



Neighbourhood Infrastructure, 'Third Places' and Patterns of Social Interaction

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Neighbourhood Infrastructure, 'Third Places' and Patterns of Social Interaction

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between neighbourhood infrastructure and social interaction in deprived neighbourhoods. It examines the social function of public places such as local shops, pubs, cafes, and community centres, and the extent to which these places, which have been described as being “third places” of social interaction after the home (first) and workplace (second), are important and valued mediums for interaction in deprived neighbourhoods. It does so by drawing on data gleaned from an on-going major study of the links between poverty and place which is being funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This study involves interviewing residents in six case study areas across England, Scotland and Wales over a three year period.

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1. Introduction

This working paper explores the relationship between neighbourhood infrastructure and social interaction in deprived neighbourhoods. It is one of a number of outputs to emerge from a major on-going study of the links between poverty and place - *Living Through Change in Challenging Neighbourhoods* - which is being funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The study, which began in 2008 and will be completed at the end of this year, involves exploring the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of residents living in six deprived neighbourhoods across England, Scotland and Wales, over a three year period. Although the study has drawn on some 'non-traditional' research techniques such as solicited diary keeping, *photo novella*, and participatory arts, the principal way that it has done so is by undertaking in-depth interviews with residents.

These are being conducted over three waves. Wave 1, which took place in the spring and summer of 2008 involved the study team interviewing 180 residents in the six case study areas. A year later, 97 of them were re-interviewed as part of the Wave 2 survey. The Wave 3 survey, which will take place in May and June of this year, will involve many of these residents being interviewed again, ensuring that experiences and perceptions of some will have been tracked over a three year period.

The study's six case studies are: *Amlwch*, a small town on the northern tip of Anglesey, which has suffered rapid economic decline in recent years; *West Kensington*, an ethnically mixed area comprising two social housing estates in inner west London; *Oxgangs*, a social housing estate located next to one of the most affluent suburbs in Edinburgh; *West Marsh*, an area with relatively little social housing located close to the centre of Grimsby; *Wensley Fold*, an ethnically and tenure mixed area in Blackburn; and finally *Hillside*, a social housing area in Knowsley (further information about the case studies is provided in Appendix 1).

The areas are all in the lower two deciles of the relevant national deprivation index, and were selected to represent broad differences in the extent of diversity, connectivity and residential mobility according to relevant social indicators. At this juncture it is worth noting one other important point about the case study areas: two of them – West Kensington and Hillside – have been the site of major regeneration work, in the form of New Deal for Communities programmes.

Drawing on the experiences of residents in all six areas, this paper, then, explores the relationship between neighbourhood infrastructure and social interaction. More specifically, it examines the social function of public places such as local shops, pubs, cafes, and community centres, and the extent to which these places, which have been described as being "third places" of social interaction after the home (first) and workplace (second), are important mediums for interaction in deprived neighbourhoods.

The paper is divided into five sections, including this one. Section two seeks to locate the research within the broader policy and academic context. Section three examines the importance attached to social interaction by residents in our case study areas, and then continues to explore the role of third places as mediums for social

interaction. Section four examines the relationship between third places and social interaction in more depth and is concerned with two key issues in particular: identifying which population groups socialise in third places; and the barriers to social interaction in them. The section also examines the symbolic significance of third places. As this research paper has been produced as part of a study that has been funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, it pays particular attention to the implications for policy to emerge from the research, and the last section highlights these.

2. The Research Context

A key feature of area based regeneration programmes in this country over the last thirty years has been the emphasis on what may be described as 'compositional' indicators, most notably measures of deprivation, to select the neighbourhoods to be included within them. The physical attributes of a neighbourhood, whether this be its layout, design or the quality of its infrastructure, have rarely been used to inform their selection and have largely been ignored in debates about how they are selected.

However, there is a large literature that suggests that the physical attributes of an area have a major impact on residents' quality of life (Goodchild, 2008). While there are a number of ways that this happens, one of the most important is the impact they can have on social interaction. This issue has been a long standing concern of planners and architects in both the policy and academic communities with their being a particular concern about how the layout of a neighbourhood affects the social 'behaviour' of its residents (Goodchild, 2008). In the 1980s, this concern centred on the relationship between the urban design and anti-social-behaviour, with some authors, such as Alice Coleman ('famously') arguing that an inevitable corollary of poor design was what she described as "*social malaise*" (Coleman, 1985).

In recent times, the concern with the relationship between an area's physical characteristics and social interaction has taken on a more positive hue as practitioners and academics have sought ways to make neighbourhoods better places to live in by creating social spaces that maximise social interaction between residents. Underpinning this approach is the belief that social interaction at the neighbourhood level enhances residents' quality of life (Carmona *et al*, 2003).

In many respects, this is the view of the American academic, Ramon Oldenburg, who argues that the social malaise that he felt existed in America in 1980s was a result of the increasing reluctance of American residents to interact outside the work place and home, in social arenas that he called *third places*, such as cafés, shops, pubs, leisure centres, and libraries (Oldenburg and Brissett, 1982; Oldenburg, 2007). Oldenburg and Brissett (1982: 271) define a *third place* as follows:

A third place is a public setting accessible to its inhabitants and appropriated by them as their own. The dominant activity is not 'special' in the eyes of its inhabitants, it is a taken-for-granted part of their social existence. It is not a place outsiders find necessarily interesting or notable. It is a forum of association which is beneficial only to the degree that it is well-integrated into daily life. Not even to its inhabitants is the third place a particularly intriguing or exciting locale. It is simply there, providing opportunities for experiences and relationships that are otherwise unavailable.

Drawing on the work of Simmel (1949), he argued that a unique form of social interaction took place in these places: *pure sociability*. In this type of interaction, which invariably occurs between participants who do not have social links or ties, the interaction is "pure" in the sense that it only occurs because participants value social interaction *per se*, and derive pleasure from what Simmel referred to as the "*play-form*" of association. As Oldenburg and Brissett (1982: 271) note:

[Pure] sociability is thus the delight, or the 'play-form' of association, as Simmel preferred to call it. The basis of the 'play' or the delight in association is not found in what sociologists call the "role requirements" inherent in the job to be done, but in the sense of individuality which emerges from these roles and the interplay between them.

While Oldenburg's work may be criticised at a number of levels, not least because it is not empirically informed, his hypothesis that third places perform an important function as a venue for social interaction is potentially very persuasive. As a cursory review of data garnered from the first wave of interviews undertaken by the study team provided some support for Oldenburg's theory, we decided to undertake a comprehensive study of third places and social interaction across all six of our case study areas. This paper, then, presents the key findings to emerge from this analysis. In doing so it examines the relationship between third places and social interaction and explores the extent to which the latter are a vehicle for promoting interaction.

The study is timely in two principal ways. First, although there is an ever growing literature which addresses, whether directly or indirectly, the issue of social interaction, particularly at the neighbourhood level, we know very little about the phenomenon within the context of third places, and this a relatively under-researched area. Social interaction has been explored in a range of different (and sometimes overlapping) contexts including: the nature of neighbourhood and community ties (Riger and Lavrakas, 1981; Ross and Jang, 2000; Guest and Wierzbicki, 1999); family and kinship (Young and Wilmott, 1957); 'neighbouring' i.e. the positive interactions that occur between residents living in close proximity to each other (Buonfino and Hilder, 2006; Crisp, *forthcoming*); mixed communities (Tunstall and Fenton, 2006; Jupp, 2000; Allen *et al*, 2005); contact theory (Emmerson *et al*, 2002; Miller, 2003; Pettigrew, 1998); relations between and within ethnic groups (Hopkins, 2010; Amin, 2002); and social capital (Power and Wilmot, 2007, Forrest and Kearns, 2001, and Putnam, 2000).

A number of the studies that have addressed the issue of social interaction, whether directly or indirectly, have been funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. It has commissioned studies on: neighbouring in contemporary Britain (Buonfino and Hilder, 2006); social interactions in urban public spaces (Holland *et al*, 2007); and mixed tenure communities, as part of a specific research programme on this issue (Silverman *et al*, 2005; Allen *et al*, 2005; Bailey *et al*, 2003; Martin and Watkinson, 2003; Tunstall and Fenton, 2006).

Interest in social interaction has not been confined to academics: it is also an issue that has increasingly concerned central government. This is clearly evident in policy 'initiatives' such as community cohesion and mixed tenure, which are underpinned by a belief that social interaction at the neighbourhood level is desirable and beneficial for residents, and the plethora of publications it has produced on the subject. These include guidance on how to encourage meaningful interaction and positive relations between people (CLG, 2008) and the role of public space in urban renaissance (Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee, 2002).

But despite growing academic and policy interest in social interaction, our understanding of it within the context of the third spaces is relatively limited. However, that is not to understate the importance of the work that has been undertaken in this area and a number of valuable contributions have been made in the field. These include: Cheang's (2002) examination of the nature and form of social interaction in a fast-food restaurant; Matthews *et al*'s (2000) study of the street as third space; Rosenbaum's (2006) exploration of the importance of social interaction to patrons of diners, coffee shops and taverns; Rosenbaum *et al*'s (2007)

examination of social support relationships in 'commercial' third places; and Lawson's (2002) study of libraries as third places.

Moreover, it is also worth noting at this point that the literature on third places has grown rapidly in recent years. However, this reflects a growing interest in the emergence of a 'new' third place – the internet – and most recent studies in the area have been concerned with this (Soukup, 2006; Steinkuehler and Williams, 2006; and Ducheneaut *et al*, 2004).

At this juncture it is important to make two final observations about the literature on third places. First, it is an American literature and interest in the concept has been confined to academics in this country. Second, reflecting that it is an embryonic and growing literature, it has not explored how the importance and nature of social interaction in third places may between different types of spatial forms, such as urban and rural areas, and between population groups. Therefore, it is not able to shed any light on the focus of this paper: social interaction in third places in deprived neighbourhoods.

Second, the study is timely because the number of third places in deprived neighbourhoods across the country is reducing as the impact of the credit crunch and recession is felt by small businesses and public agencies. For example, it appears that there has been a reduction in the numbers of shops and pubs in these areas, although neighbourhood specific data to corroborate this claim does not exist. However, if national trends are replicated within poor neighbourhoods, which appears a very reasonable assumption given that there is some evidence to suggest that the impact of recession has been more marked within them (IPPR, 2009), then recent research at the national level supports this assertion. Research by BBPA (2009) has revealed that on average 39 pubs close in Britain every week (BBPA, 2009) while data collected by Experian (Wallop, 2009) has revealed a dramatic reduction in the numbers of shops in this country. Furthermore, it is likely, that these trends will continue in the foreseeable future.

Before moving on to explore our findings, it is perhaps worth reflecting a little here on the scope of the paper and the third places that are examined. While third places may take many forms including cafés, restaurants, leisure centres, swimming pools, libraries, parks, parks, public spaces, churches and mosques, to name but a few, the paper pays special attention to two in particular – shops and community centres – as they emerged as being the most important mediums for social interaction in our six study areas.

3. Third Places and Social Interaction

3.1. The importance of social interaction

Before exploring the relationship between third places and social interaction across our sample, it is first important to establish whether, as Oldenburg and many other commentators have argued, social interaction in its many forms, including *pure sociability*, is important to residents *wherever it occurs*. The analysis of the social ties between residents presented in our Stage 1 Project report (CRESR Research Team, 2009) supports this assertion. It revealed that one of the reasons why so many residents in our case study areas valued their ties with their friends and family was the social interaction that it enabled.

Further analysis of the Wave 1 data for this study revealed a similar message: residents valued social interaction. This was clearly the case for one resident in Amlwch who, in addition to valuing having friends and family living nearby to her also valued the social interaction that meeting “acquaintances” on local streets brought her:

I: *Do you have a sense of loyalty to Amlwch?*

R: *Not really. A lot of the people that I knew, quite a few of them have died and moved away and gone... it's not... I suppose it's the people that are left more than anything else. My son lives here; my ex husband lives here; lots of friends live here.*

I: *So is that what makes it sort of special for you?*

R: *Yeah*

I: *That network of...*

R: *Yeah, the network of people you know; acquaintances and going down the street there's always somebody to say “hello” to.*
(Mandy, 45-64, Amlwch)

In a similar vein, an elderly resident in the town bemoaned the fact that local residents no longer stopped to talk to each other as they passed each other in the street, something which he appeared to miss:

I: *What about your neighbours: have they been here a long time like you?*

R: *Not, really, no. They come and go. I've had since I've been here about four, five different neighbours. I'm about the oldest one on this estate now.*

I: *So when you first came here was it very neighbourly, did everyone know each other?*

R: *Oh, much more.*

I: *What was it like then?*

R: *This was like a posh private estate. It's a council estate but everybody would say: 'what a nice place you've got down there.' There's some areas there were some coloured people but they'd been here for about a century. They're Welsh. They're not classed as negros or Chinese or whatever. They're Welsh. And we used to call that place down there Tiger Bay but it was nothing like Tiger Bay. I've been in Tiger Bay, but it was really nice then. There was some nice people.*

I: *So it was very friendly and you'd ask your neighbours for help, all that sort of thing?*

R: *You see the difference I find, I used to walk up, everybody, even little children 'how are you Mr xxx?' now they just pass you. You see people coming and they just pass you now, unless they're from here as long as me they would say "hello" but anybody that's new here, they just pass. It's just like a city now.*
(Cameron, 65+, Amlwch)

The importance of social interaction at the local level was also highlighted by residents in Hillside. Two residents there attributed their dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood to a decline in sociability caused by large scale demolition. In particular, they felt it was socially "empty" and devoid of people.

I: *Just the thought of moving, all things being equal would you want to stay where you are?*

R: *Yeah, in the environment where it is now, no, because it's just unbearable. It's like the black hole of Calcutta of a night when the winter comes. It's horrible. There's no-one living round me and it's just an awful depressing thing to go home to. I hate even being in there now and I loved my home when my children were growing up. I never ever thought I'd ever say that.*
(Carrie, 45-64, Hillside)

I: *So what sort of things do you think make it easier or harder to get by living in Hillside? Are there things that have made it harder for you in your life while you've been here?*

R: *No, not really. It's a bit of a change now like it's all getting knocked down and that and it's crap at the minute.*

I: *How's that affected you then?*

R: *It hasn't affected me in the person. I dunno. It's no emotional effect or nothing. It's just you come out your door and it's like: 'ugh, what's going in 'ere?' There's nothing there no more. You haven't your nice neighbours that lived over the road who you'd say 'good morning' to and whatever. They're not there now. So that's the only like maybe bit of emotional side of it.*
(Polly, 30-34, Hillside)

Oldenburg envisaged that the positive impact of social interaction could only occur if it took place between participants in the form of a verbalised conversation. However, this definition of social interaction is perhaps too restrictive and many residents in our case study areas engaged in social 'interaction' that did not involve verbalised conversations. In these 'interactions' residents simply valued seeing familiar faces or, in the case of more socially isolated residents, simply other human beings. In these

important 'interactions' no words were exchanged and on occasions it was an 'interaction' where, paradoxically, only one participant appeared to be involved: in this instance, the 'other participant', whether the friendly face at the shop or the child playing in the park, might be totally unaware of his/her involvement in a social 'interaction'.

This form of non verbal interaction is exemplified by the quote below, which highlights the experience of a resident in Amlwch who decided not to move home because she liked the (social) life that living on her street brought her:

I was offered a bungalow but I don't want to move. It wouldn't be the same kind of life for me in a bungalow. Here there are little children playing outside all the time and there's always something going on. If I was in a bungalow I wouldn't see anyone, no one would pass the window. If I need help I only have to go to the front garden and someone would help me.

(Gwen, 65+, Amlwch)

The social value of having non verbal interactions with people we may not know in our neighbourhood has been recognised by Young and Willmot (1957) and Hunter and Suttles (1972), who developed the concept of the "face block" community. This is a community whose members are aware of each other but who do not necessarily know each others' identity, and who do not formally communicate or interact with each other. Reflecting the importance of this type of interaction, for the remainder of the paper the term "social interaction" will be used in the broadest sense and will include non verbal interactions and the interactions between member of "face blocks".

3.2. Third places and social interaction

Across the six case study areas much of the social interaction that residents appeared to value occurred in third places. Furthermore, the importance of these places as social places was recognised by a number of residents we interviewed. For example, a resident in Amlwch was unhappy about the reduction in the number and quality of social places in the town:

We used to have a cinema, and now it's just flats and flats and flats getting built everywhere...There are very few shops in Amlwch so I have to leave to buy clothes and things like that. There used to be five butchers and a lot of other little shops for different things, bakers a veg shop but they've been shut down and replaced by Chinese restaurants, Indian restaurants. I don't know how they survive in such a small place. It's sad that there are no more little shops and cafes because there aren't enough places to socialise now.....in the 1970s the Chapel on this street closed and was turned into a warehouse, now the Welsh Chapel on Salem Street is closing. The streets are the heart of Amlwch and they're being ruined by big flat developments. The old Chapel on this road is now being turned into a block of flats and its just not attractive for people living here, its not going to be a community space anymore and that's a shame.

(Adrianna, 35-44, Amlwch)

In a similar vein, a Hillside resident highlighted the negative impact of the closure of many of the area's shops on its social environment and social interaction within it.

I: *So are there any other services or shops that you use around here?*

R: *No, because we've always had to travel. We've never had a chemist round here. The hairdressers have gone. I used to use that, now and then: used to have a colour done but that's gone. So you have to travel now to do that so everything's transport now to go to these big supermarkets. I prefer the little*

shop. I used to love it where you knew everyone..... And the woman who owned it: her daughter was a teacher in the school and she knew my children, going to the school and all that. And her friend in Knowsley - she knew them by name - you know like a small world.

I: It was close knit wasn't it?

*R: Yeah, gone. We had a supermarket and everyone knew everyone. You know it was, it was nice round here years ago.
(Winnie, 45-64, Hillside)*

Social interaction in third places in our case study areas occurred in a range of different places, as is highlighted by the two examples below. The first highlights the experiences of a resident in Oxcgangs, who (along with her family) made frequent use of the area's library and local shopping centre, which she described as being "so friendly":

I: Ok, I just want to understand a bit about how you and your family might use the neighbourhood itself. So in a typical day what might you do, not just the neighbourhood, maybe further afield as well?

R: Well, we use the library. We've got the doctor just a couple of streets up so we go there, the wee shopping centre. That's used nearly every day. We go down there and it's a lovely wee place that actually. It's so friendly and you can go anywhere and get anything there.... generally my shopping, which will be delivered in about 2 hours from Tesco. It's carried upstairs and delivered but the area we would walk around....on a Wednesday, that's our quiz night.

I: Yeah we've just been up for coffee at Morrisons so...

R: Aye, that's where you go for coffee. Morrisons is a great place for coffee, so we go up there for coffee.... we don't really drink. We're not a drinking family but we like to go up and have coffee and partake. The morning consists of me getting up, get the family out, Ken's working - he works from 5 in the morning - getting my other son ready, who gets collected in a taxi. I go to work; come back; come off the bus; pick up prescriptions; get shopping; go to the library; get library books.

I: So actually you use the library quite full don't you?

*R: Oh, yes.
(Ivy, 45-64, Oxcgangs)*

The second example highlights the experiences of a middle aged woman in Amlwch who was actively involved in the local community, and visited many places in the town that provided the opportunity to socially interact. Again like her counterpart in Oxcgangs, she clearly valued the opportunities to socially interact that the town's third places provided her.

I: Let's start off with today and maybe talk about how things have changed?

R: It's not bad at all. You have the lunch club. I go to the lunch club. We go on trips from the lunch club and it's up to you what you want to do. We have the arts. I go and do my art in the community, well next to the police station, the council offices. We do that on a Wednesday. There's bowling. There's gardening.

I: So as far as you're concerned there is plenty of activities to keep....

R: *Yes, there's the train at the top there and the swimming pool and it's up to you. I feel well enough at the moment to do it. Not everybody does of course. Other people might say different, but I don't believe in sitting in and being sorry for myself. I'd rather I go down to the shops every day. At least you see someone to talk to. This morning I saw a friend I haven't seen for years and she's come back to Amlwch to live.*

(Candy, 45-64, Amlwch)

However, as is alluded to in both the quotes above, and in line with the findings of other studies (Flint, 2006; Matthews *et al*, 2000), one third place in particular emerged as being of particular importance to residents: local shops. Across all six case studies areas shops appeared to fulfil an important role as a vehicle for promoting social interaction between residents, particularly of the pure sociability type. For example, this was certainly was the case for a resident in West Marsh who particularly valued being 'known' by other residents in the local shops he visited.

Well, I was well known because every shop I've been in I knew a lot of people. When I used to come here of a weekend I couldn't walk down say Freeman Street without being stopped you know. I knew a lot of people but I don't know whether they were two faced then but I've said all along that this place has been spoilt.

(Francine, 65+, West Marsh)

Although not a frequent user of the local convenience store, another resident in West Marsh felt that the local shop was the "hub" of any local "community".

Well, when you've got a shop there you expect it to be open and it's another 10, 15 minute walk to the next shop. You need a shop in any community because it's a hub isn't it? Even though I wouldn't do the shopping in there cos it's expensive. But people run out of milk or they need six eggs it's there isn't it, convenience basically.

(Callum, 45-64, West Marsh)

A resident in Amlwch valued the social interaction that shops brought in a different way: she noted how the local supermarket was an important and valued location for meeting her friends.

I: Do you still get out to the shops?

R: Oh, I go and do the shopping every morning whether I need anything or not. Go round Somerfield: meet more friends there than I do in the street.

(Mandy, 45-64, Amlwch)

In addition to providing a social place for residents to meet in the neighbourhood, local shops could also facilitate social interaction in another way: by promoting community events in the area. For example, a resident in West Marsh was made aware of a local fun run by publicity material exhibited in a local shop:

I: So does quite a lot go on in the park because it's really convenient for you isn't it, cos you've got the bridge at the end of the street?

R Yeah, there was a fun run at the weekend that was on Sunday, or was it Saturday? Yeah, there's often things going on and like I just found out about that because I was in the shop and there was like leaflets up.

I: *So quite a bit goes on you think around here?*

R: *Yeah, I do yeah.*
(Star, 25-29, West Marsh)

A resident in Oxfords spoke of the important role that shopping played in her life, even though that much of the time she only engaged in window shopping. This resident was typical of many we interviewed as shopping appeared to give her a reason to 'get out of the house'.

Well, I try to get out, I make myself go out for that reason. Even when my husband was alive, he used to say to me: 'go out if you want.' And I'd say: 'I think I will do.' Sitting in the house all day, it's no me. I like to get out and about. I go out for 2 or 3 hours and come back and I'm quite happy after that cos I've been out. The only day I don't go out is a Sunday. The rest of the week I'm out every day, rain, hail or snow.
(Vera, 65+, Oxfords)

The extent to which this desire is driven specifically by the need for social interaction is unclear and is difficult to disentangle from other behavioural drivers, but it is likely that for some of the many residents who went shopping to escape the confines of their homes it is an important factor.

It is also worth noting, that in addition to fulfilling an important social role in peoples' lives, whether this be through allowing them to interact socially or to "escape" from their homes, shopping appeared to fulfil another important social function: it was a "leisure" activity for many residents and for some, particularly those who were not working, an important way of occupying their time.

I: *Just thinking about a typical day, what would you do and where would you go?*

R: *Probably go to North End Road market, do the food shopping there and then just come to my friend's house. I don't really hang around the area as such.*
(Diane, 16-24, West Kensington)

R: *Yes, we do go on Sunday. We go to Morrisons and do our shopping at Bangor. But I will go down every day for a loaf or things like that.*

I: *So you'll probably go in every day for something or other?*

R: *Yes, I will have bread in the freezer but I try and make a point of going down every day, especially on a nice day like this. If I'm unwell or it was pouring down with rain I wouldn't have to go. So I do try and go out every day.*
(Candy, 45-64, Amlwch)

And at weekends I usually stroll about, go to Fulham or I go to High Street, Ken. And I like to do window shopping and go for walks. And go for coffee.
(Imogen, 30-34, West Kensington)

Shops were not the only third places to perform an important social function in our study areas. Other social places, such as cafés, community centres, leisure, local clubs, and pubs also fulfilled an important social role, and were important places of social interaction, as the quotes below illustrate:

I: *How would you describe a typical day, what would you do?*

R: *Wake up, go to town.*

I: *Town?*

R: *Amlwch.*

I: *On the streets?*

R: *Yeah, walk past the pubs and that. Go to the shop. Maybe pop into the café. Have a cup of tea there and then just go out and see my mates with their kids. Go for a walk and then at night... so I come in, stay in for a bit and so it depends. Like sometimes, I've got a pantomime practice and sometimes I've got my singing lesson and then. Or we just go up town and just hanging round there basically and just congregate on the street and cause trouble.*

I: *The pantomime's here?*

R: *Yeah*
(Roxy, 16-24, Amlwch)

There's a pub at the top of the road, just beside the shops. I tend to just go up there. I just can't really be bothered going into town and standing in queues and waiting for taxis home. It's so expensive as well. I'd rather just go somewhere I know. I mean it's not really the best of pubs. It's a local pub and it's not always that great. It can be really really quiet and you think: 'oh god what am I doing here?' But I don't really go out that much so it's fine for me.
(Lewis, 25-29, Oxgangs)

I: *I was just going to ask do you use the facilities in Amlwch?*

R: *Many years ago, yes, my second home was the leisure centre. Made a lot out of that with the children growing up. And you couldn't ask for anything more - everything was there.*
(Lorna, 30-34, Amlwch)

In three of our case study areas - Hillside, West Marsh and Oxgangs - community centres played a particularly prominent social role. For many residents, they were an important space for social interaction. For example, this was clearly the case for one resident in Hillside:

I: *And what about the community centre: obviously you use this quite a bit do you?*

R: *Yeah, yeah, all the time*

I: *And your mates use it?*

R: *Yeah, it's like out second home here.*

I: *Apart from the Hillywood Centre is there anything else like that around here?*

R: *No, there's one over on Woolfall like but don't really use that one. Just this one.*

I: *I get the impression - I've been here a few times now - that this centre's very important?*

R: *Yeah.*

I: *It's something to do.*

R: *We wouldn't have nothing to do if it wasn't for this place.*

I: *No, no. And apart from coming here to play pool or go on the internet here, do you ever go on any of the trips they organise?*

R: *Yeah, go away to Yorkshire. Went on one last weekend to Yorkshire and go to Alton Towers and all, things like that.*

I: *How long have you been coming here?*

R: *Since I was about 10.*

I: *Seven years. And are you going to try and stay here a bit longer, in terms of I know some of the guys have gone on to be helpers and things?*

R: *Yeah.*

I: *Would you quite like to do that?*

R: *Yeah.*
(Daniel, 16-24, Hillside)

In a similar vein, two residents in West Marsh and Oxfangs valued the community centres in their areas:

Yeah, the area's nice. I like the area. I know everybody round here sort of thing. The community centre's good because it's getting everybody interacting together. The schools are good. Both the schools that me boys have been to. I've been really happy with them so I've had no quibbles to move sort of thing.
(Connie, 30-34, West Marsh)

I: *What about the community centre, do you ever use that?*

R: *Yeah, use the community centre quite often. Always take the kids up to the events, they organise puppet shows and dancing..... Miranda does the dancing sometimes up there. There was a performance up there a couple of weeks ago. They did the fireworks up there after Halloween. They did the fireworks display and I went up to that. They've got a party at Christmas, went up to that, summer holidays use the play scheme and all the clubs that they go on. They do Tricky Vicky the magician and Mr Abba the music man and all that kind of caper, so I use the community centre quite often.*
(Heaven, 25-29, Oxfangs)

Most residents who used the community centres in Oxfangs and West Marsh were very satisfied with them and for many, particularly those with children, they were a vital element of the neighbourhood infrastructure.

*Yeah, but we've got two girls, we go to the community centre every Thursday night because they do football, which is really good. They really enjoy it and it's built up, about six years ago weren't it? It weren't very good was it? It was all run down and everything and volunteers from round the community and everything they did it for free. They did it all up. Painted it and everything. It's absolutely brilliant now what they do, big change.
(Morgan, 30-34, West Marsh)*

R: The community centre's very good because during the summer when you've got six weeks off with the kids. So the play scheme - they run something like 10 o'clock in the morning to 4 o'clock - so you can just take them up in the morning and go and pick them back up. And that's normally first two weeks of the summer holidays which is fantastic. And the same way the SureStart he goes to. That's, this year. It was actually on during the summer which was great because it just gives you a bit of time with the other ones when he's there rather than having six weeks of the summer where there's just nothing. You might go away for one week yourselves you know but... so there's a lot going on in the area and there's quite a few of there's a lot of the Active Schools. I don't know if you've heard of that, I think it was funded through the Lottery?

I: To encourage children to do physical...

R: It's like they can do a dance class or tennis, basketball I think, rugby, cos one of the girls was doing tennis and one was doing dancing. It's like £10 a term or something and normally it's just straight after school so you don't have to go and take them somewhere else to do a dance class and stuff like that.

I: So it's all convenient?

*R: Yeah
(Olive, 34-44, Oxfangs)*

4. Third Places and Social Interactions: Further Reflections

The previous section has revealed that third places in our case study areas fulfil an important social role and are a place where important social interaction between residents occurs. This section explores and unpicks this relationship in more detail. In doing so it identifies which population groups are more likely to socialise in third places and the barriers to social interaction in them. In addition, it examines the symbolic role of third places in deprived neighbourhoods.

4.1. Who participates in third places?

Although all socio-demographic groups in our case study areas made use of local third places, some were more likely to do so, a finding which is in line with those of a number of other studies (Campbell and Lee, 1982, Nassar and Julian, 1995; Skjaeveland *et al*, 1996). For example, residents who spent most of their day at home because they were unemployed, in poor health, retired or had childcare responsibilities, made greater use of them. And therefore as a result, not surprisingly, more of their social interactions occurred in these places. For example, a young mother in West Marsh reported that she spent most of her time on the estate because she had to stay at home to look after her young daughter.

I: So do you spend most of your time in and around West Marsh or do you spend a lot of time leaving the area and going to town.

R: Well, I used to when I was, before I had me little girl. I've been where the gangs as they probably call it now.... but yeah I'd tend to be in West Marsh, obviously now I go out a bit more, more out of it really.

I: Because you're doing stuff with your daughter you'd go out more rather... it's interesting what you say about being with the gangs and hanging around. Is there much to when you were younger, was there much to do, if you weren't hanging around was there much else to do?

*R: No, that's why it was sit on the park. There was nowhere for us to go, not that you're thinking 'we need money for this or we need money for that'.
(Mel, 16-24, West Marsh)*

Perhaps not unexpectedly, residents with young children, including those who spent a significant amount of time away from the neighbourhood through work, were particularly likely to visit third places, especially community centres and parks. For example, a female resident in West Marsh reported that she and her family used the local community centre on a regular basis.

R: We use these shops

I: You're in and out of there quite a bit.

R: *Yeah, and that's the community centre which we use quite a bit, the girls go to a junior club; one goes on a Tuesday; one goes on a Sunday. They normally have discos up there once a month.*

I: *Which they go to as well?*

R: *Which they go to. When they were younger they used to go to like a kinder gym thing for the kids and they have pantomimes up there and stuff like that. They have, they also do play schemes at summer and Easter which the kids go to.*

I: *So you use...*

R: *Yeah, I use it, also they do a fruit and veg co-op on a Wednesday up there.*

I: *Oh, yeah, are you part of that?*

R: *Well, you can go up and buy fresh fruit and veg which is a bit cheaper than what it is up the road so I sometimes go up there. So there's lots of stuff up there for any age group, pensioners, right through. There's computing classes on. There's keep fit classes. There's quite a few various things which cater for quite a few ages.*

(Olive, 35-34, Oxfgangs)

The apparent correlation between life cycle stage and the use of the community centres was picked-up by a number of respondents we interviewed. For example, a resident in Oxfgangs noted that as her children had grown-up, and therefore no longer required the childcare activities that the centre provided, she had no reason to visit it.

I: *Where would you go for socialising then?*

R: *Well, I'll go to the bingo occasionally, we go to friends for visits and meals, we'll have friends over for meals. Sometimes, I dunnae really drink so sometimes... well, very rarely drink so I don't make a habit of sitting in the pub and things like that. Go out for a meal, have a couple of drinks or whatever and my husband has a couple of drinks. And that's it but no into sitting in the pub.*

I: *And would there be any other alternatives to that for socialising round here?*

R: *Not round here other than meeting up at the community centres. And as I say my kids have grown up now so I've no got any need for mother and toddler groups and things like that and the other things dunnae interest me.*

(Eleanor, 35-44, Oxfgangs)

In a similar vein, another resident in the area also noted how his use of the centre had reduced after his children left the nursery that was based there.

R: *That's the community centre that one*

I: *That's right, do you use it...*

R: *That's at the top of the hill where the Companions are. I used to use it quite a lot because I used to be a home help at one time and I was working 'round this area as well and that's the back of the...*

I: *Yeah, yeah. What about the community centre, do you ever use that for anything?*

R: *Well, I used to when my kids were young they used to go to nursery up there. That's many years ago. One went there and one went to St John's church, because I could nae get him in the same place. So I had one there and one's in St John's church in the top of the hill.*

I: *Ok. There's also there's the library up there isn't there. Do you use that at all?*

R: *No, sometimes we used to get the mobile van. It used to stop up the Drive, Oxgangs Drive and we used to go andor I used to go down to Morningside to the one down there.*
(Hayley, 25-29, Oxgangs)

All other things being equal, economically active residents were less likely to use third places and therefore, as a corollary, less likely to socially interact within them. While there were a number of reasons for this, their lower usage could be attributed to two inextricably linked factors: the large amount of time they spent away from the neighbourhood; and their apparent lack of awareness of third places within it.

I: *One of the things we're interested is what people do in the neighbourhood and how would you describe a typical day, does that involve doing stuff in West Marsh or going out to perhaps West Marsh or what?*

R: *Usually if I'm not in the house I'm either at work or town so I don't really do a lot round here. I look after one of my friends' girls occasionally: she's only two so we feed the ducks occasionally. But to be honest I don't really know what is round here, to be perfectly frank.*

R: *So you go out to work or to town and then you come back in and come back to the house and you don't have much to do with the rest of the area?*

I: *Mmm*
(Sky, 16-24, West Marsh)

It is worth noting that lack of awareness of third places and community infrastructure more broadly was not confined to residents who spent most of their time outside the neighbourhood: some of those who spent most of the time within it also exhibited this characteristic. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that residents often held widely differing views about the prevalence and quality of third places and associated community infrastructure. This was most definitely the case in Amlwch where some noted that the town had many third places and developed community and neighbourhood infrastructure, while others thought it was moribund in these respects.

This dichotomy can be clearly seen in the quotes below from three residents in the town.

It's not hard to socialise, though. I go to the luncheon club every fortnight, the Welsh chapel, carpet bowls. And I'm also a member of the 'Friends of the Heritage' group in Amlwch. I'm part of the 'Mynydd Parys' and 'Porth Amlwch' support group who is helping to restore the old copper mine and the harbour.
(Caroline, 65+, Amlwch)

R: *People often when we first moved up here would say: 'there's nothing to do.' There's so much to do if you are prepared to go out and find it. There is lots to do.*

I: *For example?*

R: *Well, we do a lot of walking anyway, horse riding is another one.... I play netball, do dancing. I've got involved with a drama group as well so we do dancing and things for charity; hold a show every two years.*

I: *So these are all things that are going on in Amlwch?*

R: *Yes.*

I: *So is there a basketball team, then?*

R: *Basketball team, netball. I think there's a rounders one starting at the moment so they do karate, judo, all sorts of things like that.*
(Lorna, 30-34, Amlwch)

I: *What would you do on a typical day, particularly going out and about in Amlwch and where you'd go?*

R: *There's not really much to do. I just take the kids to school, there is one new thing for the kids now, it's a play centre.... but apart from that there's nothing really to do.*

I: *So you drop the kids off at school, and for the rest of the day when the kids are at school, what would you do for the day?*

R: *I just do my shopping.*
(Stephanie, 16-24, Amlwch)

This finding is consistent with those of another study funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation which explored how residents 'read' local housing markets and neighbourhoods (Hickman *et al*, 2007). The study, which focused on the experiences of recent in-movers, found that residents living in the same neighbourhood could perceive it in very different ways and when moving into it 'bought' into very different aspects of the residential environment.

Before moving on to examine the barriers to social interaction in third places, it is perhaps worth offering one more reflection about the nature and characteristics of the residents frequenting third places: that is some residents chose to avoid them particularly when they were busy, precisely because they were places that they thought they would meet someone they knew, and therefore would have to engage in a social interaction. This was the case for one woman in West Kensington who was not keen on visiting the most important third place in the area: the market and shops on North End Road.

I: *I'm going to ask you a bit about this area. How would you describe a typical day living in this area: where do you go? what sort of things do you do?*

R: *Well, personally I'm on maternity leave. I go back to work in June. But I would just take my son to school, go to work and either go down North End Road which I hate. I try to avoid it because North End Road's a place where you see everybody you know and that's where you've got your Sainsbury's your Iceland, do my shopping. I come home usually until it's time to pick up my son*

from martial arts class, really and truly I think as I've got on a bit in age I stay inside.

(Cordell, 30-34, West Kensington)

In a similar vein, analysis of West Marsh residents' attitudes towards neighbouring undertaken by other members of the study team (Crisp and Robinson, 2010) revealed that many were keen to 'keep themselves to themselves', as the quotes below illustrate:

I: We talk to people on the street but we don't really bother with them, we keep ourselves to ourselves.

R: Do most people do that?

I: Yeah, most people on this street is each to their own, keep their self to their self

(Holly, 45-64, West Marsh)

Everybody keeps themselves to themselves probably that's what I like about it.
(Grace, 25-29, West Marsh)

I talk to the neighbour next door when she's got her head out of the door and that ... this neighbour I hardly talk to him. We talked to him when he first moved in, found out who he was, where he come from and all that. He said: 'you're really nice people, I hope you enjoy yourself' ... There's another neighbour that takes our bin out for us every Wednesday morning ...but we tend to keep ourselves to ourselves.

(Mark, 16-24, West Marsh)

These findings are consistent with those of Warr (2005), who in the course of examining a 'discredited' neighbourhood in Melbourne, noted that some residents employed a deliberate policy of 'keeping to yourself' in order to 'protect' themselves from what Campbell and Gillies (2001) refer to in a study of social capital in health promotion in small communities as 'feral' or no 'hoper' residents.

4.2. Barriers to social interaction in third places

A number of barriers emerged to the use of third places in the neighbourhoods we studied. First, many residents were deterred from using them by the perceived unfriendliness of their long standing users or 'regulars'. This was particularly the case in relation to community centres. For example, two residents in West Marsh reported that they did not use the community centre there because its 'regulars' had made them feel unwelcome when they visited it.

I: So in terms of where in West Marsh, there's nothing to do, nowhere to go?

R: There's a community thing in Armstrong Street where a lot of people go.

I: But you don't go?

R: I went once and I sat with some people and one of them said: 'that's my friend's seat' so I sat at a table and I was on me own so that put me off.

(Sibyl, 65+, West Marsh)

R1: *I think everyone keeps themselves to themselves. When we first moved in we used to work in a community shop at the corner and there everyone was very clicky and into their own business, and don't want to know anyone else. So we don't go there no more.*

R2: *Even at the group at the school, and we're on this course, but there's some other mothers that are very... they all know each other and that. They don't talk to anyone else you know. We go and we chat amongst ourselves, don't we? They're very much a "clicky" group on their own.*

R1: *They're not nasty with it though whereas at the shop they were quite rude.*

I: *Why do you think that is? Do you think it's because you're from out of the area originally or something?*

R1: *I don't know but we went round to the community centre as well and they're all like in there.*

(R1: Cheryl, 25-29, R2: Monica, 25-29, West Marsh)

Another factor which deterred some residents from using third places in their neighbourhood was their lack of social confidence and discomfort in social situations, particularly when they did not know many people locally and/ or were single. This was clearly the case for a middle aged in respondent in Oxgangs who remarked that he and his partner were not "*sociable enough*" to visit the local community centre.

I: *Ok. I just wondered how much you use Oxgangs or how much you're out and about in it, doing the shopping or leisure or anything else?*

R: *We go to the library, use the library but we're not sociable enough yet to go to any of the community centres or anything like that, which we probably could if we wanted to or when we get a wee bit older we might. But we're not that way inclined to go. I don't know the people's name's next door or, in fact half of them upstairs either to be honest.*

(Roy, 45-64, Oxgangs)

In a similar vein, a resident in West Marsh noted that she had declined an offer to attend a Surestart initiative in the local community centre because she was "*quite shy*" and uncomfortable meeting new people:

R: *Do you ever go to the community centre?*

I: *I've been a couple of times over the last few months to take me nieces, well Graham's nieces who live across the road to dance class there, I've took them but not for me.*

R: *Not for you or Cassandra?*

I: *No, I have been offered to go to SureStart but it's meeting people. I'm quite shy when it comes to talking to people like that what I don't know. And I know they're all in the same situation because that's what it is and it's to help single mums but it's not something I'm interested in really.*

(Mel, 16-24, West Marsh)

A single retired woman in West Marsh reported that she was "*ashamed*" that she did not use the local community centre and attributed her failure to do so to the fact that

she did not know anyone locally.

I: *What sort of services and facilities would you use round here? Do you use the corner shops?*

R: *There aren't any corner shops round here. I do use the newsagent on Corporation Road.*

I: *What about the community centre or somewhere like that?*

R: *No, and I'm ashamed of myself really. I really must go round there and have a look because we used to get a book from the community centre called the Freshney and I used to read it, every bit and enjoy it but evidently they're not going to do it any more. And I'm sorry about that but I've never done anything to help. Well, when they've had anything on the Boulevard I've gone to that and joined in but I've never actually been to the community centre. I don't know anybody you see. That's the thing. But when they've had these, what do you call them? fetes or whatever on the Boulevard, I've gone to those and bought things at the stalls and done that kind of thing. But I've not been to the actual place itself. I really ought to go, but there are very very few shops around here. (Peggy, 65+, West Marsh)*

For some residents in our case study areas another factor lay behind their decision not to use third places: the physical difficulty of getting to them because of infirmity, ill-health and disability, which was compounded by the perceived failure of local agencies to provide them with assistance. For example, a disabled resident in Oxgangs was keen to use the area's community facilities but she felt that her severe disability made it very difficult for her to get to them.

I: *There's the day centre at Firrhill, the doctor's is Morningside?*

R: *No, it's just down the road in Oxgangs.*

I: *Do you regularly go to the community centre or the library, for instance?*

R: *Well not as often as I should no. I know these facilities are available for me. The only problem with that is I am quite badly disabled and I know I should be trying to do more myself but I'm, I don't get out as much as I should. I don't seem to have the motivation to do that. (Shirley, 45-64, Oxgangs)*

In a similar vein, a resident in Wensley Fold was only able to overcome her disability – chronic arthritis – to visit a local church because a friend gave her a lift to it: without this lift she would not be able to go there:

I: *Where's that church?*

R: *On Preston New Road*

I: *Is that a Catholic church?*

R: *Yeah.*

I: *And how often would you go there?*

R: *I go every week.*

I: *Every Sunday?*

R: *Yeah except when I'm ill.*

I: *And do you know lots of people through the church that live around here as well?*

R: *Yeah the lady who gives me a lift.... so either one neighbour or another neighbour gives me a lift. I can walk it back down the hill but to go up the hill because of me arthritis I get a lift.*

(Chad, 45-64, Wensley Fold)

And an elderly female resident in West Marsh who was reliant on her 94 year old friend to give her a lift to a local luncheon club, highlighted the difficulties that many elderly residents faced getting around their neighbourhoods.

R: *Well, what kind of quality of life is there here now if you've no transport. Used to be a bus along... gone, so what's the point of a pass with no bus? I couldn't even go to the Age Concern lunch without my friend taking me in the car. Now he's 94. He still drives. He doesn't know how long he'll be able to drive. He's got an extension of another year on his... he's just got that, but you don't know when you get that age.*

I: *Where is the dinner?*

R: *It's down at Carter Gate. They're moving now which is too far for me to walk. It's too far for me to walk to even the doctor should I want to.*

I: *How do you get there then?*

R: *I get a taxi. Now I only started recently this lunch.*

(Francine, 65+, West Marsh)

A fourth barrier emerged to the use of third places: the reluctance of some residents to venture from the homes after dark. While this was an issue to varying degrees in all of the case study areas it was a particular issue in West Marsh. For example, one resident there was very unhappy about leaving home after dark and was reluctant to visit one of the area's key local third places: the local convenience store.

I: *Do you go anywhere within West Marsh?*

R1: *Just school really*

R2: *The park and school.*

I: *Is there a reason why you don't go out round here or...*

R1: *I won't go out at night will I?*

R2: *No, she won't leave house on her own at night time because street lighting round here.*

R1: *If I need to go to shop it's a nightmare. This passage way, alley way gangs and gangs about it.*

R2: *People waiting for drugs and things.*

R1: *And it's absolute pitch black.*

R2: *They were there when I come back from school actually, two of them.*

R1: *actually waited for a taxi cos I had to go somewhere the other week and I waited there for the taxi because we can't hear them, obviously. Someone come up asking me for drugs, they thought it were me they had to meet.*

R2: *They come up to me and said: 'I've just spoke to you on phone, you're carpet man aren't you?' It must be a code name or something, I said 'eh?'*

R1: *Banging on door as well, 3 o'clock in the morning. Banging door down asking me to sell 'em...*

R2: *They said: 'is such and such here?' I said 'no.' They said: 'are you sure?' I said 'well we should know we live here'.*

I: *So it can be difficult living here then?*

R2: *Yeah*

R1: *Oh yeah*

(R1: Stuart, 30-34, R2: Wendy, 30-34, West Marsh)

In a similar fashion, in Wensley Fold a resident reported that he would not visit local shops after nightfall:

I: *Do you worry about going on, like walking on the streets at night?*

R: *I wouldn't go out at night on my own never. I wouldn't even go to the corner shop, to the take away shop.*

I: *So do you tend to stay in after a certain time?*

R: *Yeah, we don't go out at night anyway. Odd time we might go to something at church but it's always a neighbour that takes me with her.*

(Chad, 45-64, Wensley Fold)

4.3. The symbolic importance of third places

In addition to performing a 'practical' function as a medium for social interaction, third places also appeared to have a symbolic role within our case study neighbourhoods: they were seen by residents as being a marker of the 'health' and 'vibrancy' of their neighbourhoods. And their removal was perceived as being a very tangible marker and symbol of decline, with the closure of shops being particularly significant. This appears to have been particularly the case in three of our case study areas – West Marsh, Amlwch and Hillside - when key local third places closed there. Turning first to West Marsh, two residents highlighted the closure of local shops when asked to explain why they felt they area had changed for the worse in recent times.

I: *So it's not quite the same as it used to be, the neighbourhood?*

R: *No, it isn't because, got no post office now, no paper shop, we've got, we used to have a chippy at the bottom of the road, there used to be ...at traffic lights, there used to be paper shop down here, post office down on Gilby Road, post office and another shop but now .. and there's nowhere open, you can't get a paper. Next day it's not open. The day it's open you go and there's newt on the shelves. In fact I even went the other night to get some beer and he didn't*

have none so I walked toon the way back he told me in the morning he was getting beer in the afternoon and it's a weekend. I went in after ...shelf, it's there, at least you've summat on your shelf ...I'm not gonna bother coming back no more cos you've never got nowt in here anyway.
(Callum, 45-64, West Marsh)

R: No, round here, when I first moved here there was a private little club on the corner over there called Littlecoats Club. They had the post office down there on the corner and they had the fish and chip shop on the bottom of Gilby Road.

I: Yeah, I've seen that boarded up.

R: The Chinese shop as well.

I: Have all of those gone then?

R: Well the post office went. The fish and chip shop. They sold up and left and the Littlecoats Club that I must admit I never went in. But as far as I know that's closed now as well. So I mean that only leaves the Chinese shop.

I: There's not much left then is there?

R: No, not for my age group.
(Ethel, 45-64, West Marsh)

In Amlwch, the closure of local shops was also highlighted by residents when asked to describe how the town had changed in recent times. This trend particularly concerned one resident who was able to precisely quantify the reduction of two types of shops in the town.

I: Yeah, is there anything about Amlwch you'd like to be different? Is there anything that bothers you about it? Negative aspects?

R: I wouldn't say bothers me: it's just a shame to see a lot of the shops in the street they're closing down and that's just a shame to see but not much you can do.

I: And you've seen that happen while you've lived here have you?

R: Yeah, changed a lot over the years.

I: What sort of shops then, little shops selling all sorts have closed down have they?

R: Yeah, years ago you'd have a shoe shop. I think there was two shoe shops at one time. There was three fruit and veg shops. Not now.
(Bunny, 30-34, Amlwch)

And finally in Hillside , a number of residents highlighted the negative impact the closure of local shops had had on the area, including a male resident who noted:

R: Lot's (of shops have) closed down. There used to be a chip shop and everything, yeah that closed. And the one next door to her was a hairdressers.

I: So things have changed around here quite a lot?

R: Quite a lot yeah. It's all quieter.

I: *You think it's a lot quieter?*

R: *Mmm*

I: *I suppose there's not as many people living here at the minute?*
(Heidi, 65+, Hillside)

5. Reflections for Policy

The preceding commentary has explored the relationship between third places and social interaction in our case study neighbourhoods and demonstrated that they are an important medium for social interaction, interaction which is valued by residents. This section highlights the implications of the research for policy.

Perhaps, the most important of these is also the most obvious. As third places play an important social role in these areas and are a vital medium for social interaction, interaction which undoubtedly helps some people living in challenging circumstances in low income areas to 'get by', where possible every effort should be made to ensure that recession does not result in their further denudation in these areas. If their number and quality does reduce then this is likely to have an adverse social impact on *many* households, particularly those without close family and friend support networks.

However, that said, it is important to offer a note of caution about the (positive) impact that third places can have on the social problems of deprived neighbourhoods, and it would be 'naïve' to see them as them as a panacea for them. For many residents, third places play no role in their lives and, as noted earlier, some may actively 'choose' to avoid them, a point highlighted by Buonfino and Hilder (2006, p41), albeit in a slightly different context (neighbouring):

As highlighted in this think-piece, compared to fifty years ago, neighbourliness today, like most social interaction, is principally a question of choice.

The "choice" of some residents not to interact in third places, therefore, limits the potential of third places (creation) as a policy intervention in deprived neighbourhoods. This conclusion is line with those offered by Crisp (forthcoming) who concludes his paper on neighbouring and social capital by challenging the presumption that enhancing levels of social capital through strengthening social connections is a "policy fix to urban deprivation":

The simple presumption that neighbourhoods can be revitalised through strengthening social ties ... presupposes that there is latent demand for these kind of local social interactions and that residents can be mobilised around a single, shared vision of community. This appears far from the case. Whilst some residents do favour sociability with neighbours, others avoid such forms of social contact.

However, it is undoubtedly true that for many residents third places can fulfil an important social function in their lives and for them the creation of additional social spaces, allied to the retention of existing ones, may encourage further social interaction, thereby potentially enhancing their quality of lives.

The more clearly that residents can see opportunities of neighbouring and the more easily that they can take them up, the more they will be likely to do so. (Buonfino and Hilder, 2006: 41)

There are other reasons why every effort should be made to support third places in deprived neighbourhoods. For example, they can provide vital services, that many local residents, particularly those living in difficult and challenging circumstances, are reliant on. In this context, residents appear to be particularly reliant on two types of third places: the local community centre, whose childcare functions are particularly valued; and local convenience stores, which many residents, particularly those who are less mobile, rely on almost exclusively to provide them with their day-to-day necessities.

In addition, third places also fulfil another important role: they provide residents with much needed leisure activities, a way of occupying their time and a 'reason to get out of the house'. A decline in their quality and number would therefore see some residents faced with the challenge of having to find new ways to fill their time.

Furthermore, (where possible) every effort should be made to maintain third places because, as noted earlier, residents may see their removal as being a very clear marker and symbol of the decline of their neighbourhood, with the closure of shops being particularly significant.

It is particularly important that particular attention is paid to supporting third places in isolated areas, whether this isolation be a result of physical geography in the case of Amlwch, social isolation, in the case of Oxfords, or poor public transport provision. This is because it is more difficult for residents in these areas to access alternative third places: if the leisure centre closes in Amlwch then residents there face a 12 mile journey to access the nearest facility in Llangefni. However, in an area such as West Kensington which has excellent transport links and is in close proximity to other well appointed neighbourhoods, the demise of local third places, while clearly having a detrimental affect on the neighbourhood, may not be felt as acutely.

The last two reflections for policy relate to the renewal of deprived neighbourhoods, with both being concerned about making the regeneration process more rounded and 'bottom-up' by being more in tune with the attitudes, needs and wants of residents. The first of these is concerned with the criteria used to select the neighbourhoods to be included in area based regeneration programmes, whether at the national, regional, or sub-regional levels. As noted earlier, historically, most of these may be described as being 'compositional' in their nature as they are derived by combining a range of indicators of deprivation and, in the case of the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Programme, housing market weakness, to form a composite score of the severity of the 'problem' in a neighbourhood. This score is then used to determine which neighbourhoods are included in a programme with the usual convention being to allocate resources to those with the 'highest' scores.¹

However, while there is much to be said for this approach, and the reliance on 'hard' secondary data ensures that the exercise is perceived as being as objective as possible, in one important way it is flawed: it makes no attempt to capture the quality of the physical attributes of a neighbourhood, which include its infrastructure. This is important because this research has shown that the quality of neighbourhood infrastructure is vitally important in deprived areas, not least because it fulfils a role as an important medium for social interaction in its capacity as a third place.

The importance of recognising the broader social and physical *contextual* attributes of a neighbourhood when seeking to 'profile' and understand it has been recognised by other research (Cummins *et al*, 2007). Thus, quantitative *compositional*

¹ The flagship area based regeneration programme in England, the *New Deal for Communities Programme*, took a slightly different approach and allowed itself some flexibility in terms of the areas it funded. While it did focus its attention on the 88 most deprived wards in England identified using compositional data, it did not look to specifically fund initiatives in the 39 *most* deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

measures of deprivation should be supplemented by data which seeks to provide an insight into the broader social, cultural and physical *context* within a neighbourhood. This data will probably be qualitative in nature as these attributes are not easily quantified. However, this does not negate their value and including a context profiling exercise in the neighbourhood selection process will result in it being more rounded and 'bottom-up'. This is because it will be more in tune with the views of local residents, who as this research has demonstrated, attach great importance to the physical and social attributes of a neighbourhood, including its infrastructure.

The second policy reflection for regeneration relates to the focus of activities in renewal areas and, in particular, to the importance of ensuring that residents' 'voices' are heard. In recent years, there has been a growing concern with housing market renewal and as part of this process, with changing the nature of places, a phenomenon that has increasingly been referred to as 'place-shaping'. This process has largely been driven by policy stakeholders and strategic planners with the 'voices' of residents being less evident.

While this is a concern for a number reasons, not least because it seems morally and ethically wrong that residents are not playing a central role in the process, the failure to fully take-on board their views may have a detrimental affect on the 'place-shaping' process. This is because without understanding *how* and *why* residents use the places they live in and the infrastructure and the social spaces within them, policy makers may make decisions that have unforeseen deleterious impacts on the neighbourhood and residents' lives.

For example, the decision to demolish a 'tired' looking corner shop to make way for new housing or a new surgery might appear to a policy stakeholder or planner to be wholly logical, and a vital step towards positively changing a place. However, local residents may see things entirely differently and be strongly against demolition. This is because the planner and resident may view the neighbourhood, its infrastructure and the social spaces within it, in very different ways. So while the corner shop looks 'tired' to the planner, to a local resident it is the 'hub' of the community, a place to meet friends and acquaintances, and an important symbol of the continued vibrancy of the neighbourhood. Only by engaging with local residents do these issues become transparent. So a more rounded and 'bottom-up' approach is also needed to the 'place-shaping' process with local residents playing a more prominent role within it.

To conclude, this paper has explored the relationship between social spaces and social interaction in our six case study areas and highlighted the importance of *third places*. While hopefully this has been a valuable exercise, it is perhaps worth briefly noting at this juncture that the paper does not address two issues of some pertinence to this study: the extent to which social interaction in third places results in changes in the attitudes and behaviour of residents; and the 'significance', 'meaning' and 'depth' of the social interaction that takes place in them.

We recognise that both are important issues and warrant further research. The first is particularly significant as it has ramifications for policy in relation to community cohesion: if different ethnic groups socially interact with each other in mixed neighbourhoods does this result in improved social relations as attitudes (positively) shift, as proponents of *contact theory*, such as Emerson *et al* (2002), would argue? And if this is the case, is the nature of social interaction important, as Amin (2002) argues? Furthermore, is the location of the interaction important? These important issues warrant further exploration.

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Appendix 1 - Case Study Profiles

A1.1. Hillside, Knowsley

The Knowsley case study is made up of two adjoining neighbourhoods, Hillside and Primalt. Primalt is the formal name given to the area for planning purposes and by the NDC partnership, but the whole area is generally known by residents as Hillside, and this is the term for the case study area used throughout the project. The neighbourhoods make up one-third of North Huyton New Deal for Communities (NDC) intervention area (the other areas are Finch House, Fincham, Woolfall North and Woolfall South).

These two neighbourhoods, and the wider NDC area, form a part of the collection of inter-war and post-war municipal housing estates that were developed as 'overspill' from the City of Liverpool slum clearance programmes and the expansion of the Liverpool Docks. The majority of dwellings are two storey semi-detached and terraced family houses arranged in traditional street patterns. Households in the case study area are predominantly White, with just one per cent of residents from a minority ethnic background, according to the 2001 Census.

Analysis from the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for the two lower super output areas (LSOAs) that approximate most closely to Hillside show that the area is in the most deprived decile on four of the seven domains: income, employment, health, and education, skills and training; it is in the second most deprived decile on 'crime' and 'living environment', and the third lowest decile on 'barriers to housing and services'. The ONS statistics on population turnover for 2005/6 showed a rate of 50 per 1,000 (compared to a median turnover rate for Medium SOAs in England and Wales of 78 per 1,000).

The age profile of the area according to 2006 mid year estimates broadly matches the wider local authority and national picture, with a slightly higher proportion of young people under the age of 16. In the 2001 census, 25 per cent of households were classified as lone parent (compared to 19 per cent in Knowsley and 10 per cent in England) and 53 per cent lived in social housing (compared to 32 per cent and 19 per cent respectively). In February 2008, 6.4 per cent of the working age population in the area was claiming Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) (compared to 4.2 per cent in Knowsley and 2.2 per cent in England) and 19 per cent were claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB)/Severe Disability Allowance (SDA) (compared to 13.6 per cent and 6.8 per cent respectively).

Hillside is bounded by the M57, a dual carriageway (Seth Powell Way) and a park (Alt Park) and is one of the more isolated areas in the wider neighbourhood. In recent years void properties have been a significant problem in the housing stock, with many empty properties declared structurally unstable and dangerous. The sense of isolation has been reinforced by the demolition of a considerable proportion of the housing stock, leaving many unused open spaces that have yet to be developed as part of the masterplan for the area.

New development to replace demolished dwellings has recently been suspended, as a consequence of the economic downturn. The area has few public buildings and amenities, and one of the last remaining post offices in the area closed last year. Beechwood Primary School, which was one of three primary schools in the North Huyton area, has also recently closed down. The one public building in Hillside, the 'Hillywood' Community Centre, is well used by a range of local groups, residents and stakeholders. It is staffed by two paid community workers and a small band of dedicated volunteers.

The Primalt area comprises 648 units of accommodation including a renovated tower block known as Knowsley Heights. There are around sixty owner-occupied properties in the area. There are problems with anti-social behaviour in parts of the estate, and environmental problems, although one area, Pennard Field, is seen as a potential amenity for the whole community. There are no other public amenities in the Primalt area.

A1.2. Oxgangs, Edinburgh

Oxgangs is a suburb of Edinburgh, located in the south-west of the city. It is named after an 'oxgang', an ancient Scottish land measure. The development of the area started in the early 1950s; it had previously been mostly farmland and was considered part of the countryside on the fringe of the city. The area consists of large housing schemes, ranging from Edinburgh City Council-owned high rise tower blocks to private bungalows. A large proportion of former council-owned properties in Oxgangs have been bought by tenants under the Right to Buy scheme, and there is now a high demand for what remains of the council housing stock in the area.

An analysis of the LSOAs for Oxgangs in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) for 2007 shows that the area is in the third most deprived decile overall, and is classed in this decile for income, health and crime. It is in the second most deprived decile in terms of education, skills and training and housing, in the fourth most deprived decile for employment, and the fifth for geographic access. The age profile of the area in the 2006 mid-year estimates is broadly similar to the city and national picture, with a slightly higher proportion of older residents (21 per cent, compared to 17 per cent for Edinburgh and 19 per cent for Scotland). There was a relatively high proportion of lone parent households in the areas (14 per cent compared to 8 per cent in Edinburgh and 11 per cent in Scotland) and of households in the social housing sector (46 per cent compared to 18 per cent and 29 per cent respectively).

As of November 2007, 2.6 per cent of the working age population in Oxgangs was claiming JSA (compared to 1.6 per cent in Edinburgh and 2.1 in Scotland) and 14.7 per cent were claiming IB/SDA (compared to 7.2 per cent and 9.4 per cent respectively).

The neighbourhood is well served by a variety of shops, amenities and public facilities. It has two small shopping areas at each end of Oxgangs known to the locals as the 'top' and 'bottom' shops. The top shops (Oxgangs Broadway) are the larger and feature a small convenient store known as 'Denis's', named after the owner of the shop. Other shops in the top area include a newsagents, a hairdressers, and three take-aways.

There is also a post office and a pharmacy.

The local library is a popular hub of the community, and is regularly used for meetings and classes as well as for its wide range of books and IT facilities. Oxgangs has three primary schools, as well as a nearby high school with a very good reputation locally and further afield. Two neighbouring primary schools situated

on Oxgangs Green (Comiston and Hunters Tryst) were recently merged and renamed Pentland Primary. Local churches in the area include: Church of Scotland, Scottish Episcopal Church, a Roman Catholic Church and a recently built Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In 2003 Edinburgh City Council (in consultation with tenants) took the decision to demolish and redevelop Oxgangs high rise flats, originally known as Comiston Luxury Flats. In April 2005 the long-standing tower block, Capelaw Court, was demolished to make way for new housing. Capelaw was one of three high rise flats built in Oxgangs Crescent in 1961 and 1962. The other two buildings (Caerketton Court and Allermuir Court) were then demolished in November 2006. The new homes, built on the site of the high rises, were designed in consultation with local people, and provide a mixture of dwellings, including provision for the elderly and the disabled. The scheme reflected a local desire for 'low rise' housing, coupled with the need to achieve relatively high dwelling densities in the face of high housing demand. However, some local residents have expressed reluctance about moving into the newly available accommodation because of its location and lay-out.

A1.3. Wensley Fold, Blackburn

Wensley Fold is a neighbourhood of Blackburn, a Lancashire town with a population of some 100,000 in 2001, and the administrative centre of the unitary authority of Blackburn and Darwen (population 137,000 in 2001). The neighbourhood is located immediately west of Blackburn town centre. It is bounded to the North by the A677 Preston New Road, to the South by a mixed use retail and industrial area and to the West by a large park. The area has a population of approximately 3,000, occupies a hillside situation and is characterised by rows of parallel terraced houses organised in a compressed grid pattern. Recently, the area has been subject to redevelopment, as part of the Pennine Lancashire Housing Market Renewal programme, with a number of terraces being demolished and replaced by new-build terrace properties, with more space between each row allowing for gardens and back yards to be developed.

Blackburn has a long history of immigration, particularly from India and Pakistan, and one in five (21 per cent) of the population in the town were recorded as of South Asian ethnic origin by the 2001 Census. In the study area, more than half of the local population were recorded as having a non-White ethnic origin by the 2001 Census, and 51 per cent were recorded as of South Asian ethnic origin. The LSOAs that were combined to create an area almost equivalent to the case-study neighbourhood were in the most deprived decile on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007. The area was in the most deprived decile on six of the seven domains measured by the IMD: income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training, and living environment. In contrast, the area was in the least deprived decile in the 'barriers to housing and services' domain, reflecting its proximity to the town centre.

According to the 2006 mid year population estimates, the neighbourhood has a young age profile. A relatively large proportion of the population are children less than 16 years old (29 per cent, compared to 24 per cent in the local authority district and 19 per cent in England) and only 11 per cent are men over 65 years old or women over 60 years old (compared to 19 per cent nationally). The 2001 Census recorded a relatively large proportion of single person households (41 per cent) and households containing dependent children (39 per cent). The neighbourhood has relatively large social rented (30 per cent) and private rented (16 per cent) sectors, according to the 2001 Census. Only half (50 per cent) of the households live in owner occupied accommodation, compared to 71 per cent of households in the district and 69 per cent of all households in England.

A relatively high proportion of the local population were in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance or Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disability Allowance in February 2008. The proportion of people in receipt of the latter was almost treble the national level (18.8 per cent in the case study neighbourhood, compared to 11.6 per cent across the district and 6.8 per cent across England).

The area has a vibrant local shopping centre, with local shops specialising in South Asian produce. There are also a number of major supermarket stores on the edge of the area and the town centre is within walking distance. Local community resources include a community centre that runs various training, educational and social activities targeted at the whole population, as well as places of worship and parks.

A1.4. West Marsh, Grimsby

West Marsh is a neighbourhood of Grimsby, the largest town in the district of North East Lincolnshire, with a population of about 90,000. Grimsby has a long history as a fishing port and nearby Immingham is a major container port. Other major employers in the district include the chemical and food processing industries.

West Marsh is located immediately adjacent to the town centre and also close to the A180, the main route into the town from the west. A major feature of the area is the River Freshney, which runs west to east through the neighbourhood. On the north side of the River is a park. Together, these two physical features divide the neighbourhood into two distinct areas. North of the River and West of the park is an area often referred to locally as 'Gilby'. Centred on Gilby Road, this area is relatively isolated, and consists of three parallel no-through-roads, criss-crossed by six parallel no-through-roads. South of the river is an area that many local people refer to as 'West Marsh', which is characterised by parallel roads of terraced houses.

The population of the LSOAs that are almost equivalent to the study area was just over 3,000, according to the 2006 mid-year estimate. Almost two-thirds (64 per cent) were of working age and 23 per cent were less than 16 years old. The area has a relatively small older population (13 per cent of the population, compared to 20 per cent in North east Lincolnshire and 19 per cent in England). According to the 2001 Census, a relatively small proportion of households are couples, with or without children (46 per cent, compared to 57 per cent in the district and 57 per cent across England). 17 per cent of households are lone parent families, compared to 12 per cent in the district and 10 per cent in England.

The area is relatively deprived, falling within the most deprived decile of lower super output areas in England. The area is placed in the lowest decile in relation to education skills and training, crime and the living environment on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). It is in the second lowest decile in terms of income, employment and health. In February 2008, 15.7 per cent of the working age population were in receipt of JSA or IB/SDA, compared to 11.1 per cent of people of working age in North Lincolnshire and 9.0 per cent in England.

The neighbourhood, like the wider district, is ethnically homogenous. According to the 2001 Census, 98 per cent of the population of the neighbourhood and the district were White British or Irish, one per cent were White Other and one per cent were Mixed Heritage. The study team did come across anecdotal evidence, however, that migrant workers from the EU accession states had arrived into Grimsby in recent years, with some people settling in West Marsh, although the scale of new immigration is unclear.

Terraced housing is the dominant built form in the neighbourhood. Many of these properties have no garden or curtilage at the front, the front door opening straight

onto the street. A relatively large proportion of the housing stock is privately rented (20 per cent, double the district and national average), while the proportion in the owner occupied sector (64 per cent) is below the proportion in North East Lincolnshire (72 per cent) and England (69 per cent).

There are a limited number of community facilities in the neighbourhood and several shops are shut and boarded up. There is, however, a community centre on the northern fringe of the area, which provides various courses, classes and groups, including youth activities. Shortly before the study team visited the area for the first stage interviews a local man had been stabbed to death in the area. At the time of the visit, the police investigation was ongoing and police divers were combing the River Freshney for evidence.

A1.5. West Kensington, London

The West Kensington case study area is located in west London, in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The area is located within walking distance of Earls Court Exhibition Centre and a number of London Underground stations including West Kensington, West Brompton, and Earls Court. The area is surrounded by several high status neighbourhoods including Chelsea, Baron's Court and Kensington.

The case study area, which comprises 1,800 properties in two social housing estates, West Kensington and Gibbs Green, forms part of a larger neighbourhood which most locals refer to as 'West Kensington.' The neighbourhood is centred on the intersection between North End and Lillie Roads, where most of the area's numerous shops, pubs and cafes are located. The area also has a bustling (semi-permanent) market which is located on Lillie Road. The West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates are located in the north of the neighbourhood on the eastern side of North End Road. Reflecting the diversity of the wider West Kensington area, the neighbourhood is a mixed income area and contains many households with above average incomes. In some parts of the area, property prices are very high, with some selling recently for more than £1.5 million.

The LSOAs for the area do not match the case study exactly, but are close enough to indicate the profile of deprivation in the locality. In terms of the IMD 2007, the areas were in the lowest decile for income and living environment, in the second lowest overall and in terms of employment, health and barriers to housing and services, and the third lowest for crime. It was however (just) in the least deprived half of LSOAs in terms of education, training and skills. In terms of the age profile, there is a slightly higher proportion of younger residents under 16 (20 per cent) than in the borough (16 per cent) or nationally (19 per cent) and a lower proportion of older residents (12 per cent) than in England (19 per cent). According to the 2001 Census, 23 per cent of households are lone parents, compared to 12 per cent in Hammersmith and Fulham and 10 per cent in England, and 11 per cent are multi-person households, compared to 13 per cent in the borough and just three per cent nationally.

65 per cent of households were described as 'white' or 'white other' in the area (78 per cent in Hammersmith and Fulham and 91 per cent in England) and 21 per cent described themselves as 'black' (compared to 11 per cent and 3 per cent respectively). The black and minority ethnic population includes members of Afro-Caribbean, West African and Somali communities. 57 per cent of households on the estates were in the social housing sector, compared to 33 per cent in the borough and 19 per cent nationally, and just 25 per cent were owner-occupiers (compared to 44 per cent and 69 per cent respectively).

The study area is covered by the North Fulham New Deal for Communities programme, and social housing units on the West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates are being modernised as part of this initiative. The West Kensington estate comprises approximately 1,000 units and was built in the early 1970s. It is a mixed development comprising five tower blocks, low rise flats, maisonettes and some terraced houses. The Gibbs Green estate comprises some 160 flats and maisonettes, built in the late 1950s/ early 1960s. The properties are set out in six four storey blocks and one eight storey block, which is due to be replaced by low rise housing and a communal hall under redevelopment proposals.

A1.6. Amlwch, Anglesey

Amlwch is a small town located on the northern tip of Anglesey. It is the fourth biggest settlement on the island and has a population of 1,400. It is relatively isolated geographically and the nearest towns to it are Llangefni (13 miles away) and Holyhead (20 miles). Amlwch comprises distinct neighbourhoods, including Amlwch Port, which was once a thriving port, Amlwch town itself, where most shops and services are based, and Craig-y-don, a small local authority housing estate located between Amlwch and Amlwch Port. The residential areas contain a mixture of property types, although most of the stock consists of houses of traditional construction.

The town was once of the main centres of industry in Wales. It had one of the world's largest copper mountains (Parys Mountain), was once a centre for ship building and repair, and the base for a chemical plant which extracted bromine from sea water. However, these industries have all closed and, despite the continuing economic value to the town of the nearby Wylfa nuclear power station, the town has been in economic decline for the past thirty years or so. As a relatively deprived area, there is some regeneration activity being undertaken in Amlwch, coordinated by the regeneration agency for Wales, *Communities First*.

The LSOAs selected do not match exactly the study area but they nevertheless provide reliable estimates of its socio-economic position. In terms of the Welsh IMD, Amlwch is in the second most deprived decile in terms of community safety, environment, access to services and housing, and in the third most deprived in terms of income and its overall ranking. It is in the fourth most deprived decile for employment, health and education. It does not have as high a WIMD score as many of the communities in the South Wales valleys, but the reason for selecting the area was due to its greater geographical isolation and relative immobility, signified by a population turnover rate for mid 2005 to mid 2006 of 44 per 1,000 population (compared to a median of 78 per 1,000 for England and Wales).

In the 2006 MYE, the age profile was broadly similar to district and national averages with a slightly higher proportion of those under 16 (20 per cent compared to 18 per cent for Anglesey and 19 per cent for Wales). Slightly higher proportions of the population were lone parent (13 per cent) or single person (35 per cent) households than in Anglesey (11 per cent and 29 per cent) and in Wales (12 per cent and 29 per cent). 98 per cent of the population is of 'White British/Irish' population ethnic origin (the same as for the district and one per cent higher than the national average).

In the 2001 Census, just over two-thirds (67 per cent) of households in Amlwch owned their homes (68 per cent in Anglesey and 71 per cent in Wales) and 18 per cent were in the social housing sector (compared to 17 per cent and 18 per cent respectively). In February 2008, 5.1 per cent of the working age population were JSA claimants (3.1 per cent in Anglesey and 6.6 per cent in Wales) and 12.3 per cent were JSA/SDA claimants (compared to 9.5 per cent and 10.9 per cent respectively).

Many residents speak Welsh and it is the first language for some. In acknowledgment of this, residents were asked which language they would like to be interviewed in. Most did not have a preference, but two of the in-depth interviews undertaken by the research team were conducted in Welsh.