meanings created in policy implementation and the reaction to policy, the analysis has revealed extensive differences in the ABI and strategic approach to regeneration. This difference in meaning is in line with previous policy evaluation, particularly in England. The ambitious New Deal for Communities ABI achieved some effective community engagement and also produced large scale physical transformation responding to the wishes of residents (Lawless, 2006). It has been noted that LSPs do not necessarily offer an effective arena for engagement, as a 'partnership whose strength is to bring together diverse agencies and interests may struggle to establish a clear and common identity, recognisable to sceptical, or uninterested, local citizens.' (Sullivan and Lowndes, 2004: 63). The contrast between *New Life* and community planning also supports the suggestion that engagement will be more effective at a local scale, taking advantage of neighbourliness and domesticity, particularly in deprived communities with strong bonding social capital (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Jupp, 2008; Smith, Bellaby and Lindsay, 2010). Bringing both sets of policies into the purview of one interpretive analysis allows direct comparison, suggesting that perhaps we have lost something with the end of ABIs – the meaning of regeneration. This contrasts with the story of policy improvement presented in section two.

Weaving together the issues of propinquity, engagement and complexity in the stories above we can write a new narrative of regeneration. Two positive stories emerge relating to ABIs and the strategic approach. It was clear that, although difficult, the local, practical, visible action of the *New Life* partnerships had meaning for participants. This was woven into their

biographies and presented a tangible and believable story that something called "regeneration" had occurred. On the other hand, the strategic approach was improving services in deprived neighbourhoods and making a difference, however this was unrecognisable to residents; it lacked meaning. In the case of "clean renfrewshire", and other examples of community planning witnessed during fieldwork, the strategic answer to problems was always correct, even if local knowledge challenged this. Strategic regeneration then became a difficult process of officers and community activists talking past one another (Sullivan and Lowndes, 2004; Davies, 2009.

This might suggest that the strategic approach is almost doomed to remaining meaningless. However, if it focused on practical, tangible improvements – improvements to the stressed built environment or more obvious environmental servicing (Hastings, 2009) – it could make strategically delivered, targeted services as meaningful for residents as the experience of an ABI. Rather than an ABI package that aims to "turn around" neighbourhoods and then ends, this would be a constant ABI that supported those residents who choose to live in the neighbourhoods, while providing opportunities for those using the neighbourhood as an "elevator" (Robson, Lymperopoulou and Rae, 2008). This could offer a way to reinvent regeneration as positive state intervention into neighbourhoods, as opposed to state-led gentrification (Shaw and Porter, 2009).

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