

Residents' Perceptions of Neighbourhood Change and its Impacts



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Residents' Perceptions of Neighbourhood Change and Its Impacts

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1. Introduction

This working paper explores the perceptions of neighbourhood change amongst residents living in six lower-income neighbourhoods in Britain. The neighbourhoods are: Amlwch in Anglesey; Hillside in Knowsley; Oxfords in Edinburgh, West Kensington in London, West Marsh in Grimsby; and Wensley Fold in Blackburn. The data presented in this paper are based on two waves of interviews with residents conducted between 2007 and 2009. These interviews were undertaken as part of a wider Joseph Rowntree Foundation-funded longitudinal study of the connections between poverty and place. A full account of the research aims and methods and a description of the six neighbourhoods will be available in forthcoming papers.

The paper begins by providing an overview on the literature and research evidence on neighbourhood careers, neighbourhood change, area effects, and neighbourhood satisfaction. This review highlights the importance of residents' subjective perceptions of neighbourhood change, including narratives of neighbourhood decline, and identifies the policy recommendations and research issues that have been explored in the existing literature.

The paper then presents the findings from our research, beginning with an investigation into residents' perceptions of the scale and extent on change in their neighbourhoods, including the diversity of perceptions and the time and space dimensions of neighbourhood change. This is followed by an account of the drivers, symbols and indicators of change articulated by residents, including the local economy, housing and the physical environment, population change, shopping facilities, neighbourhood infrastructure and crime.

Residents' positive and negative perceptions of change are demonstrated, followed by an account of the extent and nature of the impacts upon residents of the changes occurring in their neighbourhoods. The paper then analyses differences in perceptions of change between the six neighbourhoods and the reasons for these differences and describes residents' desired future changes in their neighbourhood. The paper concludes with a discussion of the policy implications arising from the research findings.

2. Background and Existing Research Evidence

2.1 Neighbourhood change and area effects

It has long been established that neighbourhoods have 'careers'; that they are subject to periods of transition and change and trajectories of growth or decline (Park, Burgess and McKenzie, 1925; Zorbaugh, 1929; Jacobs, 1961; Skogan, 1990). These changes are the result of economic, demographic, social and technological developments external and internal to the neighbourhood. It is also well established that 'place matters' (Baum *et al*, 2009). Fried (1984) found that local residential satisfaction was second only to marital satisfaction as a predictor of life satisfaction and that residential satisfaction was particularly important for lower income groups. The area effects literature has sought to demonstrate the impact of physical, environmental, economic, social and cultural characteristics of neighbourhoods on the populations residing within them (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Ellen and Turner, 1997; Kearns and Parkinson, 2001; Warr *et al*, 2007, see also Beatty *et al*, 2009).

It has been argued that the pace of change of contemporary society and what Bauman (2000) terms 'liquid modernity' leads to a sense of 'ontological insecurity' with individuals feeling increasingly 'out of place' as neighbourhoods are subject to often rapid transformation (Giddens, 1984; Savage *et al*, 2005; Mee, 2007; Watt, 2006; Hall, 2007). A number of structural processes of change have impacted on deprived neighbourhoods in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. These include the residualisation of some areas, with growing concentrations of disadvantaged populations and social problems (Murie, 1997), the gentrification of particular working class districts (Martin, 2005; Hall, 2007), rapid population turnover (Livingston *et al*, 2008) and major changes to the housing tenure mix (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000) and ethnic profile of some localities (Watt, 2006; Hall, 2007). A series of models have been developed to explain how neighbourhood changes impact on residents' attachment to place, their perceptions of their area and the future they perceive for the locality (see Beatty *et al*, 2009). These include, for example, the loss of social role models (Wilson, 1987; Murray, 1990) and changes in levels of social capital (Putnam, 2001). Wilson and Kelling (1982) developed their 'broken windows' theory to suggest that visible signs of physical disorder and incivilities acted as symbols of neighbourhood decline and deteriorating mechanisms of social control, which in turn resulted in residents wishing to leave the area (see also Skogan, 1990).

2.2 Neighbourhood satisfaction

Much of the existing literature has attempted to identify levels of neighbourhood satisfaction and its impact on residents' attachment to a neighbourhood and their desire to remain in or to leave a local area. The findings of these studies are inconclusive. It is commonly agreed that a range of factors influence neighbourhood satisfaction. Parkes *et al* (2002) identified these as individual financial resources, neighbourhood resources and reputation, exposure to neighbourhood problems, attachment and social integration and expectations. Baum *et al* (2009) found that determinants of satisfaction included income, tenure, life-cycle stages, housing quality and social features and reputation. Mee (2007) argued that perceptions of neighbourhood are linked to previous housing experiences, life stage, housing market context, location, social interaction and on-going and shifting relations with others. Andersen (2008) categorised physical environment, location and services,

social environment, housing and reputation and status as key variables for neighbourhood satisfaction.

Studies have also found greater levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction amongst lower-income groups (Burrows and Rhodes, 1998; Fietjen and van Ham, 2008). Although Livingston *et al* (2008) found that the most important factors of place attachment were the same in affluent and deprived neighbourhoods, they also found that residents were less likely to be attached to their local area in deprived areas due to weaker social networks and cohesion and more negative views of crime and safety (Livingston *et al*, 2008). Housing and environmental satisfaction have been found to be closely related to neighbourhood satisfaction (Parkes *et al*, 2002) with residents of high-rise towers and those living in higher density built forms more likely to link neighbourhood problems with dissatisfaction and negative impacts on health (Warr *et al*, 2007; Parkes *et al*, 2002). Particular groups, such as young people or short and long-term residents have also been found to have different levels of neighbourhood satisfaction (Parkes *et al*, 2002; Andersen, 2008). Baum *et al* (2009) found that socioeconomic mix impacted on neighbourhood satisfaction with the presence of higher income households being associated with higher levels of satisfaction, although this could also have unintended negative consequences (see also Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000). However, social mix in itself was not associated with reduced neighbourhood attachment in another study (Livingston *et al*, 2008).

2.3 Neighbourhood change and satisfaction

Pan Ke Shon, (2007) argued that residential trajectories and residents' perceptions of their future were often missing from studies of perceptions of places of residence (although see Hall, 2007; Watt, 2006). The temporal dimension of neighbourhood change is especially important in understanding neighbourhood satisfaction and moving wishes (Fietjen and van Ham, 2008: 2105; Lee *et al*, 1994). There is therefore the need for a deeper understanding of how people perceive and respond to neighbourhood change (Fietjen and van Ham, 2008: 2119; Aitken, 1990: 263). A number of studies have examined the impacts of neighbourhood change on levels of satisfaction. One study found no effect of socioeconomic change on residents' desire to move (Fietjen and van Ham, 2008). High population turnover has, however, been linked with lower levels of satisfaction and may negatively affect place attachment by undermining social networks and by eroding feelings of trust, safety and security (Fietjen and van Ham, 2008; Livingston *et al*, 2008). Rapid changes in ethnic mix have also been linked to increasing neighbourhood dissatisfaction, although this process is complex and unclear (Livingston *et al*, 2008; Fietjen and van Ham, 2008). Increasing levels of crime and disorder are strongly linked to rising levels of neighbourhood dissatisfaction (Andersen, 2008; Watt, 2006; Warr *et al*, 2007; Geis and Ross, 1998). Some studies have sought to measure the specific impact of area-based regeneration initiatives on neighbourhood satisfaction, such as the evaluation of the New Deal for Communities Programme (Beatty *et al*, 2009; Batty *et al*, 2010a). These studies have found that, although significant proportions of residents perceive these initiatives as improving their neighbourhood and high levels of satisfaction with quality of life, the area and accommodation, four in ten residents still wished to leave the neighbourhood.

2.4 The importance of subjective perceptions

Neighbourhood satisfaction is a function of objective realities and subjective evaluations and wellbeing is as strongly influenced by our perceptions of material phenomena as the material phenomena themselves (Burrows and Rhodes, 1998; Andersen, 2008). These *perceived* neighbourhood attributes and changes are argued to be a more accurate guide to understanding residential satisfaction than personal and housing background variables (Parkes *et al*, 2002). These perceptions

are influenced by the symbolic construction of community (Cohen, 1985, Watt, 2006) in which residents respond to their locations within webs of social relations they themselves cannot map in detail (Tilly, 1998) and form evaluations based on an 'anonymous sociability' arising from their co-existence in the same neighbourhood with many people who they do not have direct contact or relations with (Pan Ke Shon, 2007).

These subjective assessments of neighbourhood conditions and change are affected by individuals' age, education, socio-residential status and networks and residents have different expectations of their places of residence (Pan Ke Shon, 2007). Residents bring relational positions to each other and to others from other neighbourhoods into the place making process (Blokland, 2001: 41). An awareness of the external reputation of a neighbourhood is also an important factor, particularly as persistent external neighbourhood reputations often do not reflect rapid and significant changes occurring within them (Dean and Hastings, 2000; Hastings and Dean, 2000; Hastings, 20004; Blokland, 2001; Fraser, 1996; Robertson *et al*, 2008). Livingston *et al* (2008) describe the 'fit' between an individual and their neighbourhood as residential correspondence. When neighbourhoods no longer correspond with individuals' preferred characteristics or their image of themselves, this gives rise to residential stress (Fiejten and van Ham, 2008) and a sense of not really belonging and feeling out of place (Blokland, 2001; Watt, 2006). This can lead to individuals dis-identifying themselves from the local community (Blokland, 2001). For example, residents living in a neighbourhood that they consider to be below their social status may experience proximity with the poor or foreign co-residents as stigmatising (Pan Ke Shon, 2007: 2233). However, it is important to recognise that not all residents position their neighbourhood, or their neighbours, in a relational hierarchy of social status with other areas or populations (Allen, 2005, 2008; Allen *et al*, 2007; Charlesworth, 2000).

2.5 Narratives of neighbourhood decline?

Many commentators have identified a growing sense of insecurity, social conflict and loss of community in Western societies as a result of rapid transformations and globalisation (Bauman, 2000; Giddens, 1998; Putnam, 2001; Pompke, 2007). Previous research has found that low income groups more often state that their neighbourhood has deteriorated than higher income groups (Fiejten and van Ham, 2008; Burrows and Rhodes, 1998). Within deprived neighbourhoods, studies have identified a complex set of images, rooted in narratives of neighbourhood decline, deteriorating social conditions and community loss (Watt, 2006; Andersen and Munck, 1999; Wood and Vamplew, 1999; Forrest and Kearns, 1999, Blokland, 2001 (For in-depth studies of these processes, including detailed accounts in residents' own words see Campbell, 1993; Hall, 2007; Power and Mumford, 2003; Charlesworth, 2000). These processes of neighbourhood change are often beyond residents' sphere of influence (Fiejten and van Ham, 2008) and there are strong correlations between neighbourhood disorders and subjective perceptions of powerlessness among residents (Geis and Ross, 1998; Warr *et al*, 2007).

These narratives often contrast a previous 'golden age' of neighbourhoods (Ravetz, 2001; Watt, 2006) with what Martin (2005: 86) calls 'a constellation of material issues that residents perceive as impeding their day to day existence'. A range of factors generate these narratives. The arrival of 'strangers' and 'outsiders' and tensions between 'the established' and 'outsiders' are pivotal elements in a sense of neighbourhood decline (Elias, 1994; Wood and Vamplew, 1999). Individuals are often adverse to neighbours who they view as deviating from 'mainstream' norms and values (Harris, 1999; Fiejten and van Ham, 2008). The presence of 'low status' others, or 'rough' newcomers is viewed as threatening the way of life of 'respectable' locals (Elias, 1994; Watt, 2006). In some cases, these perceptions may be racialised,

although complex and nuanced distinctions are often made between and within ethnic minority groups and anti-racist views are also evident (Watt, 2006; Martin, 2005). A sense of neighbourhood decline is often linked to fear of crime, problems of anti-social behaviour, drugs, violence and a 'generally threatening youth culture' (Martin, 2005; Watt, 2006; Anderson, 2008; Sampson *et al*, 1999). The poor management and deteriorating conditions of public spaces are a crucial symbol of decline (Watt, 2006; Martin, 2005). Physical disorders and social incivilities act as 'visible cues' of disintegration and impropriety in local environments and signal low levels of social control and an inability to maintain order (Warr *et al*, 2007; Sampson *et al*, 1999; Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Skogan, 1990).

This sense of loss and neglected heritage is also linked to the closures of landmark buildings, shops and workplaces (Wood and Vamplew, 1999; Andersen and Munck, 1999) and changes in retail and leisure services (Watt, 2006). Economic restructuring, displaced local businesses and deteriorating public welfare services are viewed as both signifying and causing neighbourhood decline (Watt, 2006; Martin, 2005). Poor local facilities and low rates of social interaction have also been found where tenure diversification has occurred on council estates (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000; Parkes *et al*, 2002). It is this combination of increased socio-economic deprivation, insecurity and socio-cultural heterogeneity, articulated by residents as a material change for the worse that characterise these perceptions of neighbourhood decline (Watt, 2006; Martin, 2005). Even positive opinions of neighbourhoods are often qualified by an awareness that the current situation may not last because of social change under way, or by a fear that a neighbourhood will change for the worse and that residents' lifestyle is threatened (Pan Ke Shon, 2007).

However, research tends to emphasise the negatives and problems of deprived neighbourhoods (Mee, 2007). There is a need for a more complex understanding of the inconsistencies and tensions between generalised narratives of decline and more specific accounts of positive interaction and belonging and multiple and at times contradictory and simultaneous negative and positive experiences (Watt, 2006: 786; Mee, 2007). Studies have shown that the majority of residents say spontaneously that they are satisfied with where they are living due to the advantages of the neighbourhood and their emotional roots within it (Pan Ke Shon, 2007) and have found high levels of satisfaction amongst social housing tenants who regard their (often socially stigmatised) neighbourhoods as familiar, agreeable, beautiful, well organised and safe (de Decker and Pannecoucke, 2004).

These positive perceptions are grounded in notions of belonging and knowing people and the benefits of living in inner city neighbourhoods and/or Council housing (Watt, 2006; Pan Ke Shon, 2007; Andersen, 2008) where people feel at home, believe that there are fortunate to have their current homes, lucky to have these homes and that their home and neighbourhood provide comfort, control and ontological security (Mee, 2007; Martin, 2005; see also Allen, 2008 and Charlesworth, 2000, on the gap between residents' and academics' and policymakers' perceptions of neighbourhoods and neighbourhood change, including the focus given to the, material and functional, rather than symbolic, value of neighbourhoods).

Regeneration initiatives have also influenced perceptions of neighbourhoods (Forrest and Kearns, 1999; Hall, 2007; Beatty *et al*, 2009). Some studies have suggested that residents who live in urban renewal neighbourhoods experience or expect mainly positive change (Fiejten and van Ham, 2008: 2117). However, studies have also found that regeneration initiatives can lead to a sense of powerlessness and heightening divisions (Forrest and Kearns, 1999; Cattell and Evans, 1999; Allen, 2008). Studies have also shown mixed views amongst residents about the impacts of gentrification processes (Martin, 2005).

2.6 Policy recommendations

These studies have led to a number of policy recommendations. These include the importance of addressing household level deprivation (Warr *et al*, 2007) and addressing anti-social behaviour and crime and maintaining public areas (Andersen, 2008, Warr *et al*, 2007; Parkes *et al* 2002). Improving local schools and facilities have been identified as key mechanisms for addressing negative perceptions of neighbourhood change (Andersen, 2008; Parkes *et al*, 2002; Power and Mumford, 2003). A number of studies have suggested the need for the image management of some deprived neighbourhoods (Dean and Hastings, 2002; Forrest and Kearns, 1999; Andersen, 2008). Finally, Innes and Jones (2006) argue that responses to insecurity and change, and in particular crime and disorder, should be targeted at particular risk factors, engaged in resilience building and designed to trigger wider recovery processes, enhancing security and contributing to a material improvement in a neighbourhood's situation.

2.7 Research issues

It is evident that residents can experience the same neighbourhood conditions and changes in quite different ways and different groups attach more importance to particular neighbourhood features and local resources (Mee, 2007; Parkes *et al*, 2002; Burrows and Rhodes, 1998; Pan Ke Shon, 2007). There are 'competing spatialities' (Keith and Pile, 1993) and changes to particular landscapes have a greater resonance for some individuals (Martin, 2005). Therefore, studies need to identify which neighbourhood changes have particular impacts for certain groups and their complex relationships with other life and wellbeing outcomes (Beatty *et al*, 2009). Not all residents perceive changes to their neighbourhood, or believe that neighbourhood changes have an impact on them and support of, or resistance to, change vary considerably (Andersen and Munck, 1999; Martin, 2005; Hall, 2007; Allen, 2008). For example, for young people, it may be the perceived lack of activity, monotony and dullness of a neighbourhood rather than nuisance and insecurity, that creates unhappiness (Pan Ke Shon, 2007, see also Charlesworth, 2000). Friends, relatives and neighbours do not all have the same influence on the same type of resident and different types of residents are not equally sensitive to different categories of relationships (Pan Ke Shon, 2007). In addition, residents are more disposed to express dissatisfaction with some of the specific conditions in the neighbourhood than to make a general devaluation of their neighbourhood (Andersen, 2008). Although many studies categorise neighbourhoods as 'deprived', there is also a need to recognise the diversity between and within neighbourhoods, the different processes of change occurring within them and the different individual and collective responses to, resilience towards, and recovery from, these changes in different communities (Fraser, 1996; Hall, 2007; Innes and Jones, 2006; Sampson *et al*, 1999). Finally, researchers need to be aware that categories of difference, and the comparative typologies used to distinguish neighbourhood change and types of neighbourhood may not match residents' own frameworks of perception and understanding (Martin, 2005; Allen, 2008; Charlesworth, 2000). The paper now attempts to address some of these issues through presenting the findings from our six case study neighbourhoods.

3. Residents' Perceptions of the Scale and Nature of Neighbourhood Change

This section examines the extent to which residents' perceived changes in their neighbourhoods and the temporal and geographical framework they used to determine and assess these changes. A number of key points emerged. Firstly, individuals' perceptions of the scale and nature of change varied within, as well as between, each neighbourhood. Secondly, changes could be identified both as occurring rapidly over very short time periods and also located within a much longer historical framework (confirming the findings of Robertson *et al*, 2008) which was often characterised by trends of social and economic decline (see Watt, 2006). Thirdly, residents identified changes at different spatial scales, from their stair or street to the neighbourhood and the wider town or city level.

3.1 Variation in perceptions

Individuals' circumstances, including their age and their employment status influenced their awareness of neighbourhood change and the impacts of any changes upon them. So for example, one resident reported that: *"I was actually working so my wife probably has a better understanding of the neighbourhood"* (Sabah Khan, aged 16-24, Wensley Fold).

Similarly one younger respondent in Blackburn indicated that whilst he was less aware of changes in his neighbourhood, his parents were more likely to be aware of changes and affected by different forms of change. Conversely, one parent believed that neighbourhood change was much more important for her young son: *"I'm not really in the environment if you like but it's very important for Jack [her son]"* (Doris, aged 30-34, West Marsh).

Residents' views on neighbourhood change were also influenced by their experiences of living elsewhere: *"Moving here has changed my views on a lot of things"* (Mel, aged 16-24, West Marsh).

Many residents did not identify any significant changes to their neighbourhoods in the last 18-months, with responses including *"I haven't noticed anything"*, *"It's still the same every day"*, *"Nothing changes here"*, *"The area remains the same"*, *"It's still the same, everything's the same everyday."* Some residents suggested that the lack of change reflected a longer-term absence of neighbourhood transformation: *"Amlwch's like a time capsule. You get here in a 100 years and there'll be no change"* (Robert, aged 25-29, Amlwch).

In contrast, the majority of residents in Wensley Fold, Blackburn identified significant changes and residents in West Kensington, London were all aware of proposed major changes, including significant demolition. In other cases, particularly Hillside, some residents stated that the area remained the same but were explicitly referring to the last 18 months, rather than the previous period of extensive restructuring of housing and population. Some residents struggled to identify or articulate specific elements of change: *"I just can't explain it, it's not the same; it's definitely not the same"* (Olive, aged 35-44, Oxfangs). Other residents gave more detailed accounts of their assessment of change:

“There have been positive changes mostly. The estate is still being regenerated, unfortunately building work has come to a standstill due to the credit crunch...As regards the living conditions on the state, things have quietened down a little bit as regards the anti-social behaviour that we were experiencing” (Barbara, aged 45-64, Hillside).

Although, as highlighted above, there were general patterns of responses relating to the actual extent of change in the six neighbourhoods, in which Wensley Fold and Hillside had experienced the most significant physical, social and environmental transformations, it was striking that residents living in the same neighbourhood offered very different assessments of change. This was exemplified in Oxgangs. Some residents, whilst acknowledging some housing demolition and new build, did not believe that this has resulted in significant change:

“I wouldn’t say anything has dramatically changed to make it any better or any worse, other than them building the new houses” (Stan, aged 35-44, Oxgangs)

“It’s changed because of the new houses that are getting built but I wouldn’t say there’s a great change in the rest” (Wilma, aged 35-44, Oxgangs)

“I wouldn’t say so [that the neighbourhood has changed], not apart from the building that’s going on and stuff, like the new houses round this area but apart from that I wouldn’t say there’s been any major changes at all” (Tina, aged 16-24, Oxgangs)

In contrast, other residents reported ‘unbelievable’ levels of change:

“There has been so many different changes it’s been unbelievable in the last seven years, we’ve gone from being a community up in the sky [living in a now-demolished high-rise block] to being scattered all over the place” (Betty, aged 35-44, Oxgangs)

Although these responses are linked to whether or not residents lived in, or in the proximity of, the multi-storey blocks that had been demolished in Oxgangs, other residents identified wider substantial change:

“There’s been a huge amount of changes and I don’t think people realise just how much...every school in the area, two primary, one secondary have all been either substantially refurbished or rebuilt, so that’s all the schools, you have the flats coming down and the replacements being built, replacement shops, new houses at x Crescent, 36 new houses being built there, you’ve got one end of the Avenue, 28 new homes being built there...I’ve worked it out over the five years we’ve got nearly 500 new families of some description coming into this area, huge impact” (Daphne, aged 45-64, Oxgangs).

These findings indicate the extent of differentiation within neighbourhoods and the importance of subjective interpretations of the same phenomena, which are influenced by patterns of use of the neighbourhood, age, employment and the location of individuals’ homes. As discussed in a following section, these differences mean that policy-driven neighbourhood changes will not be uniformly viewed by residents and indicate the impossibility of determining a ‘community’ view on the desirability or impact of change.

3.2 The time dimension of neighbourhood change

Although much recent neighbourhood policy, research and evaluation has focused on assessing recent change and perceptions of these changes over short time

periods, residents often placed change in a far longer historical context and identified previous periods of transformation (see also Robertson et al, 2008). For example, in Amlwch, older residents referred to the 1960s as a period:

“When all these incomers came, not just drip drip, it was a huge influx of incomers and then there were the council houses built... this huge influx of English that didn't particularly want to integrate” (Lloyd, aged 65+, Amlwch).

Therefore, the more recent continuation of this trend: *“It's happening a lot now [outsiders settling in the town], not just from Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, other places”* (Brenda, aged 35-44, Amlwch), was placed in this historical context.

Other key historical economic trends or specific developments, such as the loss of train and bus stations or the building of a new road, were identified as the root cause of contemporary dynamics of change:

“We didn't need the tourist industry and it was very self sufficient, there was farming, sea but those have depleted and we've got to bridge that gap because Amlwch's dying on its feet” (Wendy, aged 45-64, Amlwch).

“It started depleting when they put that new road in, the bypass for Amlwch. That tore the heart out of Amlwch” (Graham, aged 25-29, Amlwch).

In many cases, this long historical timeframe was used to articulate a narrative of decline in the social status and social conditions of the neighbourhoods:

“The people that live next door to me, they've been here, they've grown up here, the three lads there with their mum and the lads are all in their 40s and 50s and they said its gone do downhill. They're all wanting to move and it's so sad when they've been here all their lives and they're thinking they want to move and it just shows the ways the area's going” (Doris, aged 30-34, West Marsh).

“My grandparents lived here and this was classed as a posh area, it was always very quiet, there were always elderly people in it so when dad said we could get a house up here he was over the moon, we thought we was moving into a nice posh area opposite the boulevard, lovely, but over the years since my children have grown up its got worse” (Isobel, aged 65+, West Marsh)

“I would say on and off since 1983 because I've been here a long time and it used to be a lot better” (Anthony, aged 30-34, West Kensington).

These accounts confirm the previous findings of Paul Watt (2006) of narratives of decline being linked to a remembered past characterised by communal solidarity based on interaction, reciprocity and an equality in housing and income conditions, even though these conditions were often ones of poverty:

“When everybody had the same, nobody had a lot but we all had the same and everybody mucked in...and I cling to that” (Lloyd, aged 65+, Amlwch).

“It didn't matter if you were working or single or a drug addict or...you were all in the same boat, we all had the same kind of housing, we all had the same problems, so I think that's what made it easier...everybody's different and it's just not the same” (Olive, aged 35-44, Oxfords).

“It used to be a fantastic community place. You could go and say to someone ‘I need help with this, could you give?’...and ‘not a problem’, where people are not interested now” (Renee, aged 45-64, Oxgangs).

“When the neighbourhood was like it was before we all did things for one another all the time” (Maureen, aged 65+, Wensley Fold).

However, other residents provided more nuanced assessments that challenged the positive nostalgia of previous times in the neighbourhood:

“It depended, at times it was a really good place... you could go to someone’s door and ask for sugar or something like that, that’s why it was called Village in the Sky because..they’d all look out for each other, but then at other times you had fights and stabbings and people jumping off balconies and furniture flung off the balconies and stuff like that, but we can look back on it now and laugh” (Tina, aged 16-24, Oxgangs).

It was also noticeable that, as discussed below, a sense of community could prove to be remarkably resilient in the face of recent transformations and upheavals, as in the case of Hillside or future plans for potential demolition, as in West Kensington. In Wensley Fold, many residents also suggested that a sense of community was being re-established, rather than lost, in the new housing developments. Regardless of the degree of nostalgia and partial remembrance evident in some of these accounts, the emotional and practical importance of neighbourhood memories should not be underestimated:

“I go to people and say ‘look you remember what it was like when you first moved here and there were no pavements and you got the number 10 tram and...’ That’s of value, it’s not just remembrance, it’s not just an old fogey sitting talking in the pub, we need to learn from these mistakes, we do not want to make the same mistakes and that’s how it worked...people wanted to remember. Every time there was a demolition we had some kind of display up” (Daphne, aged 45-64, Oxgangs).

“We’d been there for more than 10 years and you get attached to things and there’s a lot of memories of the people that lived in the flats” (Stan, aged 35-44, Oxgangs).

This is particularly important in the contexts of neighbourhoods including Hillside, Oxgangs and Wensley Fold where regeneration and renewal activity, including significant housing and population restructuring, disrupt homes and social networks. Although such development may be based on achieving longer-term improvements to these neighbourhoods, there is a need to be aware that residents often have strong emotional bonds to their properties and neighbours and may not conceive social problems (and their solutions) in the same framework as policymakers. This will also be a key issue in the future redevelopment of West Kensington. It was also evident, particularly in Hillside and Oxgangs that physical and environmental change did not link, in a linear pattern, to transformations in social interaction.

Alongside these longer timeframes, residents also identified much more rapid periods of transformation:

“There’s recently been a great deal of change, since the tower blocks were knocked down” (Joe, aged 45-64, Oxgangs).

“I think it happened only in the last couple of months it’s gone really bad” (Winnie aged 45-64, Hillside).

In some cases, longer historical periods could be used simultaneously with more immediate and rapid developments. So, following the account of Isobel above describing changes since her grandparents lived in West Marsh, she stated: *“It’s [the neighbourhood] is on the turn I think. I shall know better after the summer.”*

The complexity and unevenness of neighbourhood change, as opposed to linear or consistent trajectories, was captured by one resident:

“It’s got worse and it’s got better and it’s like always up and down, it’s never straight. The park’s nice now, that was a right wreck...the river’s still bad, people chucking stuff in” (Malcolm, aged 16-24, Grimsby).

3.3 Geographical scales of reference

It was also evident that residents used different geographical scales of reference in determining neighbourhood change. This could include their own homes, for example many social housing tenants had received new kitchens and bathrooms; their streets, including work to pavements, boundaries and fencing; or the neighbourhood as a whole (relating to major housing and population change and changes to services provision such as schools and policing). Significant shifts in residents’ evaluations of their neighbourhoods could also arise from a change in their immediate neighbours. This could include no longer having specific long-standing neighbours as a source of social support, or conversely, problematic neighbours:

“There is one change in the neighbourhood, the neighbour that’s across there, the kids used to be horrendous” (Nusrat Ali, aged 35-44, Wensley Fold).

“It has actually gone down a shade, and I know the reason why, you get problem people in the street. There was one who was, he’s just moved back in” (Holly, aged 45-64, West Marsh).

“I think the worst thing is the neighbours innit?” (Monica, aged 25-29, West Marsh).

Residents also identified that their own immediate locality could experience different changes and social conditions to other areas of the neighbourhood:

“Where I lived on x Avenue obviously it’s all been knocked down now and all this redevelopment’s happening slowly but surely but only up the road there’s guns and things that you can’t believe it’s going on just a five minute walk away, shootings at the shops...within my street it’s like a little oasis away from it all but one little way around the corner and it’s just guns and violence and gangs” (Rebecca, aged 25-29, Hillside).

At the other end of the spatial scale, in Amlwch, the entire town was usually the reference point for residents’ narratives of change. In Wensley Fold, developments in the neighbourhood were sometimes linked to wider changes in Blackburn, such as the renewal of the city centre, the new hospital and Blackburn’s quest for city status. In West Kensington, residents regularly articulated a linkage between future plans for the redevelopment of their neighbourhood and the forthcoming Olympic Games in 2012. This important distinction in the wider context of the six neighbourhoods and the often ambivalent relationship that residents perceived between their neighbourhoods and wider localities is discussed in later sections of this paper. What is evident is that research and evaluation instruments that ask residents about their perceptions of recent change in ‘the neighbourhood’ do not capture the influence of

historical perspectives, the fluctuating and often rapid periods of change and the various spatial scales that residents use to conceptualise change.

4. Drivers, Symbols and Indicators of Neighbourhood Change

This section explores what drivers residents perceived to be influencing neighbourhood change and the symbols and indicators of change that they identified.

4.1 The local economy

The local economy was a key driver of change. In some cases, this was located within a longer-term historical decline in sectors of industry and the particular dependence of some neighbourhoods on a small number of predominant firms. In Amlwch, the closure of local firms or the ending of construction projects had a major impact. In West Marsh, residents identified the loss of key local employers:

“The food industry here it’s gone down. It used to be a thriving town, now it isn’t any more” (Harold, 35-44, West Marsh).

This was linked to resulting social problems in the neighbourhood:

“I think its poverty to tell you the truth, not poverty but no jobs for these young uns like so they find strength in hanging about in a gang” (Callum, aged 45-64, West Marsh).

In Wensley Fold and West Kensington, residents also identified a more immediate impact from the current recession:

“This recession is hitting, there’s more people out of work, it’s harder to get a job” (Maureen, aged 65+, Wensley Fold).

“The work situation has become a lot worse. There isn’t any work, they’ve closed down the factories, they’ve replaced them with other buildings” (Khaliq Ahmad, aged 30-34, Wensley Fold).

“West Kensington is going down to the floor [due to the recession]” (Christina, aged 30-34, West Kensington).

4.2 Housing and the physical environment

Changes to the physical condition and tenure of the housing stock were important symbols of the trajectory of neighbourhoods. In Wensley Fold, residents were generally positive about the regeneration and redevelopment of residential areas:

“Beforehand everybody had done what they thought was a good renovation on the property but everything was different so some people had stone cladding, some people had rendered fronts, some people hadn’t done anything at all, some people had new windows, some people had white windows, some people had wood windows, everything looked like a patchwork, whereas now it looks like an integrated area in the sense that they don’t look the same, there are differences between the houses but there’s a much more uniform look and a uniform feel about it” (Martha, aged 35-44, Wensley Fold).

“Before the street used to be totally fenced off which I don’t agree with and people do mix so I think that’s a better way of structuring a street where we don’t segregate the people in housing association with privately owned. I think it makes more tension in the neighbourhood so I think that is a better way” (Sajid Khan, aged 30-34, Wensley Fold).

These developments symbolised a sense of renewal and reinvigorated community. In contrast, residents in West Marsh described the numbers of boarded up empty properties as indicating a wider sense of decline. Large scale demolition and redevelopment could also cause major disruption and anxiety, which was most evident in Hillside:

“Beachwood, that’s still going on, the building there but on the opposite site the demolition took place and they’re supposed to, Lowry were supposed to be building there, but they’ve stopped on the site now...and there’s some people still waiting to move into the Lowry homes, those people are still waiting to be re-housed” (Irene, aged 65+, Hillside).

“It’s [the redevelopment] just all stopped and there hasn’t been any work going on in Hillside for the longest time, not that I remember anyway, it’s like a big waste ground” (Kyle, aged 16-24, Hillside).

A continuing major litter problem was identified by many residents in Wensley Fold, whilst some residents in Oxgangs referred to the positive impact of resurfaced pavements and upgrades to the central shopping mall.

4.3 Population change

Perceived shifts in the populations of the neighbourhoods featured prominently in residents’ accounts of change. This included a perception that ‘incomers’ and ‘strangers’ were changing the local social dynamics. Particularly in Amlwch, this was linked to a generational effect and a sense of weakening social ties:

“They’ve all grown up and most of those have left the village, you don’t see the parents as much at the school gates and you know, everyone just drifts apart” (George, aged 45-64, Amlwch)

The growing ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of some of the neighbourhoods, most prominently Wensley Fold, was a key indicator of profound change for many residents, including migration from Eastern Europe. Residents varied in their responses to these trends. In Wensley Fold, some residents suggested that the arrival of Eastern Europeans had helped the existing Asian community feel more established and had added to the vibrancy of the neighbourhood:

“What’s really changed is the sounds on the street, the sound was always Bengali or Jukati, now its goodness knows how many different languages” (Martha, aged 35-44, Wensley Fold).

However, other residents viewed increasing diversity as an economic and cultural threat:

“Far too many Asians putting other people at risk because they’re taking a lot of jobs” (Maureen, aged 65+, Wensley Fold).

“There’s an element of racisms, can’t communicate with Bulgarians you know?... We got a Polish community” (Callum, aged 45-64, West Marsh).

Beyond the issue of diversity, there was a common identification in most of the neighbourhoods of an increasingly transient population. For example one resident in West Marsh described how:

“The population seems to change regularly, you don’t see them, perhaps a year, perhaps six months and there’s one house, I don’t think it even goes six months, you don’t know whose living there, you see somebody turn up with a van, furniture in, furniture out” (Isobel, aged 65+, West Marsh).

Similarly, some residents in Oxfgangs identified a rapid turnover on individual stairs in flats and ‘a lot of semi-constant residents’:

“There’s a lot of folk coming in that weren’t in the area that are moving in and some of them can get overpowering” (Betty, aged 35-44, Oxfgangs).

Our study confirmed the findings of previous research that residents identified social housing allocation policies and private rented properties as key drivers of negative changes to the local population:

“There are not so many rentals [rented properties] round here anymore, there used to be and we used to get more trouble when more houses got rented...it’s not their house, it’s not their area, they’re not going to be here for that long” (Malcolm, aged 16-24, West Marsh).

“It seems as though they are letting to any old people that are trouble makers on where they’ve moved them from” (Francine, aged 16-24, West Marsh).

As stated above, although residents identified more generalised shifts in populations, it was changes in their immediate neighbours that often had the most prominent impact. One resident in West Marsh stated that *“It’s a nightmare since the next door neighbours moved in.”* Conversely, other residents reported that a problematic neighbour leaving had made a dramatic improvement to their daily quality of life.

4.4 Shopping facilities

The closure of shops or the changing nature of shops was an important symbolic indicator of neighbourhood change. In, Hillside, Oxfgangs and West Marsh, the loss of shops was linked to a wider sense of economic and social decline:

“When I first moved here across there, there was quite a lot of shops, there was a baker’s, there was a newsagent, there was a butcher’s shop...all of that’s gone now” (Betty, aged 35-44, Oxfgangs).

“There was a shop on every corner whereas now you’ve got to go on the bus to town” (Kathleen, aged 65+, West Marsh).

In Amlwch, the rapid turnover in shop ownership was an indicator of the wider economic fragility of the town:

“[Shops] constantly changing, opening and closing, opening and closing, I suppose it’s the same in most small towns” (Lorna, aged 30-34, Amlwch).

In Amlwch, many residents identified the closure of specialist food and goods shops in the last three years and their replacement with charity shops and cafes and restaurants and supermarkets; *“there seems to be a lot of them and not enough other*

shops". These residents also articulated a concern about the appropriateness and sustainability of these shops against the backdrop of economic decline:

"There's a great influx of outlets for eating but not everybody can afford...it's a high unemployment areas so I don't know how they're all going to survive" (Rose, aged 16-24, Amlwch).

In contrast, the increasing stability of local shops and enhanced range of provision symbolised the sense of vibrancy and renewal in Wensley Fold:

"Shop keepers seem happier and more established, there's not shops opening and closing as much as there were...shops like Netto have come along so people seem to shop and live much easier than they did before, there's a lot more choice" (Martha, aged 35-44, Wensley Fold)

"I suppose it's for the better because we've got some different shops now" (Artur Novotny, aged 45-64, Wensley Fold).

4.5 Neighbourhood infrastructure

The strength of neighbourhood facilities and infrastructure was a key determinant of residents' sense of neighbourhood change. In Amlwch, a perceived longer-term decline in the town was symbolised by the loss of key transport infrastructure:

"It's gone down an awful lot. We've had a railway station here, we had the bus station here, we've neither now." (Lloyd, aged 65+, Amlwch).

In other neighbourhoods, the closure of key facilities, like youth clubs, or play parks for children or the decline of key community events, such as carnivals or street parties, and less people in public houses, were perceived as symbolising deterioration in the social vibrancy of communities. Conversely, the provision of new facilities, such as play areas could indicate a more positive future, although this could be complex. For example, although a new children's play area was welcomed in West Marsh, the use of security lights reinforced fears of crime and, in some neighbourhoods, the vandalism to, or deterioration of, recently provided play areas or youth shelters indicated to residents the fragility of the possibility of renewal. The decimation of neighbourhood infrastructure was most stark in Hillside, and was summarised in the account of one resident:

"The neighbourhood has not improved...all the shops have closed, including the post office. [There are] lots of undeveloped areas, lots of top soil everywhere and lots of problems with kids on the building sites. There are for sale signs everywhere but given the current state of the area and lack of facilities, they are not selling" (Marie, aged 35-44, Hillside).

4.6 Crime

Our study confirmed the findings of previous research that perceptions of crime and disorder were an important symbol of neighbourhood change. This issue is discussed in more detail in the following section, but one factor that emerged was the perception of some residents that drug taking had become more visible in public spaces and increasingly replaced alcohol as an indicator of social problems in neighbourhoods:

"They are more open taking it [drugs], so I think we tend to see it more...I think it's more so the increase in visibility, I think I mean it's always been here"

but I think because they're more open about it now" (Olive, aged 35-44, Oxgangs).

"Drugs are more visible, it's a change from alcohol" (Brenda, aged 35-44, Amlwch).

Although crime was often linked to changing populations and the recent arrival of problematic individuals, some residents suggested that there was a generational effect:

"It's just people growing up, no-one really new come into areas like this, it's mainly just families and you knew them as kids, very nice playing out and then now they're in gangs and hoodies and guns, you can't believe it" (Rebecca, aged 25-29, Hillside).

It was evident that a wide range of drivers, symbols and indicators were identified by residents in their accounts of neighbourhood change. These included changes to the local economy, housing, the physical environment, populations, infrastructure including shopping facilities and crime. There were differences within and between neighbourhoods about whether these symbols indicated positive or negative change, but there was a commonality in the prominence given to these visible manifestations of change in residents' frameworks for assessing the trajectory of their home localities. Although many residents were able to identify specific symbols of change and link them to their perceived causal factors, others were more aware of a general alteration in neighbourhood conditions:

"Although I can't say one specific thing has changed, things seem to be more pleasant...whether its coincidence or whether anything specific has happened I don't know but it is definitely quieter and I feel much happier. Honestly I do. But I couldn't say 'this thing has changed and that thing has changed'" (Peggy, aged 65+, West Marsh).

It was also clear that residents' accounts of change were linked to both their own personal experience and changes in their immediate environment, and to wider trends within the neighbourhood. Although the visible symbols of change directly encountered in their daily lives were most prominent in their accounts, it is important to recognise that other sources of information, most notably the local media, could influence resident's perceptions and indeed lead them to challenge their own experiences:

"Things are improving but out there, the general areas I'm not so sure it has because I pick the paper up at night, I think two people were stabbed in that street" (Francine, aged 65+, West Marsh).

5. Positive and Negative Perceptions of Neighbourhood Change

A major finding of our study was confirmation of the diversity of perceptions of change within neighbourhoods. Residents often individually identified positive and negative changes within their own accounts and residents in the same neighbourhood often differed in their interpretation of change. Indeed, many residents were aware that they were offering an individual perspective that would differ from others and that they would be more or less personally affected by particular changes:

“It isn’t as bad now, well through my eyes it is so bad out there now” (Francine, aged 65+, West Marsh).

“There isn’t a pub round here you know, that one’s gone on the corner, it wouldn’t be my sort of pub anyway” (Holly, aged 45-64, West Marsh).

That said there were some commonalities in the accounts provided in each of the neighbourhoods. Residents in Wensley Fold were most likely to indicate positive changes within their neighbourhood:

“I think there’s been a general feel of there being a lift in the area, people have a brighter attitude to the area, I certainly do... it’s an upward step, a forward step, it’s definitely in the right direction” (Martha, aged 35-44, Wensley Fold).

“It’s changed, it changes more because the children tend to play together, they get out together” (Saima Mirza, aged 16-24, Wensley Fold).

“I’d say it’s hell of a lot better, much better” (Khaliq Ahmad, aged 30-34, Wensley Fold).

In contrast, residents in Hillside and West Marsh were more likely to indicate negative change, often linked to increasing crime and disorder:

“For us it’s actually deteriorated in as far as conditions and your quality of life” (Irene, aged 65+, Hillside).

“There is a change. I think some of it’s for the worse” (Julie, aged 45-64, West Marsh).

“I personally think it’s got worse...it just seems at the moment every week there’s a car burnt out and there’s jobs around” (Doris, aged 30-34, West Marsh).

“The top end of this estate is a disgrace now which it wasn’t before, you know what I mean? Families have been moved from...they must have been problem families...the anti-social behaviour’s actually worse” (Irene, aged 65+, Hillside).

However, perceptions of crime and policing indicate the complexity and contradictions within residents' accounts of change, as evidenced by these two contrasting opinions of residents in Amlwch:

"The crime's got a lot better. I think it's safer than it was" (Stephanie, aged 16-24, Amlwch).

"Fear of crime. That's ten times worse than it's ever been" (Lorna, aged 30-34, Amlwch).

So, although there was often a general sense in the neighbourhoods of residents feeling less safe and secure, in each neighbourhood residents differed about whether crime was actually increasing or decreasing. These conflicting views extended to interpretations of the policing presence within neighbourhoods:

"It's a lot more quieter than it used to be, there's not much trouble on the streets now, its quietened down and you've got a lot more community police officers and they are very effective" (Faizal Hussain, aged 16-24, Wensley Fold).

"I think it's got worse. There's a lot of PCSOs walking about" (Connie, aged 30-34, West Marsh).

"You see them, you do get quite a bit of patrolling, the police cars occasionally do it but usually only when there's trouble" (Isobel, aged 65+, West Marsh).

Residents could contradict themselves within their own accounts of whether an enhanced police presence increased their feelings of security:

"I'd say worse, I really would because a few weeks ago we had coppers all over here, I don't know what was going on...I think more police around the neighbourhood, more police on patrol on foot than in cars, more regular patrols, I think that would cut crime a hell of a lot" (Donald, aged 35-44, West Marsh).

The issue of crime and policing illustrates two key points; firstly, the diversity of residents' perceptions within neighbourhoods about prevailing social conditions and secondly, the discord between the anticipated impacts of neighbourhood policy responses (in this case enhanced policing) and the actual interpretation of these policies amongst residents.

Particularly in Amlwch, there was also ambivalence about the desirability of change in the first place:

"I don't want it to change, eighty per cent of Welsh nationalist people don't want things to change, they like it as it was fifty years ago." (Harold, aged 65+, Amlwch)

"There is a reluctance because the good old days were the good old days...To be honest the [lack of change] doesn't bother me" (Rose, aged 16-24, Amlwch).

In contrast, some residents in other neighbourhoods desired the large scale transformation of their area:

“They might be knocking it [the neighbourhood] down, that’s a positive change. They said after the Olympic games in 2012 they’re considering knocking it down. When I heard that I was over the moon because that means I will move if they do that” (Tabasxamu Aba, aged 25-29, West Kensington).

One particularly interesting element of the positive views of neighbourhood change in Wensley Fold was their countering of the sense of community decline evident in other neighbourhoods and identified in previous studies. Several residents in Amlwch and Oxgangs noted the loss of street parties, carnivals and gala days:

“It used to be a good carnival, there was floats and all sorts of things and it’s gone forever now” (George, aged 45-64, Amlwch).

One Wensley Fold resident provided a similar account:

“It used to be in a way round here when they have parties and things people used to bring a bit of food round and stuff and now it’s like I’m stuck here on my own, nobody seems to bother any more” (Tracey, aged 25-29, Wensley Fold).

However, more Wensley Fold residents identified enhanced levels of cohesion and social interaction:

“Generally speaking I think it’s becoming, there’s a lot more cohesion amongst people, before when the Asians moved in it was hard to integrate but now people are just starting to accept that...you see English people moving to Asian areas, Asians moving into English areas and it shows that times are moving forward” (Faizal Hussain, aged 16-24, Wensley Fold).

“I think it is more a community than it was when I moved back, it was still pretty new, the new housing, a lot of the houses were still being sold, people hadn’t moved into them...there’s that kind of second and third families moving into these new houses, so in that sense it’s more established as a community...a lot of people feel like they’ve established roots I think here, there’s not as many people in and out, people are not doing moonlight flits” (Martha, aged 35-44, Wensley Fold).

Not only do these accounts counter narratives of social decline, they highlight the importance of time in determining cohesion in neighbourhoods, both in terms of migration and ethnic diversity and in the phasing of major housing clearance and redevelopment. In contrast, residents in both Hillside and Oxgangs, which are in the midst of major restructuring, identified the arising disruption to social networks, even when physical housing renewal was regarded positively:

“I think the neighbourhood, I think it looks a lot nicer without the tall high rise buildings in the middle of it plus I think it looks a lot more positive with things that are going on in the neighbourhood as far as the new buildings have been built and proposals for the flood damage (Joe, aged 45-64, Oxgangs).

It was also evident in Oxgangs that the merger of local schools and attempts to enhance social mix had created tensions:

“We’re no good enough to mix with us but they’re good enough for us, our community centres to use, their kids to do something in our school, this causes a lot of bad blood” (Daphne, aged 45-64, Oxgangs).

This highlights the importance of recognising the impacts of the *process* of regeneration on residents, even when the longer term outcomes are viewed positively:

“What they did here to me is a huge improvement to what it was. I think we were in the middle of it so you didn’t see it before, what they’ve done is excellent I think” (Connor, aged 65+, West Kensington).

These outcomes of regeneration and community development initiatives were often the key positive neighbourhood changes identified by residents:

“There’s a lot more buzz in Amlwch at the moment...there’s a new initiative called Age Well, it’s a fantastic idea, it’s in the Memorial Hall and again you’re seeing a lot of elderly people coming out now that you would never have seen before” (Jack, aged 45-64, Amlwch).

“It’s going to make a difference, it’s going to look nice and everything, a new health care centre, we’ve just had £82,000 for the library, that will make a big difference, other little things, calming traffic zones, different things for different areas, different people” (Lorna, aged 30-34, Amlwch).

“There’s obviously been projects here that have improved the areas, the swimming pool was demolished and another swimming pool was put back and the Fulham Broadway was built and the cinemas came so really there is a lot here” (Sarah, aged 45-64, West Kensington).

In addition to large-scale housing and environmental restructuring, more modest regeneration initiatives were also viewed positively by residents, including the provision of new bathrooms and kitchens in their homes, improvements to public spaces including parks and youth shelters and enhanced street cleaning and the provision of a new cash machine in a residential area of Amlwch.

6. The Impact of Neighbourhood Change on Residents

Just as residents' perceptions of neighbourhood change differed widely, the actual impact of these changes on individuals' personal circumstances and daily lives varied considerably. Some residents did not identify any impacts: "*The changes [in Wensley Fold and Blackburn] haven't made any difference (to me) at all*" (Wensley Fold¹²). These views were also influenced by resident's orientations to change and the importance of the neighbourhood to their lives:

"I make the best of any situation anyway...I'd still have a life like I have really, I don't think the area attributes that much to it" (Tracey, aged 25-29, Wensley Fold).

"I'm trying to give it a shot here" (Jackie, aged 30-34, Oxgangs).

"It's re-established me as a Blackburnian as opposed to just living here...so I've approached it with a different attitude this time and I think maybe part of that has been its an area I want to live in because of the upgrade" (Martha, aged 35-44, Wensley Fold).

Even some residents who were living in those neighbourhoods which had been subject to substantial demolition activity were uncertain about the extent of impacts on their area:

"I dunno if it has, it has changed obviously looking at and there's people coming in, it has changed but the people that have always been here, since I've known they have nae changed, the way they act and the way that they see people, it's still the same, but it's no if you ken what I mean" (Penelope, aged 16-24, Oxgangs).

"It won't change the nature of Oxgangs because Oxgangs is kind of family orientated, there's big families" (Stan, aged 35-44, Oxgangs).

Many residents identified changes in retail provision as having a significant impact on their lives through reducing access to affordable essential goods:

"You need to go out of town to get affordable shoes... I don't think there is a shoe shop in town now, you can't get decent clothes in town" (Robert, aged 25-29, Amlwch).

"The nearest one [local shop] is this one here, you go to the Nettos up the street there, you can get a tin of beans for 8p but the same tin of beans, same make is 32." (Kathleen, aged 65+, West Marsh).

"The local shops...can be expensive and at the moment a lot of people are on tight budgets so you have to go to big shops to go for the bargains and whatever, so it does have an impact on everybody" (Betty, aged 35-44, Oxgangs).

For some residents it was the lack of quality goods, rather than their cost, that was the key issue:

“Clothes shop, good quality shoes I need, not the cheap stuff” (Gwen, aged 65+, Amlwch).

The gain or loss of key facilities could also have a significant impact on residents. The loss of the post office and chemist was identified as a major issue in Hillside, particularly for elderly residents. However, another resident in this neighbourhood identified improved health services provision and apprenticeships as having a positive impact. One West Marsh resident also stressed the importance of the new children’s centre in providing practical help and activities for parents (Grimsby 17). The traffic calming measures in Wensley Fold were identified by a number of residents as having increased the safety and the friendliness of the neighbourhood.

One Amlwch resident indicated that the changing local economy had affected the generational population dynamics of the town:

“For the young people here, without [work]...they’ll have to go into England maybe to find work or whatever” (Harold, aged 65+, Amlwch).

Unsurprisingly, the most significant impacts of neighbourhood change were identified by residents in those neighbourhoods subject to substantial physical transformation: Hillside, Oxgangs and Wensley Fold (and future regeneration plans were a major issue in West Kensington). One resident of Wensley Fold suggested that the redevelopment of the neighbourhood had a positive impact on the wider external image of the area and residents’ self-esteem:

“The positive changes are actually building all these new houses, it used to be horrible round here, a real reputation, a real bad name when you say “I live near x street” people go ‘oh god’ and now you can say ‘I live in them new houses off x street’ and ‘oh its nice round there now...they’ve done a real positive thing, its took the bad name off x street...you look and think ‘it’s quite nice round here now” (Tracey, aged 25-29, Wensley Fold).

Likewise, these residents of Oxgangs and Hillside argued for the significance of new housing development providing a sense of progress for the neighbourhood:

“I think it’s very important, it’s also a very important thing for people to see, people who have lived here for a number of years with the high rise buildings and the drug addicts and all the rest of it” (Joe, aged 45-64, Oxgangs).

“Brilliant, I love it, everyone whose moved as well is from the street that I’ve lived in so it’s like the whole street moving to a load of new homes...the kids are having a great time playing out in the street and that, made loads of new friends” (Rebecca, aged 25-29, Hillside).

However, the impacts of this physical transformation were disputed by other residents.

“We’re still living with the open areas that have been cleared of housing and I don’t think that’s very good for the morale on the estate...you’ve got this vast expanse of land where there’s nothing, it’s just open land, you can’t see it, your vision can’t penetrate it” (Barbara, aged 45-64, Hillside).

“It was devastating. A lot of people lived there over a period of years, thirty-odd years or whatever and when they were coming down...I think it shocked a lot of us when they did something” (Jackie, aged 30-34, Oxgangs).

In Hillside and West Kensington, there was a regular articulation about the uncertainty and lack of empowerment caused by regeneration or proposals for regeneration:

“We’ve got this estate and it’s supposed to be going to be better and then they’re waiting for a new play scheme to be built” (Winnie, aged 45-64, Hillside).

“The house we were living in is under demolition so it’s getting revived here, I’ve moved into the new houses that have been built...it was two years going on and not knowing if I was going to get a new house straight away” (Rebecca, aged 25-29, Hillside).

One important finding from our study is that, contrary to broken windows theory (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Skogan, 1990) and many studies of residential mobility, the majority of residents did not translate negative views of aspects of neighbourhood change into a desire to leave their neighbourhood. Physical incivilities like empty properties, vandalism, litter and dog fouling combined with insecurities about the changing populations and social conditions of neighbourhoods. However, a key element of the power and significance of these phenomena for residents was precisely that mobility was not an option (either due to financial constraints or a strong orientation to remain in the neighbourhood). This appeared to be a defining feature of narratives of change in lower-income neighbourhoods- that such change, positive and negative, is experienced within the context of the need to remain in the area and a sense of disempowerment in the ability of residents to alter or influence these forces of change:

“But there’s nothing I can do. I don’t like it but I don’t have the power, the people might say but when the government has made up its mind that this is what they’re going to do” (Gary, aged 45-64, West Kensington).

“The people from years ago...came up with these sorts of concepts like estates and all this kind of thing and this is the plan of it all” (Leon, aged 25-29, West Kensington).

7. Difference Experiences of Neighbourhood Change and its Impacts: Comparing the Six Neighbourhoods

It is clear from the evidence presented above that residents within the same neighbourhood differed considerably in the extent to which they perceived changes to have taken place, how they identified such changes, whether they viewed such changes as positive, negative or both and the level of impacts that these changes had on their experience of change and their life circumstances. This difference was driven by a wide range of factors, including their age, their length of residence, the amount of time they spent in the neighbourhood, the degree of reliance they had on neighbourhood infrastructure and facilities, their orientation towards change and the specific area of a neighbourhood that they resided in. However, there were differences between the neighbourhoods that resulted from the particular forms of change that had taken place.

Before discussing these specific differences, it should be noted that residents differed in their own perceptions of whether the changes occurring in their neighbourhoods were particular to their own locality or symbolic of wider changes happening elsewhere. Some residents viewed the changes in their neighbourhoods as ordinary and common to all areas:

“Like everywhere else it’s the recession” (Robert, aged 25-29, Amlwch).

“It’s happening across society, you go to any area your find that [problems with young people]” (Maureen, aged 65+, West Marsh).

“It’s a sign of the times though, culture, it’s the norm now” (Malcolm, aged 16-24, West Marsh).

“I guess, I think, this would be anywhere else, this wouldn’t be specific to West Kensington, I think that you will always find there are people that just don’t seem to place the same sense of value on their surroundings” (Waseem Akhram, aged 30-34, West Kensington).

Other residents were placed their neighbourhoods (or wider localities) in a more comparative framework:

“Let’s hope it picks up for everybody because there’s worse towns than here, that’s lost a lot compared to what we have here” (Harold, aged 35-44, West Marsh).

As discussed above, there were also common drivers and signifiers of neighbourhood change across the neighbourhoods, including declining local economies, population shifts, transformations in retail provision and concerns over crime. However, it is also apparent from the material presented in earlier sections that there were significant differences in the form of change and their impacts in each of the neighbourhoods.

In Amlwch, Hillside and West Marsh, neighbourhood change was dominated by the decline in traditional industries and employment opportunities. In Hillside, Oxfords and Wensley Fold, neighbourhood change was driven by significant housing

transformation, including demolition, clearance and redevelopment. In each of these neighbourhoods, the physical restructuring of housing and the environment had been accompanied by significant shifts in the population, involving the dispersal of previous social networks and the arrival of new residents and the need to build new forms of social interaction and a sense of community.

The scale, stage and pace of this regeneration in each of these neighbourhoods had a major impact on residents' perceptions of change. In Wensley Fold and Oxfangs, housing demolition had been, or was nearing, completion whilst in Hillside, redevelopment had been halted, leaving the neighbourhood scarred by clearance and undeveloped space. Future proposals for the development of West Kensington had also impacted on residents' perceptions of change and neighbourhood trajectory. In Wensley Fold, although there had been significant disruption and continuing problems with litter, the majority of residents were supportive of change and identified an embryonic, but rapidly strengthening, sense of community and stability. In contrast, the significance of disruption, the loss of previous social-spatial networks and tensions over new populations meant that residents in Oxfangs were more ambivalent about change, and in Hillside residents were living in the midst of disruption and the loss of basic community infrastructure with little sense of when regeneration would resume and what the outcomes would be.

Although concerns over 'incomers' were articulated in each of the neighbourhoods, there were variations in these narratives. In Amlwch, incomers were regarded as those arriving from urban settlements and those who were not Welsh or non-Welsh speakers. In Wensley Fold, new arrivals, including those from Eastern Europe were perceived to have changed the social dynamic of the community, but often in positive ways, for example through enhancing the status of the existing Asian community. In West Marsh, the arrival of Eastern European migrants was more likely to be viewed problematically. Changing ethnic or religious diversity was not perceived to be a significant issue in Oxfangs or Hillside, where concerns were focused on the changing class composition of the neighbourhoods and, along with West Marsh, residents identified problematic new residents arriving as a result of social housing allocation processes. The longer-standing ethnic diversity in West Kensington meant that residents did not regard population shifts as a significant component of neighbourhood change.

The geographical location of the neighbourhoods provided a key context for the impacts of neighbourhood change. In particular, the isolation of Amlwch and the distance of Hillside from the centre of Liverpool exacerbated the effects of declining retail provision and the loss of transport infrastructure. West Kensington's location in central London ensured that its residents had greater geographical (but not necessarily financial) access to a range of facilities, services and shopping outlets and to a lesser extent, residents in Oxfangs and Wensley Fold were also able to access the respective city/town centres of Edinburgh and Blackburn.

Some residents also identified particular possibilities and opportunities arising from the features of their neighbourhood, including its location and history and wider local development initiatives. For example, the rural location and industrial heritage of Amlwch was viewed as offering potential for economic growth, whilst the attempts of Blackburn to achieve city status had impacted on some residents in Wensley Fold.

"I think there's a lot towards the heritage side and trying to promote it as the Copper Kingdom" (Robert, aged 25-29, Amlwch).

"They've got this railway line going. They've done a lot up on the mountain and they wanted to combine that with the port so they could show the history" (Mandy, aged 45-64, Amlwch).

“Fantastic, I think that if you’re going to jump in and do something and try and get this city status and try to upgrade your town you need to look at all the aspects including education and I think its brilliant. I must say I’m quite proud to be living here at the moment with everything that’s going on... So I’m proud to be in Blackburn at the moment” (Tracey, aged 25-29, Wensley Fold).

8. Residents' Desired Future Changes in the Neighbourhood

We asked residents about what changes they would desire for their neighbourhoods. The responses reported in this section need to be placed in the context of some residents not desiring any change, as illustrated above. Some residents provided examples of changes in services and facilities that would make significant positive impact on their lives, including shops, particularly in Hillside and Amlwch:

"If we could get a Lidl and Aldi in Amlwch it would make a massive difference, we need that kind of cheaper shop" (Ashley, aged 45-64, Amlwch).

The need for a local post office was highlighted in Hillside and Wensley Fold. Improved transport services were also identified:

"If there was a once an hour bus service...it would make all the difference" (Francine, aged 65+, West Marsh).

In addition, other regularly cited desired changes included more policing, greater use of existing community centres, more green spaces and parks and enhanced facilities for young people. What is important to note here is the emphasis that residents place on these changes as potentially making a significant difference to their daily lives, given the centrality of their neighbourhood to them in the context of limited options, either to move permanently or to access services and facilities elsewhere.

It was also evident that competing futures are envisaged for the neighbourhoods, with conflicting views amongst residents and between residents and regeneration and renewal programmes and an understanding that change may benefit some sections of the community at the expense of others:

"What industries are there here and very few is your basic answer, tourism is going to be your main one so you need to get [it]...but for tourists you need to go back into your history...the history is fantastic...it's about its industrial heritage...Well, who are you doing it for? Are you regenerating it for tourists who come down here or people who live there?...If you tear the heart out of it, which is what they're proposing...you can certainly make it more visitor friendly without destroying it for the locals" (Ashley, aged 45-64, Amlwch 11).

This was particularly prominent in Hillside which was experiencing considerable demolition and clearance as part of the Housing Market Renewal programme and in West Kensington where there were proposals for significant housing transformation:

"I think there'll be a split community to be honest for the simple reason that they'll [new residents in new build owner-occupied housing] get in their cars, they'll drive off... They'll take their children to schools; that's outside the areas, they'll most probably work outside the area" (Irene, 65+, Hillside).

"They want professional type people, they don't want people who are living in housing benefit situations" (Sarah, 45-64, West Kensington).

"This is prime location and they're thinking 'why do we want the estate people living in there?'" (Nigel, aged 30-34, West Kensington).

"I think it's the estates culture they want to get rid of" (Robina Shah, aged 30-34, West Kensington).

"They've got money to put into the area so obviously they want to bring it up to a certain standard which is a shame because some of the families have been here for many years, all the children have grown up around the estate all together so everybody knows everybody, so it's going to be a shame" (Robina Shah, aged 30-34, West Kensington).

"In a way I understand what the government is trying to do to put all these houses down" (Christina, aged 30-34, West Kensington).

"You'll be sad to see it go but I definitely feel in that respect, I feel like 'well you know but sometimes things like that have to happen to create change'" (Leon, aged 25-29, West Kensington).

There was also a distinction between residents who believed that significant change was feasible and those who were less convinced of this possibility:

"Amlwch can wake up and boom again...what I want eventually is for Amlwch to be a destination point" (Jack, aged 45-64, Amlwch).

"I don't know how you could change it really. It's just a small town" (Harriet, aged 25-29, Amlwch).

"There's no quick fix" (Sajid Khan, aged 30-34, Wensley Fold)

The doubting of the possibility of change was also rooted in an understanding that the sustainability of neighbourhoods was ultimately linked to the vibrancy of local economies, the competition between places for investment and the limitations of physical regeneration, short-term construction or service sector jobs or the provision of food outlets:

"Maybe more employment, that's the biggest thing" (Robert, aged 25-29, Amlwch).

"We're right at the end of the road. If you want tourists to come here you've got to beat all the other places that are trying to get tourists" (Robert, aged 25-29, Amlwch).

"All this trying to change the shopping centre to bring new housing in and trying to have better, new, ...it's all basically cosmetic" (Maureen, aged 65+, Wensley Fold)

"Where's your economy?...You see the thing is they need to develop the people along with the plans, because there is funding the people as communities can access but if they're not developing the people along with the project, where's your sustainability?" (Irene, aged 65+, Hillside).

These opinions illustrate how residents are acutely aware of the wider economic and social trends impacting on their neighbourhoods. It is crucially important that this identification of the limitations of neighbour-based regeneration is not conceptualised as apathy, disinterest or fatalism. Rather, it is the articulation of knowledge, rooted in an understanding of the longer history of their neighbourhoods, that a neighbourhood

renewal agenda premised upon area-based initiatives is insufficient in itself to address poverty and social problems in these places.

Residents' views of the future of their neighbourhoods are also characterised by uncertainty (rather than ambivalence) about the processes and outcomes of renewal programmes, as illustrated in residents of West Kensington's perceptions of proposed regeneration:

"I heard that some of the residents got re-housed as far as Southall, Southall's a long way from here" (Sarah, aged 45-64, West Kensington).

"They are talking about after the Olympics they will be seriously looking into this project of placing people in housing and bringing in employment and more money into the area so I don't know how that's going to happen. But personally that is really going to be not very nice, unsettling for everybody...All these houses they're thinking of knocking down and I don't know what they're going to do, I've no idea, so let's see how that goes... Well the changes that are going to happen, I don't know whether it's going to improve our lives or is it just going to disrupt our lives, that's the concern" (Robina Shah, aged 30-34, West Kensington).

In addition to highlighting the complexity of views about neighbourhood regeneration, these views also indicate that extent to which the fates of these neighbourhoods and their populations are viewed as being dependent upon the decisions of planners and renewal initiatives and the perceived powerlessness of residents to influence these processes. This is a defining characteristic of the experience of poverty and place: the hope that changes to neighbourhoods, which will be determined by others, are positive in the context of residents wishing to, or having to, continue living in these localities regardless of the nature and impact of these changes.

9. Policy Implications

The findings of our study raise a number of implications for academics, policy-makers and practitioners. Our findings suggest the limitations of work on residential satisfaction based on survey evidence that seek overall views on satisfaction and responses to change over short time periods, that link neighbourhood satisfaction to quantitative indicators of demographic, economic or social indicators of change at the neighbourhood population level and that are premised on a link between neighbourhood conditions, differing levels of attachment and belonging and a desire to leave localities. There are also limitations in local policy-makers or practitioners attempting to establish 'a community' view on change. Rather, what is evident is the complexity of perceptions of neighbourhood change- between neighbourhoods, between residents and indeed the extent to which individual residents often identify both positive and negative aspects of neighbourhood change. It is clear that residents often have a strong attachment to place and view their future as being in their current neighbourhood, regardless of the changes taking place within it.

Our study has revealed the limitations of both research and policy programmes premised upon the similarity or classification of 'deprived communities.' Economic development and renewal programmes, at regional, local authority and neighbourhood levels, have often been premised on a universal set of drivers of change and a common approach to solutions. What is evident is the actual diversity of contexts and manifestations of change in these neighbourhoods as well as their commonalities. In other words, the possibilities and potential for change vary considerably. In Amlwch, there may be opportunities linked to tourism and industrial heritage (although see below), in West Kensington, the legacy of the London Olympics in 2012 may provide scope for change and, in Blackburn, changes in Wensley Fold may be linked to wider attempts to achieve city status and revive the civic and retail vibrancy of the town centre. These possibilities are not currently present in Hillside and West Marsh.

Our study also suggests, as residents themselves identify, the centrality of the wider economy to neighbourhood change and the limited sustainability of responses to economic change. Thus, physical renewal has often generated short-term construction employment but has not, of itself, delivered longer-term employment opportunities. Renewal programmes aimed at fostering a social mix, such as those in Hillside and the proposals in West Kensington, do not address the employment or financial circumstances of existing residents. Similarly, the increasing presence of charity shops or fast food outlets were widely viewed as a symbol of the lack of sustainability of local economies and the failure to replace declining industrial occupations. Although tourism was suggested as one vehicle for economic growth in Amlwch, it was also recognised that many other localities in North Wales were seeking to develop a similar strategy and there was fierce competition to attract tourist income. In Hillside, the reliance on a housing market renewal paradigm based on projected housing demand and private sector finance, in common with many other areas in the north of England, left the neighbourhood incredibly exposed to the credit crunch and housing market slump, with major consequences for residents living in an area that has been subject to extensive demolition and clearance but where redevelopment has now stalled.

This is linked to the identification by residents that neighbourhood change continues to be driven by other forces and factors external to the neighbourhoods, including the lack of affordable housing, social housing allocation policies and migration. The

implicit premise of the neighbourhood renewal and mixed communities agendas of the last decade; that internal housing and population restructuring and enhanced service provision will result in sustainable positive change in deprived neighbourhoods; is challenged by our findings.

That is not to say that the provision of key facilities and services is not crucially important. It is evident that neighbourhoods (or rural towns) require a level of infrastructure to function. Most strikingly in Hillside, there is a lack of key infrastructure, including basic services such as post offices and pharmacies. In Hillside and also West Marsh and Amlwch, there is also now a lack of shops selling affordable essential goods and poor public transport connections. Whilst many local areas in the UK have subsidised public transport, there is an urgent need to consider ensuring a minimum standard of retail provision of affordable essential goods. The failure to address the loss of key retail provision, services and communal facilities risks repeating the mistakes of the new towns and periphery estates developments of the 1960s. There has, perhaps, been too much attention given to addressing the population mix and physical infrastructure (primarily housing) of deprived communities and not enough emphasis on defending or securing the other elements necessary for a neighbourhood to function. It is also clear that, given the reliance of these neighbourhoods on public services, substantial future cuts in service provision will have a disproportionately negative impact.

More positively, physical transformation has often been viewed positively by residents and it is evident that, whilst poorly maintained public spaces, littering and vandalism are important symbols of neighbourhood decline, addressing these problems can also have a significant impact on residents' sense of neighbourhood satisfaction. Our findings also indicate that one achievable improvement in neighbourhoods is maximising the use of existing community services and facilities. Many residents believed that these facilities were not utilised fully and other residents indicated that when these facilities were enhanced (for example to incorporate parenting or health provision) this had major positive impacts. Concerns over crime, anti-social behaviour and insecurity were prominent in all of the neighbourhoods. However, it was also apparent that, although residents often voiced concern about the presence and activities of young people in public space, the most significant detrimental impacts of crime and anti-social behaviour related to a small number of problematic and vulnerable households affecting specific localities. Encouragingly, there is an increasing awareness of the underlying drivers of these families' problems and more sophisticated and intensive methods of intervention available to address these problems, which suggests some potential to address this issue within neighbourhoods.

Our study suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of the impact of major regeneration initiatives and service provision and how these are perceived by residents. An increasing police presence provides a good example. Although survey evidence suggests that more police officers is a key priority for residents in deprived neighbourhoods, the actual presence of more police officers or security features in public space could also be perceived as a signifier of growing disorder and insecurity. Likewise, the ineffectiveness of consultation and communication strategies to explain the rationales, processes and outcomes of major housing restructuring in Hillside, Oxfords and West Kensington is striking. The voices of the residents presented in this paper indicate the levels of anxiety and uncertainty that characterise these developments.

Finally, one of the clear messages to emerge from the perceptions of residents is the need to fully understand the impacts on existing communities of programmes of significant neighbourhood regeneration. This requires a better knowledge of the strength of community connections and recognition that poorer quality housing or

social problems constitute only part of residents' experiences of place. The impacts of the process of regeneration on residents need to be given greater weight and far more comprehensive support needs to be provided during the process. There is a danger that conceptualising the wider longer-term beneficial outcomes of regeneration underplays the disruption caused during the process. More intractably, neighbourhood change, including change brought about by regeneration and renewal programmes, does not benefit all residents and there needs to be a greater honesty and acceptance of this in policy-making and delivery.

10. Conclusions

Our evidence supports previous research findings about the differentiation in residents' perceptions of the scale and nature of change within, as well as between, neighbourhoods. This difference was driven by a wide range of factors, including residents' age, gender, their length of residence, the amount of time they spent in the neighbourhood, the degree of reliance they had on neighbourhood infrastructure and facilities, their orientation towards change and the specific area of a neighbourhood that they resided in.

These findings suggest that a 'Broken Britain' narrative overstates the negatives and problems of deprived neighbourhoods (Mee, 2007; see also Mooney, 2009). Rather, many residents provided simultaneous negative and positive accounts of neighbourhood change, supporting the findings of Watt (2006) and Mee (2007). These qualitative findings also appear to confirm the quantitative evidence from the New Deal for Communities Programme evaluation (Beatty *et al*, 2009; Batty *et al* 2010a and 2010b) that a sense of improvement and high levels of general satisfaction in quality of life, the local area and accommodation may coincide with continuing identification of neighbourhood problems and, for a significant proportion of residents, a narrative of decline and a desire to leave.

There is an important time element to changes, which residents identified as occurring rapidly over very short time periods, but were also located within a much longer historical framework, often based on a narrative of economic and social decline. Although these narratives may in part reflect an overly-romanticised view of the past, it was striking that these narratives were expressed across the neighbourhoods, with specific indicators and examples provided and that they were not always confined to the elderly residents. Residents also identified changes at different spatial scales, from their stair or street to the neighbourhood and the wider town or city level. Research and policy evaluation instruments that ask residents about their perceptions of recent change in 'the neighbourhood' do not capture this influence of historical perspectives, the fluctuating and often rapid periods of change and the various spatial scales that residents use to conceptualise change.

Residents' identified a number of drivers of neighbourhood change and described the symbols and indicators that made change visible. These included the local economy, housing and the physical environment, population change, shopping facilities, neighbourhood infrastructure and crime and it was evident that, in each neighbourhood, neighbourhood change comprised a complex mix of these drivers and indicators.

Aspects of neighbourhood change could be viewed positively, negatively or neutrally. Residents often individually identified positive and negative changes within their own accounts and residents in the same neighbourhood often differed in their interpretation of change, for example in their views of large scale housing transformation and crime trends. This makes establishing a community 'view' on the desirability of change and the efficacy of particular regeneration initiatives and policy interventions very difficult. This difficulty is exacerbated by the different interpretations that residents have of particular interventions, such as enhanced policing. This is why the New Deal for Communities Programme evaluation (Batty *et al*, 2010b: 9) encountered the issue of how benefits from regeneration projects will be distributed across all of those living in an area and how communities may define needs. There are therefore limitations in local policy-makers or practitioners

attempting to establish 'a community' view on change. Rather, what is evident is the complexity of perceptions of neighbourhood change and it is clear that residents often have a strong attachment to place and view their future as being in their current neighbourhood, regardless of the changes taking place within it. This suggests a greater awareness of the limitations of survey data and calls into question the expense and effort put into attempting to establish a community view and measure perceptions of change, rather than, for example, focusing on ensuring minimum standards of infrastructure and services and addressing the strength of the local economies within which neighbourhoods are situated. It was evident that competing futures are envisaged for the neighbourhoods, with conflicting views amongst residents and between residents and regeneration and renewal programmes and an understanding that change may benefit some sections of the community at the expense of others. Residents recognised that the future of their neighbourhoods were largely dependent upon the decisions of planners and renewal initiatives.

Our findings also indicate that academic studies and regeneration initiative evaluations may be based upon a different calculus to those of residents. For example, evaluations give prominence to particular neighbourhood-level interventions and the change they generate over short time frames. However, it is evident that a wide range of dynamics beyond public policy drives perceptions of change. The focus upon neighbourhood attachment and the link between neighbourhood conditions, neighbourhood satisfaction and desire or propensity of residents to leave an area in previous studies negates the extent to which many residents view their futures as being within these neighbourhoods, regardless of changing conditions. This also challenges the 'broken windows' theory of environmental conditions driving residential mobility. However, it is clear that environmental incivilities and degradation, including litter, poorly maintained public spaces and uncompleted construction projects have a powerful symbolic impact on residents' perceptions of the trajectory of their neighbourhood.

One important finding was the generally positive perception of neighbourhood change in Wensley Fold in Blackburn and especially the opinion of many residents that social cohesion and interaction were increasing, which was different to the narrative of community decline more commonly articulated in the other neighbourhoods and in previous research studies.

The impacts of neighbourhood change varied widely. Some residents did not identify any personal impact arising from neighbourhood change, whilst other residents indicated very significant impacts. These impacts were particularly extensive in Hillside and Oxgangs, which have been subject to major housing transformation and, especially in Hillside a loss of key neighbourhood infrastructure. This has had major consequences for social interaction and the disruption of social networks beyond physical and environmental changes and highlights that the process impacts and costs of regeneration initiatives are not always fully considered in when envisaging renewal programmes. The loss of local shopping facilities and the subsequent impact on the accessibility and affordability of essential goods was identified as a key issue in Amlwch, Hillside and West Marsh. It was also evident that residents could be affected by very localised developments, most frequently changes in their immediate neighbours linked to the increase or decrease in anti-social behaviour.

In addition to the commonalities of narratives of neighbourhood change across the six study localities and the diversity of perceptions within the localities, our study found that some elements of change were specific to each neighbourhood and were a result of the geographical location, social, economic and demographic history and policy interventions in each area. In Amlwch, Hillside and West Marsh, neighbourhood change was dominated by the decline in specific traditional industries and resultant employment opportunities and this decline generated a powerful

symbolism of significant change to the fundamental basis of these areas' existence and highlighted uncertainty about their futures. In Hillside, Oxcgangs and Wensley Fold, neighbourhood change was driven by significant housing transformation, including demolition, clearance and redevelopment. The geographical location of the neighbourhoods provided a key context for the impacts of neighbourhood change, with the isolation of Amlwch and the distance of Hillside from the centre of Liverpool exacerbating the effects of fragile local economies, declining retail provision and the loss of transport infrastructure. There are limitations to policy programmes premised upon the similarity of 'deprived communities', given the actual diversity of contexts and manifestations of change in these neighbourhoods as well as their commonalities. In other words, this study indicates that the possibilities and potential for change vary considerably between neighbourhoods.

Residents identified a number of desirable future changes for their neighbourhoods, including enhanced provision of retail outlets, public spaces, transport links, facilities for children and policing. For many residents, these improvements were regarded as potentially making a significant difference to their daily lives, given the centrality of their neighbourhood to them in the context of limited options either to move permanently or to access services and facilities elsewhere. The provision of key facilities and services remains crucially important and deprived neighbourhoods require a level of infrastructure to function. There has, perhaps, been too much attention given to addressing the population mix and physical infrastructure (primarily housing) of deprived communities and not enough emphasis on defending or securing the other elements necessary for a neighbourhood to function. Although previous research has suggested the need to improve service provision and facilities (Andersen, 2008; Parkers *et al*, 2002; Power and Mumford, 2003) there is a case for a more ambitious agenda here, that extends, for example to retail provision. The absence of local shops selling essential and affordable goods, post offices and pharmacies exacerbated the experience of poverty and exclusion for many residents and suggests the need to ensure that all neighbourhoods have a minimum standard of retail and health, as well as housing, infrastructure. This should be a key requirement within the 'lifetime neighbourhoods' agenda (Communities and Local Government, *et al* 2008). This also suggests, contrary to the theory expounded in the Conservative's 'Two Nations' thesis (Conservative Party, 2010) that public provision of core services remains crucial to the residents of deprived neighbourhoods and substantial future cuts in service provision will exacerbate this problem.

Our study confirms, as residents themselves identify, the centrality of the wider economy to neighbourhood change and the limited sustainability of responses to economic change. Residents are well aware that neighbourhood change continues to be driven by forces and factors external to the neighbourhoods, including the lack of affordable housing, social housing allocation policies and migration. The implicit premise of the neighbourhood renewal and mixed communities agendas of the last decade; that internal housing and population restructuring and enhanced service provision will result in sustainable positive change in deprived neighbourhoods is challenged by our findings. It is not clear therefore how individuals, families or communities can be empowered to take control of their lives and a focus on strengthening families, schools and the welfare system (Conservative Party, 2010) will not, in itself the centrality of worklessness (and low paid and insecure employment) to the prospects of deprived neighbourhoods (see Batty *et al*, 2010b).

More positively, physical transformation has often been viewed favourably by residents and it is evident that addressing neighbourhood problems can have a major impact on residents' sense of neighbourhood satisfaction and the quality of their daily lives. The perceived enhanced social cohesion and sense of neighbourhood vibrancy in Wensley Fold provides the most striking example of this. Maximising the use of

existing community services and facilities is one achievable mechanism for achieving some positive neighbourhood change.

Our study suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of the impact of major regeneration initiatives and shifting service provision and how these are perceived by residents. This requires recognition of the complex relationship that residents have with their place of residence, in which evident social problems are balanced with positive features and a strong sense of attachment and belonging. It also requires a more honest account of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of renewal programmes.

Residents' perceptions of neighbourhood change confirm that place matters in the experience of poverty in Britain. It matters, firstly, because forces of economic, social and demographic change may result in the major transformation of neighbourhoods, with significant impacts for residents. Secondly, these place impacts are particularly important for residents on lower-incomes who view their future as being connected to their existing neighbourhood, regardless of the changes occurring within it and in a context where they have relatively limited power to influence these changes. Thirdly, place matters because the nature of neighbourhood change and the social and spatial experience of poverty vary between different types of deprived neighbourhood.



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