

‘It’s Not Community Round Here, It’s Neighbourhood’: Neighbourhood Change and Cohesion in Urban Regeneration Policies

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Summary. Neighbourhood has become a key spatial scale in the UK government’s policies for urban regeneration and social inclusion, resuscitating the long-standing debate over the efficacy of area-based policies. The paper argues that the latter need to be sensitive to the interaction between macro-structural and local, reinforcing processes and that ‘people-based’ policies need to be complemented by ‘people and place’ ones. The complexities of ‘neighbourhood’ definition are explored, using the distinction between ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘place-based community’ to support an argument for seeing neighbourhoods as an appropriate spatial scale for understanding the operation of ‘everyday life-worlds’. Drawing on research based on a specific regeneration initiative, the ‘Pathways to Integration’ priority of the Objective 1 Structural Funds Programme for Merseyside (1994–99), the paper goes on to explore the political and operational issues surrounding the spatial targeting of policy and some of the partnership issues surrounding ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘community’. It argues that area-based policies and spatial targeting are inherently political as well as technical exercises that need to be sensitive to the social-spatial construction of neighbourhoods and that the operational definition of policy areas should be part of an evolutionary process of community engagement.

1. Introduction: ‘Neighbourhoods, Competitiveness and Cohesion’?

We all know the problems of our poorest neighbourhoods—decaying housing, unemployment, street crime and drugs. People who can, move out. Nightmare neighbours move in. Shops, banks and other vital services close.

Over the last two decades the gap between these “worst estates” and the rest of the country has grown. It has left us with a situation that no civilised society should tolerate ... It shames us as a nation, it

wastes lives and we all have to pay the costs of dependency and social division. (Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Foreword in SEU, 1998, p. 7).

My vision of Britain is of a nation where no-one is left out or left behind, and where power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few. Investing in that vision is an investment in the future of our whole country, and is in everyone’s interests. (Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Foreword in SEU, 2000, p. 6).

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The government clearly sees its national strategy for neighbourhood renewal as being crucial in securing cohesion, for—to use the main title of the first of the Social Exclusion Unit's reports cited above—'Bringing Britain Together'. It is also clear that the government wants the people living in neighbourhoods needing renewal to be involved actively in the strategy:

The most powerful resource in turning around neighbourhoods should be the community itself. Community involvement can take many forms: formal volunteering; helping a neighbour; taking part in a community organisation. It can have the triple benefit of getting things done that need to be, *fostering community links* and building the skills, self-esteem and *networks* of those who give their time (SEU, 1998, p. 68; emphasis added).

This enthusiasm for community participation in neighbourhood renewal certainly echoes that of the Commission for Social Justice's emphasis on the need to (re-)build 'social capital' in disadvantaged areas. Drawing heavily on the work of the American social scientist Robert Putnam, the Commission emphasised the 'community strength/civic wealth' aspect of social capital in which the geography of 'neighbourhood' clearly matters

Social capital consists of the institutions and relationships of a thriving civil society—from networks of neighbours to extended families, community groups to religious organisations, local businesses to local public services, youth clubs to parent-teacher associations, playgroups to police on the beat. Where you live, who else lives there, and how they live their lives—co-operatively or selfishly, responsibly or destructively—can be as important as personal resources in determining life chances (Commission for Social Justice, 1994, pp. 307–308).

The Commission has no doubts about the significance of social capital

The moral and social reconstruction of our society depends on our willingness to invest in social capital. We badly need to mend a social fabric that is so obviously torn apart. Social capital is a good in itself; it makes life possible. But social capital is also, essential for economic renewal; the two go together ... *economic prosperity depends not only on economic but also on social resources*. Social capital can encourage new investment as well as making existing investment go further; it is the glue that bonds the benefits of economic and physical capital into marginalised communities (Commission for Social Justice, 1994, p. 308; emphasis added).

The political message seems clear: to repair the social fabric, it is necessary to (re-)build social capital in 'marginalised communities' and for reasons not simply of social cohesion but also of economic competitiveness. Writ large also is the message that geography matters in social cohesion/social exclusion and that policies to address these issues need to involve some that are specifically area-based.

For the Social Exclusion Unit, these areas should clearly include 'neighbourhoods', but it is interesting that the Unit's reports do not give a clear framework for identifying and defining them. The statistical analyses are predominantly at ward level¹ and when trying to come up with an estimate of the number of 'poor neighbourhoods', the Unit cites the results of cluster analyses using households and the 'ACORN' postcode classification of socioeconomic groups (SEU, 1998, p. 13). But there is clearly more to 'neighbourhood' than these rather crude statistical measures would suggest and especially so when neighbourhoods, and the people living in them, are expected to form the building-blocks of policy.

In this paper, we want to explore some of the issues surrounding the definition and role of neighbourhoods in urban regeneration policy drawing on research based on a specific regeneration initiative, the 'Pathways to Integration' priority of Merseyside's Objective 1

Structural Funds programme (1994–99).² Section 2 attempts to contextualise the renewed political enthusiasm for area-based policies (including the national strategy for neighbourhood renewal) in debates over the explanation of the micro-geographies of economic and social change. Section 3 discusses the complexities of neighbourhood definition, drawing on a recent review of the literature by two geographers, Davies and Herbert. Section 4 shifts to a discussion of the 'Pathways to Integration' initiative, exploring the political and operational factors in spatial targeting and, taking the North Liverpool Pathways Area as an example, the partnership issues surrounding 'neighbourhood' and 'community'. The section concludes with a discussion of some of the lessons for policy revealed by a recent proposal to alter the geography of the partnership areas.

2. The Return of Area-based Policies

As Glennerster *et al.* (1999, p. 1) argue

For politicians concern with area-based solutions has waxed and waned over the past hundred years. We are clearly now in a waxing mood.

Reviewing the history of research on poverty, they remind us how early researchers like Booth and Rowntree did not draw area-based policy conclusions from their research. Engels' view that the alleviation of poverty requires systemic, not local, change still echoes through Marxist-inspired research and even more reformist Keynesian economic and social democratic social policy analysts question the relevance of area-based solutions. For free market economists, in contrast, the answer is to be found in the areas themselves in the form of freely operating land, property and labour markets allowing prices and wages to fall to such levels as to encourage new rounds of investment in them. But area-based 'policy' here, then, is very definitely *laissez faire* (or whatever is necessary to ensure *laissez faire*). So why the recurrent 'waxing' of policy interest in area-

based policy given the weight of argument against it?

A key reason, of course, has been the widely documented persistence and worsening of geographical concentrations of poverty and disadvantage (Glennerster *et al.*, 1999). This geography at European-level prompted the European Union's three poverty programmes (1975–80, 1986–89 and 1990–94) and was further recognised by the (1994) White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* which saw exclusion from the labour market and the increasing spatial concentration of this exclusion as a 'spectre' haunting economic and political integration and social cohesion. More recently, the Social Exclusion Unit's analyses of disadvantage at neighbourhood level have reinforced the growing concern over the micro-geography of poverty and disadvantage identified by such commentators as Green (1994a, 1994b, 1997, 1998), Green and Owen (1998), Lee and Murie (1997) and McCormick and Philo (1995)—a micro-geography which in Britain is characterised by the problems of 'inner cities' and 'residualised outer estates'.

In the US, the emphasis has generally been more on inner cities, perhaps most forcefully—and controversially—expressed by William Julius Wilson in his work (1987, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) on the creation of a 'ghetto underclass' in North American cities. Criticisms of the negative psychological stereotyping in such analysis, however, seem to neglect the force of the structural emphasis in Wilson's argument which places massive job loss and the out-migration of both middle- and working-class families from inner-city neighbourhoods at the core of the problem. This combination of job loss and out-migration of people in search of work and improved living environments, in Wilson's view, makes it hard to sustain basic formal and informal institutions and

as the basic institutions decline, the social organization of inner-city ghetto neighbourhoods deteriorates, further depleting the social resources and life chances of

those who are trapped in these blighted areas (Wilson, 1996b, p. 248).

Wilson's argument clearly influenced the thinking of the Social Exclusion Unit (not least, of course, with his emphasis on neighbourhoods) and touches on a long-standing debate in geography over the explanation of social and economic change in places. Where does explanation lie? In the places themselves or in broader societal processes? A recent rerun of these questions occurred in the so-called locality debate of the late 1980s (Cooke, 1989a, 1989b). Issues touched on in this debate have also surfaced more recently in the concerns expressed by some over the perceived return to area-based regeneration policies with critics caricaturing 'the answer is local' rationale of what they describe as a 'neo-localism'. This neo-localism, for the critics, effectively 'scales-down' (and thus fails to specify accurately) processes operating at broader spatial scales (for a discussion of 'neo-localism' see, for example, Lovering, 1995 and 1997; Gough and Eisenschitz, 1996; and Eisenschitz, 1997).

But, as Glennerster *et al.* (1999) also point out, a growing body of research has also begun to support an area focus. Most importantly, there has been a recognition that macro-level economic trends are heavily influenced by micro-level developments and that while structural causes lie behind the geography of disadvantage many of the structural factors are to be found in local situations. This interrelationship means that not only are the local impacts of structural factors worsened, macro-level solutions are also made more difficult: "Macro and micro causes of deprivation, and therefore the necessary remedial policies, are interdependent" (Glennerster *et al.*, 1999, p. 5). They cite Wilson's work, already referred to, as an example of this approach where (structural) job loss triggers polarisation effects at local level which then become self-reinforcing. They also cite Jargowsky's (1996) econometric analysis of poverty in US cities which claims to show (with typical econometric precision) that, while four-fifths of the expla-

nation for concentrations of poverty lie in metropolitan-wide changes, the remaining one-fifth is to be found in 'neighbourhood effects'. Again, macro-structural factors are seen to interact with local reinforcing ones: for example, poor job opportunities affecting school performance and consequent weak human capital affecting productivity and income prospects. For Glennerster *et al.* (1999), the importance of work like that of Jargowsky and Wilson lies in the fact that

Both studies show how area conditions, poverty, race, individual performance and opportunity interact with regional, national and international pressures. Both conclude that wider economic change is a main driving force behind area conditions, rather than race or personal characteristics per se, although they also play a part. However, they also conclude that the interaction of wider and more local factors play into each other in a vicious circle that has many of its roots in American urban history, and produces starkly reinforced problems in areas with high poverty concentrations (Glennerster *et al.*, 1999, pp. 10–11).

Other research also emphasises the role of local reinforcing factors in social and economic change. For Madanipour (1998), land and property markets have a central role in the geography of poverty and disadvantage. For him, the combination of the free operation of land and property markets (segregating income groups and social classes) and the regulation of space through planning, create

a picture of a city as a mosaic of segregated socio-spatial *neighbourhoods*, created as the result of the market and the intended or unintended consequences of town planning (Madanipour, 1998, p. 85; emphasis added).

Geography, for Madanipour, is unquestionably at the heart of social exclusion

The question of social exclusion and integration ... largely revolves around access. It is access to decision making, access to

resources, and access to common narratives, which enable social integration. Many of these forms of access have clear spatial manifestations, as space is the site in which these different forms of access are made possible or denied (Madanipour, 1998, p. 80).

Space has ... a major role in integration or segregation of urban society. It is a manifestation of social relationships while affecting and shaping the geometries of these relationships. This leads us to the argument that social exclusion cannot be studied without also looking at spatial segregation and exclusion. Social cohesion or exclusion, therefore, are indeed socio-spatial phenomena. As Lefebvre (1991) puts it, every society creates its own space (Madanipour, 1998, p. 81).

Picking up on Lefebvre's (1991) argument, referred to in the above quotation, it could be argued that the 'space' that our society has created, then, contains a growing number of areas in which not only are levels of disadvantage high, but also they are experienced in a qualitatively distinct way: lack of accessible public (as well as private) services; poor or non-existent transport facilities; boarded-up, vandalised properties; fortified shops (where they exist); degraded environments; and the social and economic stigmatisation that comes from living there.

'Social exclusion', then, is not only multi-dimensional, but also geographical

Social exclusion combines lack of access to resources, to decision making, and to common narratives. The multidimensional phenomenon of social exclusion finds spatial manifestation, in its acute forms, in deprived inner or peripheral urban areas. This spatiality of social exclusion is constructed through the physical organisation of space as well as through the social control of space, as ensured by informal codes and signs and formal rules and regulations. These formal channels act at all scales of space. Global space is fragmented by national spaces, which have a

tendency to deny difference and homogenise social groups. At the scale of local space, spatialisation of social exclusion takes place through land and property markets. These markets tend to fragment, differentiate and commodify space through town planning mechanisms which tend to fragment, rationalise and manage space, and also through the legal and customary distinctions between the public and private spheres, with a constant tension between the two and a tendency for the privatisation of place (Madanipour, 1998, p. 87).

Madanipour's arguments certainly chime in with the growing recognition that a fruitful way of understanding localities is through an understanding of the way social relations—relations that are not all confined to those localities—are articulated within them to produce change in 'everyday life-worlds'. Such an approach underpins Massey's notion of a 'progressive sense of place' (Massey, 1993a, 1993b and 1994) and Putnam *et al.*'s (1993) idea of 'social capital' and can be detected in attempts by Healey and Sandercock to understand and plan for 'difference' and 'multiple publics' (through, respectively, 'collaborative' and 'insurgent' planning: Healey, 1997; and Sandercock, 1998). In terms of policy for tackling social exclusion, the need, then, is to understand how people interact with each other in places—a people *and* place approach, to complement the people-based emphasis of the critics of area-based policies (see, for example, MacLennan, 2000). The question still remains, of course, at what spatial scale are these 'places' to be defined? For the current government, as already argued, it is the neighbourhood that is important. This raises the difficult issue of neighbourhood definition, to which we will now turn.

3. Neighbourhoods

Healey (1998) argues that the neighbourhood provides a useful scale for studying the social relations of 'everyday life-worlds'

It is in this context that the neighbourhood provides a useful focus, seen not as socially and spatially integrated *gemeinschaft* community, but as a key living space through which people get access to material and social resources, across which they pass to reach other opportunities and which symbolises aspects of the identity of those living there, to themselves and to outsiders. Place-based disadvantage certainly exists, but not just because of the position of a place in local housing markets and the social maps people have of their city. The social experience that develops in places where those in particularly difficult circumstances find themselves concentrated adds to the difficulties people already experience. Some people in some neighbourhoods in such conditions do find ways to maximise their chances of flourishing. A key variable in whether this happens or not is the social world which builds up through social interaction in the living place (Healey, 1998, p. 69).

This definition of 'neighbourhood' as 'living space' clearly has both social and spatial dimensions. Davies and Herbert (1993) make a useful distinction, in this context, between 'neighbourhood' and 'community' in their argument for the continuing importance of 'communities in cities'

Community is ... related to the term 'neighbourhood' for which it is sometimes used as a synonym. However, usually neighbourhood is much more restricted in spatial dimensions. It relates to the area around a residence within which people engage in neighbouring, which is usually viewed as a set of informal, face-to-face interactions based on residential proximity (Davies and Herbert, 1993, p. 1).

Holman's incisive (1997) analysis of a community project in Glasgow (the 'Family Action in Rogerhouse and Easterhouse'—FARE—voluntary initiative), for example, seems to emphasise the more restricted spa-

tial dimension of 'neighbourhood', making use of Seabrook's (1995) definition

an area where the majority of people know by sight most of those who live there and probably recognise everyone of their own age group, know all the significant buildings and central focus of the area—shops, schools, libraries, children's playgrounds, clinics, surgeries, youth clubs, bingo halls, pubs or whatever (Seabrook, 1995; cited in Holman, 1997, p. 58).

Davies and Herbert (1993) prefer the notion of 'place-based communities', but recognise that these are more complex and more difficult to define than 'neighbourhoods'

Communities, considered as areas within cities, are collective entities that have a physical plan, particular land uses and facilities, such as shops and churches, and contain people with different characteristics such as gender, family, age, ethnicity etc. When one adds the behaviour, interrelationships and organizations of these individuals, their personality types, and how they interpret and perceive these areas, it is clear that communities considered as intra-urban areas, must be very complex in their character (Davies and Herbert, 1993, p. 33).

To demonstrate the difficulty of definition, Davies and Herbert (1993) provide a useful list of attempts at defining place communities and neighbourhoods, stretching from that of the Chicago School sociologist Park in 1925 to Wilkenson's definition of community as 'place-orientated process' a decade ago. As Table 1 shows, these different definitions emphasise a wide range of elements from geographical proximity through physical and social character and organisational features to cognition, common interests and conduct and social relations. Davies and Herbert, however, see this complexity of definition as a strength rather than a weakness, avoiding the danger of oversimplification of what is genuinely a complex phenomenon. Building on previous research, they helpfully group the features of neighbourhood and com-

Table 1. Selected definitions of neighbourhoods and communities

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1. “Proximity and neighbourly contact are the basis for the simplest and most elementary form of association which we have in the organisation of city life. Local interests and associations breed local sentiment, and, under a system which makes residence the basis for participation in the government, the neighbourhood becomes the basis of political control ... it is the smallest local unit ... The neighbourhood exists without formal organisation” (Park, 1925, p. 7).
Elements Proximity, local interests, local associations, sentiment, participation, political control
 2. “A neighbourhood is a distinct territorial group, distinct by virtue of the specific physical characteristics of the area and the specific social characteristics of the inhabitants” (Glass, 1948, p. 18).
Elements Territorial group, physical character, social character
 3. “The term neighbourhood ... refers to distinctive areas into which larger spatial units may be subdivided such as gold coast and slums ... middle class and working class areas. The distinctiveness of these areas stems from different sources whose independent contributions are difficult to assess: geographical boundaries, ethnic or cultural characteristics of the inhabitants, psychological unity among people who feel that they belong together, or concentrated use of an area’s facilities for shopping, leisure and learning ... Neighbourhoods containing all four elements are very rare in modern cities ... geographical and personal boundaries do not always coincide” (Keller, 1968, p. 87).
Elements Boundaries, social character, unity or belonging, local facility use
 4. “When community area boundaries were delimited... the objective was to define a set of sub-areas of the city each of which could be regarded as having a history of its own as a community, a name, an awareness on the part of its inhabitants of community interests, and a set of local businesses and organisations orientated to the local community” (Kitagawa and Taeubeur, 1963, p. xiii).
Elements Area history, name, local awareness, local organisations, local business
 5. “A community consists of a population carrying on a collective life through a set of institutional arrangements. Common interests and norms of conduct are implied in this definition” (US National Research Commission on Neighborhoods, 1975, p. 2).
Elements Population, collective life, organisation, common interests, common conduct
 6. “In last analysis each neighborhood is what the inhabitants think it is. The only genuinely accurate delimitation of neighborhood is done by people who live there, work there, retire there, and take pride in themselves as well as their community” (US National Research Council, 1975, p. 2).
Elements Cognition, residents, workers, retired, self-pride, area pride
 7. “Community is not a place, but it is a place-orientated process. It is not the sum of social relationships in a population but it contributes to the wholeness of local social life. A community is a process of interrelated actions through which residents express their shared interest in the local society” (Wilkenson, 1989, p. 339).
Elements Place-orientated process, partial social relations, shared interest
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Source: Davies and Herbert (1993).

munity definition into three—potentially interactive—basic domains.

The first domain they label ‘areal content’ which relates to the physical or social differences in areas. It is this domain that has produced the plethora of areal classifications from the social ecology of the Chicago

School and the ‘social area analysis’ of factorial ecology to more recent attempts at typologies of neighbourhood types using such ideas as ‘neighbouring’ and ‘sense of community’. All of these approaches are concerned with identifying and measuring variations in the social structures of urban

areas, albeit with different analytical frameworks and different indicators.

The second domain of features of neighbourhood and community definition relates to 'behaviour or interaction' which

is associated with the behaviour or interaction of people—with the way they engage in social and economic contacts with others, in and around their area of residence (Davies and Herbert, 1993, p. 63).

This domain has produced what Davies and Herbert describe as a tension between social network analysis (attempting to identify and measure the structure and patterning of informal associations) and analysis emphasising a 'neighbourhood as place' concept. This tension can be seen in arguments which infer from the preponderance of network ties outside neighbourhoods that the latter are of little importance. But these arguments can underplay the existence—and importance—of neighbourhood-based contacts and fail to recognise the psychological significance of 'weak ties' within neighbourhoods. There is also evidence that for certain groups—the elderly, ethnic minorities, the unemployed, women and children—the neighbourhood has heightened importance. They are more 'neighbourhood-dependent'. A key theme in this domain is that relating to 'neighbourhood effects' or the role of the 'neighbourhood milieu' in shaping behaviour and interaction. This is where the 'social relations'/'everyday life-worlds' approach referred to above comes into its own in its attempt to understand the interplay between the operation of structure and agency in place. Davies and Herbert cite the conclusion of Hunter (1979) that

the central thesis of neighbourhood is that of a uniquely linked unit of socio-spatial organization between the forces and institutions of the large society and the localized routines in their daily lives ... [and] ... that to think of neighbourhood in isolation from the rest of the city is to disregard the biggest fact about it (Davies and Herbert, 1993, p. 81).

They go on to argue that

The relevance of the many structural postures is clear: many things do filter downwards from societal structures; decisions made and values prevailing at societal levels do impact upon neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, people are not merely passive recipients of structural conditions, they are creators of meaning which is a well-spring of human action and historic change ... The need to recognize structural forces, processes and various forms of structure is a truism. There is also a need to achieve 'openings' between the concentration on structure on the one hand and that on human agency on the other ... For those scholars who choose to investigate human diversity and values, the neighbourhood as a local place-community remains a fertile area of study (Davies and Herbert, 1993, p. 81).

As we will argue in the discussion in the next section, it is crucially important to view neighbourhoods in a city/city-region context and to recognise the importance of neighbourhood agency (in the shape, for example, of neighbourhood-based organisations) in both the definition of neighbourhood and the 'up-scaling' of relationships across and beyond neighbourhoods.

Davies and Herbert's third domain of neighbourhood and community definition relates to what they call 'conceptual identity'. It is in this domain that issues relating to sense of community and affective, generalised feelings about place—the 'sense of place'—come into play. There are two main sub-domains of conceptual identity which they label 'cognitive' and 'affective'. The former concerns the way in which neighbourhoods and place-communities are perceived and defined by their inhabitants as revealed in naming and territorial marking and the mental maps that their inhabitants have of them. The latter sub-domain relates to the meanings and attitudes that people have about their neighbourhoods and place-communities—their social valuation of them, their sense of place. This sense of place is

Table 2. The definition and function of key affective dimensions of place-communities in cities

Definition	Function
Sentiment as attachment	Degree of rootedness or stability of population
Evaluation	Degree of satisfaction people have of residential area
Nuisances and annoyances	Community dissatisfaction
Security and safety	Relative degree of fear or threat present in the community
Empowerment	Degree to which individuals feel that they have control over the area (in the sense of being able to influence the future of their community)
Symbolism of place	The way areas produce enhanced or decreased status for their residents
Property appearance	Identification of the extent of potential <i>malaise</i> or contentment in an area
Latent participation (neighbours)	The level of expected mutual aid from people in the area
Aesthetics	Linked to views of beauty or order of places by residents (culture-specific)
Common values	Extent to which there is interpersonal influence or common behaviour
Empathy or sense of belonging	Social cohesion or integration

Source: Davies and Herbert (1993).

difficult to measure, but as Davies and Herbert's list of the definitions and functions of key affective dimensions of community indicates (see Table 2), it nevertheless remains of central importance in understanding neighbourhoods and place-communities as social constructs with social identities. It is also clear that elements of this sense of place—such as security and safety, latent participation, common values and empathy—are fundamentally reliant on social capital and networks of trust. As Kearns (1998) argues in this context, neighbourhoods are best viewed as being created out of a series of overlapping social networks rather than as territorially bounded entities—although, as we will argue below, territory can be a powerful conditioning influence on the operation of these networks.

Finally, Thomas (1991) provides what we feel is another useful perspective on understanding the 'community' dimension of 'place-based communities' in his reflections on community development work in his time

as Chief Executive of the Community Development Foundation. He stresses the central role of social resources and processes in the production of 'viable' or 'coping communities' which will

- exist or be designed in a way that brings residents together rather than keeps them apart from one another
- have facilities that promote social contact, such as pubs, churches, shops, cafes, community centres and so on
- have daily routines that promote interaction between people; for example walking children to school rather than taking them by car
- have a variety of 'live' social and recreational networks, as well as those based on mutual aid
- have active organisations of a variety of kinds and purposes that bring people together and which define and represent their ideas and concerns
- allow residents to take on public roles

Table 3. A ladder of community interaction

Rung	Description
11	Owning and managing local facilities
10	Working with policy-makers
9	Co-operation with other community groups
8	Joining community groups
7	Participating in community activities
6	Informal mutual aid
5	Involvement in informal networks
4	Social contacts; such as at the pub, church or community centre
3	Routine contacts; such as picking the children up from school every day
2	Casual contacts; for example whilst shopping or waiting for the bus
1	Mutual recognition

Source: Thomas (1991).

outside the household that are satisfying to themselves and of service to others (Thomas, 1991, p. 19).

He goes on to represent these aspects of community interaction in the form of a ladder which has a crucial break between rungs 6 and 7 (Table 3). This break differentiates the lower rungs of “routine, trivial and taken-for-granted aspects of community interaction”—“the round of daily life”—that form the necessary foundation for the higher rungs comprising “the more formal organisation of community life” (Thomas, 1991, p. 20).

Thomas (1991) accepts that the lack, or infrequency of, interactions between residents produces what he calls ‘nominal communities’ and that these may well be perfectly effective for the ‘privileged’ who

have a choice about how far their social life is constituted around the family, the neighbourhood or groups and people outside in a wider area (Thomas, 1991, p. 20).

Faced with problems, these people have a range of choices for seeking support including the possibility of buying in expert advice. There is a crucial difference, however, for the ‘underprivileged’. These people, in stark contrast to their more affluent fellow citizens,

are those who have no choice in how their social life is constituted, and have to face difficulties with little access to solutions to

problems outside their neighbourhood or through commercial services (Thomas, 1991, p. 20).

Social exclusion and its spatial concentration, in other words, raise the significance of place and neighbourhood and underline the ‘behaviour or action’ domain of neighbourhood and community definition discussed above. Thomas goes on to describe “underprivileged communities”

Besides poverty and material deprivation, communities are underprivileged when their inhabitants are unable to communicate with each other in order to form agreements about both the daily tasks of living together, and how to deal with particular problems that crop up in the life of any locality (Thomas, 1991, p. 20).

In relation to the previous discussion, these ‘underprivileged communities’ are characterised by the lack of local interests and associations and the presence of such affective dimensions of place-community as nuisance and annoyance, fear over security, low levels of expected mutual aid and little empathy or sense of belonging. Policies are needed, then, which can provide the social resources and processes to help produce Thomas’ viable and coping communities by facilitating associational activity and the movement of individuals and groups up the ladder of community interaction towards intergroup

co-operation, working with policy-makers and the ownership and management of local facilities. The spirit of such policies underlies the 'Pathways to Integration' initiative on Merseyside, to which we now turn.

4. 'Pathways to Integration' in the Objective 1 Structural Funds Programme for Merseyside (1994-99)

4.1 Social Inclusion in the Objective 1 Programme for Merseyside

'Action for the People of Merseyside' was the name given to one of the five identified priorities for action in the regional conversion document for funding under Objective 1 of the European Union's Structural Funds for the period 1994-99.³ The funding for Merseyside, with local and national 'match', came to some £1.6 billion. What was distinctive about the 'Action for the People of Merseyside' priority was its recognition that the people of Merseyside themselves constituted what the conversion plan referred to as a 'driver for change' in the economic and social conversion of the area. The growing emphasis within European social and economic policy on ameliorating social and economic exclusion is reflected in the priority and its relative share of programme funding, accounting for nearly 48 per cent of the public-sector spend (c. £626 million). To activate and support this 'people-based' driver for change (in local policy terminology, 'Driver 5'), the plan proposed a strategic priority for creating 'Pathways to Integration' specifically targeted at addressing issues of social and economic exclusion. This strategic priority also involved the spatial targeting of funding through a special measure ('Driver 5.1') which focused spending on "a limited number of communities in the region, facing the worst problems" (CEC, 1995). The package of support for these target areas comprised four interlinked 'pathways': 'to education' (emphasising the links between school, further education and work); 'to skills' (emphasising pre-vocational training and support); 'to training' (providing and

improving access to vocational training); and 'to jobs' (through employment subsidies and job-placement schemes, support for community and commercial businesses and child-care and caring provision). These 'pathways' were, in turn, to be supported by actions to improve the 'quality of life' of residents in the pathways areas through targeted environmental improvements, improved community facilities and raising of awareness of the links between health and employment and crime prevention measures. Finally, and of crucial importance for the whole strategy, was the securing of community involvement in the design and monitoring of locally generated initiatives.

In its operation, the priority encountered, not unsurprisingly, a range of difficult issues surrounding areal targeting of policy, not least of which were those relating to the links between neighbourhoods and neighbourhood-based organisations and broader spatial scales. It also illustrated the tensions inherent in reconciling 'top-down' with 'bottom-up' policy approaches.

4.2 The Politics of Spatial Targeting: Identifying the 'Pathways Areas'

Spatial targeting of funding was not in the original bid for European Union Objective 1 assistance, an omission that was highlighted in the *ex ante* evaluation of it and one that was taken up enthusiastically by the European Commission in its negotiations over the Objective 1 programme. The Commission found allies in its promotion of what became the 'Pathways to Integration' initiative from the voluntary sector and other local organisations that, for whatever political reasons, had originally signed up for the original bid. Central government thus found itself facing pressure from both the Commission and some local partners for the inclusion of a spatially targeted element of the Objective 1 programme. Some of this enthusiasm on the part of the local partners in the voluntary sector was for the political nature of the proposal. From this perspective, the initiative was not simply a matter of applying the

principle of concentration of spending enshrined in the Structural Funds regulations to the Merseyside programme. As one voluntary-sector participant heavily involved in the negotiations over the proposed priority put it

The Pathways Programme is about remedying two injustices. One was that the state had failed the poor in our poorest communities and the other is that substantial swathes of the middle class were making a damn good living out of that failure. And the conclusion we drew from those two positives was that we needed to hand control of money that was supposed to be for their benefit back to those deprived communities. So the 'Pathways' principles, and much more to the point, the scoring systems and support mechanisms that we put in place would over time invert the usual relationship between the poor citizens and their employees—in that it would be TECs and colleges and local authorities and central government departments who would be asking deprived communities if they could have some money for their programmes, not the other way round (voluntary sector respondent, personal interview, January 2000).

After the 'Pathways' principle was agreed (after some lengthy and quite heated negotiation), the next step was to identify the areas for the targeting of resources. From the outset, it was clear that this exercise—like the initiative as a whole—was not simply technical but inherently political. The task was given to a small group of local authority and Government Office officials and a representative of the voluntary sector which was to report to the Shadow Monitoring Committee for the Objective 1 programme as a whole.⁴ The remit was clear. The areas had to be designated on the basis of clear and transparent criteria and, to allow concentration of resources, coverage of the population should be between 25 and 35 per cent of the city-region's total population. The criteria for identifying areas were also relatively straightforward. The areas needed to contain substantial numbers of the priority groups

identified for support (including young people, long-term unemployed and people 'at a disadvantage in the labour market'). They needed to include a relatively large share of the total priority groups in Merseyside as a whole in order significantly to reduce disparities within the city-region. Finally, they needed to be

large enough, and cohesive enough, to form areas within which geographically targeted delivery mechanisms can work, but small enough not to dilute the principle of targeting (Merseyside Monitoring Committee for Objective 1, 1994, p. 1).

The main data source for the selection of areas was the 1991 Census and the first technical decision was whether to use data at ward level or at the level of enumeration districts. The report, whilst acknowledging that the ward-level data would potentially hide pockets of deprivation visual at enumeration-district level, also hinted at the politics behind choice when it pointed out that if ward data were used for the exercise and ranked in order of deprivation, no wards in one of the five Merseyside local authorities (St Helens) would feature in the most-deprived 25 per cent. Census enumeration districts were therefore chosen as the building-blocks for both technical and political reasons.⁵ Three variables from the Department of the Environment's Index of Deprivation were used: 'unemployment', 'households without a car' and 'children in households with no full-time earner'. These three variables were standardised and added together for each enumeration district and the districts were then ranked in descending order and 'cut-offs' identified to pick out the worst 25 per cent, 30 per cent and 35 per cent of Merseyside's population. What this meant in terms of population coverage is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 makes clear that the choice of 'cut-off' had major implications for the population coverage in each of the five local authority districts. Thus, a 25 per cent cut-off meant that St Helens' population coverage was just 5 per cent of the total regional

Table 4. Spatial targeting of the 'Pathways to Integration' priority

District	Total resident population	Target areas based on Merseyside's worst					
		25 per cent		30 per cent		35 per cent	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Knowsley	151 869	72 742	20.8	78 289	18.7	81 470	16.6
Liverpool	450 409	176 848	50.6	213 079	50.8	247 210	50.5
St Helens	178 504	17 669	5.0	23 996	5.7	35 337	7.2
Sefton	288 344	40 896	11.7	48 454	11.5	56 587	11.6
Wirral	330 554	41 733	11.9	55 699	13.3	69 161	14.1
Merseyside	1 399 680	349 888	100.0	419 517	100.0	489 765	100.0

Source: Merseyside Monitoring Committee for Objective 1 (1994).

population compared to nearly 7 per cent with a 35 per cent cut-off. The higher cut-off meant that the population coverage in St Helens more than doubled. Similar considerations applied, to a lesser extent, in Wirral and Sefton. It was perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the local authorities would support the 35 per cent cut-off when the paper setting out the targeting exercise went to the Monitoring Committee. The political argument was that 35 per cent coverage ensured the involvement of all the local authorities in the initiative and strengthened the partnership working that was necessary for the programme as a whole. At the Monitoring Committee meeting at which the decision was taken, it was left to the European Commission representative to voice concerns about the dilution of resources that the decision implied (Merseyside Monitoring Committee for Objective 1, 1993). This was certainly a view held by some of the other partners who were also concerned about what the decision meant for the nature of the initiative as a whole

The local authorities kept bidding it up and up so it ended up as 35 per cent because otherwise there wouldn't have been a programme in St Helens and St Helens would have taken the ball away. Now that pretty comprehensively Donald Ducked our original, clear vision because 'Pathways' then became seen as provision rather than dynamic. In other words, it wasn't a way of changing things, it was a way of whacking

out the money. Well, we then had a further complication within each local authority. If, for example ... by making it 35 per cent what the Monitoring Committee really did was make 'Pathways' cover half of Liverpool's population. If you take any sort of principle of natural communities, that's probably about 70 or 80 ... There's no way on earth that Liverpool City Council could ever have supported 70 or 80 Partnerships. Horror on horror they might have had to let go; they gave in to what they call a compromise between what they could administratively handle and what neighbourhoods sort of clumped together. Eleven is the figure that was eventually arrived at (voluntary sector respondent, personal interview, January 2000).

As the above quotation indicates, the final designation of areas was more than just a simple statistical exercise, it inevitably had to contend with all the complexities of neighbourhood and 'place-based community' definition discussed in the previous section. Targeting was difficult for all the local authorities but perhaps particularly so for Liverpool which, as already noted, had the largest number of people eligible for 'Pathways' designation—just over half of the city's population. Maps were drawn up of areas that appeared to fit together, but this mapping exercise was, from the outset, bedevilled by the problem of representing the actual social geography of the neighbourhoods that made up those areas and of cre-

ating 'Pathways areas' that also made some sense in relation to the local economy

It was, you won't believe this, it's felt tip pens on big maps. What I mean, obviously it was based on the Census ... so MIS [Merseyside Information Services] prepared maps which indicated the worst 35 per cent if you like so that you know where they were geographically. Now we had to make sense of them. I mean in Liverpool it wasn't so bad because you know there was quite a strong concentration of them in particular areas. There were *ad hoc* spots around but not, I don't think, as much as perhaps Wirral or Sefton experienced, so they were the base, the basic areas, and we made some adjustments to that, to widen those areas, only to make some sense of them ... In North Liverpool [pointing to map] this is the residential area but we thought it made sense to embrace quite significant economic activity around the docks ... Some other areas like 580 ... which is 'Pathways' communities through to here but again we felt they were separated by the industrial estate and some of the opportunities on the A580 road itself, we thought there should be a link there. The Queens Partnership is almost exclusively the 'Pathways' community, the LEAP Partnership is almost exclusively the 'Pathways' community, Netherley Valley similarly. Dingle was the 'Pathways' community though we took the line to the river bank to include the likes of Brunswick Dock so there was some economic activity there. Granby Toxteth was broadly the 'Pathways' community ...

I would say it was, you know, obviously, it was largely 'Pathways' communities as defined on this MIS map, but we did, I mean we did get the felt tip pen out and just made sure, just from local knowledge that we weren't drawing the line in a daft way, you know (interview, Liverpool City Council Central Policy Unit, December 1999).

The distinction in the above quotation between 'partnerships' and 'pathways com-

munities', in part reflects the attempt to divide the map into a mix of residential areas ('communities') and neighbouring (economic) land uses. It also was clear, at this early mapping stage, that the clustering of residential areas would inevitably include 'neighbourhoods' which were socially distinctive. And so it proved. Across Merseyside 38 'Pathways areas' were finally selected with a wide range in both population size and numbers of households covered (see Figure 1 and Table 5). As Table 5 shows, the Pathways areas ranged in population size from just under 600 (in St Thomas Square in St Helens) to nearly 42 000 (in the Stanley area partnership in Liverpool). Household coverage ranged from 297 (St Thomas Square) to nearly 17 000 (in Stanley).

The geography of some of the larger 'Pathways areas' in terms of neighbourhood composition raised issues from the outset with regard to community engagement. The following quotations from the Heads of Liverpool City Council Directorates responsible for establishing Area Partnerships in two of Liverpool's Pathways areas, Liverpool East Area Partnership (LEAP) and 580 (named after the main road cutting through the area) give a flavour of the difficulties they faced

[In reply to a question on community infrastructure and activity in the Area Partnership when 'Pathways' was introduced]: No, there was nothing, nothing in place at all. It was very much a blank sheet of paper, all of us were sent out if you like with the same mission which was to develop a new partnership between the public, private, voluntary and community sectors in each of the partnership areas. The geographical limitations of the partnership were defined based on, you know, the analysis of the population in terms of levels of car ownership and all of those sort of indices and the partnerships really were artificial creations as a consequence. You know they were new lines drawn on a map, in my own particular case in the Liverpool East Area Partnership it brought together communities which had no ready

Table 5. Population and households pathways areas (1991 Census) ranked by size of population

Pathway area	Local authority	Population (1991)	Households (1991)
Stanley	Liverpool	41 647	16 778
Huyton	Knowsley	39 360	14 723
Queens	Liverpool	36 515	13 400
Parks	Liverpool	36 231	15 730
Bootle/Seaforth	Sefton	35 373	14 098
Kirkby	Knowsley	31 795	11 299
North Liverpool	Liverpool	28 402	12 165
Birkenhead	Wirral	21 249	8 915
Dunningsbridge	Sefton	20 756	7 845
LEAP	Liverpool	19 842	7 568
Granby Toxteth	Liverpool	18 970	9 147
Speke/Garston	Liverpool	18 551	7 144
Parr/Blackbrook	St Helens	17 808	7 125
Netherley/Valley	Liverpool	15 753	6 161
580 Partnership	Liverpool	14 394	5 852
Dingle	Liverpool	13 917	5 812
Tranmere/Rock Ferry	Wirral	11 864	4 827
Halewood	Knowsley	9 647	3 656
Seacombe/Poulton	Wirral	7 044	3 043
Woodchurch	Wirral	6 462	2 719
Thatto Heath/West Sutton	St Helens	5 008	1 859
Beechwood/Ball'tyne	Wirral	4 497	1 610
North Moreton	Wirral	4 262	1 879
Leasowe	Wirral	4 031	1 433
Egremont	Wirral	3 344	1 436
Fouracre	St Helens	3 344	1 168
Thatto Heath/Portico	St Helens	3 039	1 148
Lickers Lane	Knowsley	3 012	1 091
Wargrave	St Helens	2 806	1 052
Fairbrother	St Helens	2 339	999
Newstreet	St Helens	1 887	678
Noctorum	Wirral	1 666	514
Duke St/Cornwallis	Liverpool	1 315	598
Bromborough	Wirral	1 210	553
Mill Park	Wirral	1 137	469
Town Lane	Wirral	1 104	382
Prenton	Wirral	1 033	484
St Thomas Square	St Helens	554	297

form of link or identity, there was no common identity to the partnership that we had to create, and that in itself was one other challenge, you know, and ... I don't know how familiar you are with the partnership area, but it was about getting people from the Dovecote part of Liverpool working alongside people from the Deysbrook part and the Broad Green part, which ordinarily didn't have any natural

linkages at all really and we had to develop all of that as part of the growing and developing and nurturing of the new partnership, and there was a lot of rivalry in the early days between the community organisations and bodies involved. And giving them an understanding of why we were asking them to all work together around a common agenda was one of the challenges of the post in the early days

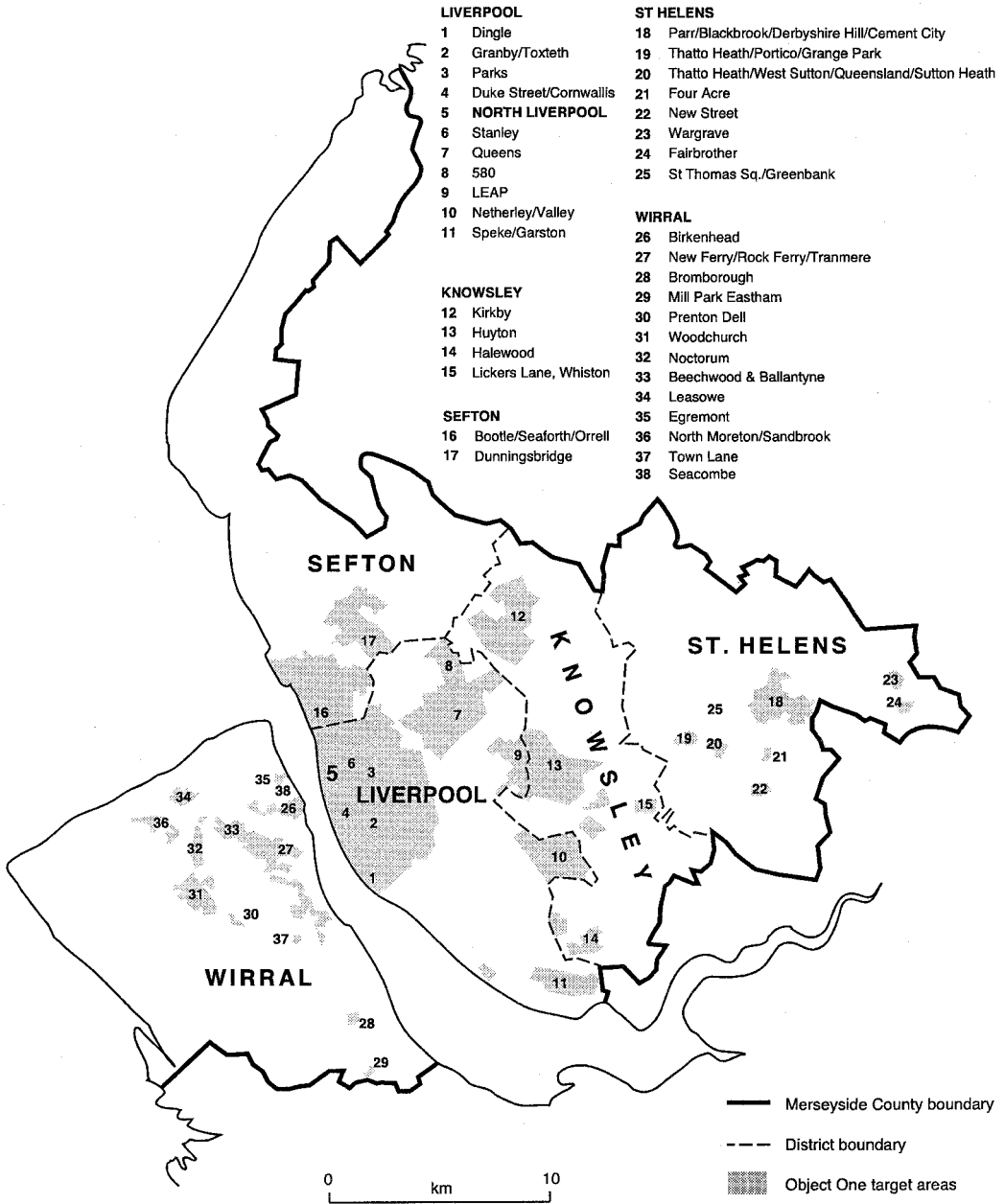


Figure 1. 'Pathways to Integration': Pathways area partnerships.

(interview with Head of Leisure Services Directorate, Liverpool City Council, February 2000).

There was actually an allocation of the 'Pathways areas' and I was actually allocated Netherley Valley and I asked to

change it ... basically because the 580 area which is Fazakerly and Gilmoor has got substantial Social Services infrastructure and I just thought it might be easier ... I did a swap with the Director of Education actually. The Director of Education did Valley/Netherley and I did Fazakerly/

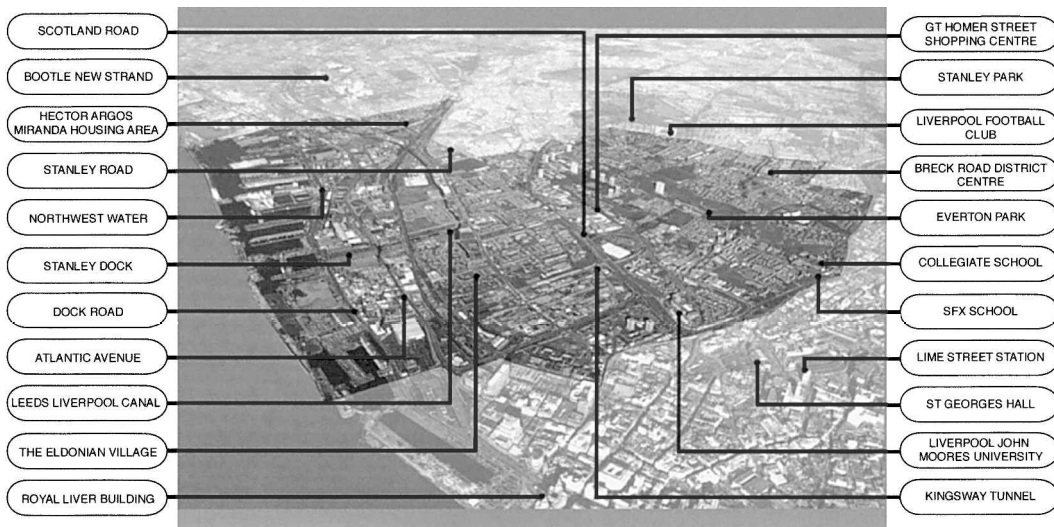


Figure 2. North Liverpool Partnership area. *Source:* North Liverpool Pathways Partnership.

Gilmoss. You've got Gilmoss which is a highly activist community ... I mean I can't go back very far personally but they certainly had a massive investment in the community programme ... in the late '80s, had huge, huge investment in that, and a well developed community forum ... Fazakerly was probably far less developed although quite an active federation but not the same history of community development activity. But I mean they're geographically next to each other but in-between you've got the road of course [the main A580] but you've not only got the road, you've got the sort of little industrial bits ... In between the two you've got the GEC Factory site and there's the waste disposal on all of that green land in between, so they don't ... there's no reason for anybody to go from one to the other, or link with the other. Although now ... both communities are now aware of each other and fully involved with each other (interview with Head of Social Services Directorate, Liverpool City Council, February 2000).

The operational definition of the two Partnership Areas above, thus, immediately raised issues of facilitating dialogue between differ-

ent, essentially neighbourhood-based organisations and communities. This requirement raises immediate questions about time-scales. The partnerships were being set up in the second of a six-year programme and allowance clearly needs to be made for the meetings and networking that are needed to consolidate the community base of the partnership. Indeed, this networking and community development work needs to be viewed as part of the process (and measurable output) of partnership-building. And it will take time. In the following section, we will use the example of the North Liverpool Partnership to illustrate these issues and to underline the need for area-based policies to be sensitive to self-defined and socially constructed neighbourhoods and 'place-based communities'.

4.3 North Liverpool Partnership Area

Also designated as a Single Regeneration Budget area, the North Liverpool Partnership takes in 3 inner-city wards (Breckfield, Everton and Vauxhall) together with parts of another (Melrose) with a population (in 1991) of over 28 000 people living in just over 12 000 households (Figure 2). These wards themselves constitute a distinct social

geography within the Area Partnership. As one resident and local community development worker put it

Breckfield sits on top of the hill, Everton's in the middle of the hill and Vauxhall's at the bottom of the hill. You know, people are always pointing down or pointing up ... it's the most parochial area I've ever worked in my life (personal interview, April 1999)

And within this social geography is a finer mosaic of neighbourhoods and it is these neighbourhoods which form the bedrock of social relations within the area

It [North Liverpool] was intensely tribal and still is, you know. If you could class the community there's no such thing, there's a lot of small neighbourhoods ... I think neighbourhoods is a safer word to use, community sounds so cosy doesn't it? Believe you me I see it as far from cosy ... I mean there's small communities and you have to be involved to know where the boundaries of those communities are because to an outsider you tend to take the geographic ones like, you know, Vauxhall Road and it's not like that because it's historic (local Partnership worker, interview, March 2000).

To understand the geography of neighbourhoods, it is essential to understand the economic and political histories in which this geography has been forged. The major factor structuring community response has unquestionably been the impact of economic restructuring. The past 30 years have seen the loss of such major local employers as Tate and Lyle and British American Tobacco alongside the massive contraction of employment in the docks. Unemployment has soared. Over the last three censuses, unemployment rates have risen from an average of 16 per cent in 1971 to 41 per cent in 1991. Currently, the unemployment rate stands at more than one and a half times the City rate and is the second-highest (to Granby/Toxteth) of the city's Pathways areas. Population loss has been dramatic, falling over the three

censuses by nearly one-half. The Everton ward actually saw population decline by just under two-thirds. The latest population estimates for the partnership as a whole show a slowing of the decline (just under 3 per cent between 1991 and 1996) but still five times the rate of the City's Pathways areas (0.6 per cent). Indicators of disadvantage not surprisingly paint a depressing picture. In the DETR's latest Index of Multiple Deprivation (2000), Everton is ranked fourth, Vauxhall sixth and Breckfield twelfth. The most recent figures, produced by the market research company CACI on average household income by postcode, rank Vauxhall as the poorest in the UK. It is not difficult, then, to appreciate the economic adversity with which individuals and groups in the area's neighbourhoods have had to cope nor to acknowledge against such a background the remarkable nature of their achievements, some of which we will discuss below.

These achievements have also been secured against a political environment marked by conflict and, especially in recent years, volatility. As one local activist engaged in community-based economic development argued

We have like twenty different variations of Labour, a couple of variations of Lib Dems, and one or two Tories and it's like so fragmented and unstable and volatile ... [compared with] the Wigan City Challenge scenario—basically one community and through that community the people who are leading the community are also Labour Party members who are also like, there's one social club on the estate, the Labour Club, and so they go and speak to the management committee of the Labour Club who also double up as the local ward representatives who are also the chairs of the steering groups and whatever, and the council's dead secure where it's about 98 per cent of one variation of Labour ... so everything's just stable so I think that the community are willing to leave it in the hands of the politicians in areas like that, whereas in areas like this,

well you don't know who the politicians are going to be from one day to the next.

I've noticed as well the difference between areas like Glasgow and Wigan and other solid working-class areas that I've been to is that people who are sort of politically motivated to get involved in community organisations ... in those areas they're political with a big 'P', they're councillors ... or they followed that progression route whereas, I think, you'd find that the vast majority of us, the likes of us are not even members of a party (Development Trust representative, interview, February, 1999).

In this economic and political context, a number of neighbourhood-based groups have emerged to defend the standard of living of residents. And perhaps the two strongest are to be found in what, to an outside eye, might appear to be a single 'neighbourhood'. The groups are the product of different histories and different social relationships, some inter-connecting, but with others forged both within and outside the city that together help to make them distinctive: the Eldonians and the Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council. The history of the first of these is nationally relatively well known. Indeed, that national awareness has, in turn, helped to shape its local distinctiveness.

Named after the street in which a group of local residents lived, the Eldonians formed initially to oppose their relocation from the Vauxhall area by the City Council in the late 1970s. This opposition turned into a protracted struggle with successive City Council administrations over the development of what has become Britain's largest housing co-operative. Municipalisation of the group's first housing co-operative by the militant Labour administration of the City Council (1983-87) only made the group more determined to establish another and involved a 'no-holds barred' struggle with the militants over control of the local Labour party. The group single-mindedly made alliances both inside the city (most notably with the Church and the city's two high-profile Bishops (a

local Catholic church being a crucial focus for the Eldonians) and outside the city with a central government under Thatcher, itself in high-profile conflict with the City Council. Important links were also made nationally with the Housing Corporation, English Partnerships and, after local and national lobbying, the Eldonians found themselves located within the extended boundaries of the Merseyside Development Corporation in 1988. Now outside the direct control of the City Council and with a Development Corporation starting to emphasise 'community' in its priorities (Meegan, 1999a), the Eldonian Housing Co-operative and Development Trust finally became a reality.

It is difficult to underestimate the extent to which this history of conflict helped to shape the 'place-based community' that is imprinted so visibly in the landscape in the form of the Eldonian Village. The following quotations from two of the leading figures in the formation of the housing co-operative give a flavour of the way in which the community was socially and politically constructed

The Council and the politicians tried everything they could think of to stop us ... They bullied us, they threatened us, they tried to tempt us with offers of housing they thought we couldn't refuse. But we stuck together and in the end we won. Their biggest mistake was to think that, just because we come from one of the poorest areas of Liverpool, we were stupid. What they didn't bargain for was that we are just as clever as them. What they didn't realise was that they were dealing with the bravest people in the world (Tony McGann; quoted in Ashdown, 1994, p. 65).

When we recall the events of the late 1970s, we remember a community which had been in existence for generations; indeed many in the community could trace their family histories here, right back to the time when our Irish forbears fled from the great famine of the 1840s.

Life was very hard, and in many cases,

very short, but out of that shared experience and common faith, there established itself a strong community identity, which remains to this day.

This manifested itself again when, over ten years ago, the community was threatened with the same fate as that which had befallen its fellow communities in other parts of the city; when the bulldozers were sent to smash those communities in the name of progress and 'better housing'.

The Eldonians had witnessed the fruits of this urban renewal with smashed communities from the inner city; witnessing also the fear, the distrust, the crime and the vandalism which this generated.

Recognising that communities which had taken generations to establish, were being destroyed overnight, they said 'enough is enough' and would not let it happen here (John Livingstone, *The Eldonian*, 1989, p. 3).

Whilst not totally self-contained within the Vauxhall area, the Eldonian Village and associated housing developments have created a distinctive 'community'. If we return to Davies and Herbert's (1993) three domains of 'neighbourhood' and 'community', the Eldonians would seem to score highly. In terms of 'areal content', social ecologists and 'social area analysts' could label the development as distinctive and coherent in their typologies (probably 'working-class', 'low-income', 'social housing', perhaps with 'religion' thrown in). In this sense, what would make the 'areal content' of the Eldonian development most distinctive in relation to its surroundings would be the nature (and quality) of the housing and its architecturally designed, defensible space. A housing mix of bungalows, low-rise flats and houses has replaced tenement blocks and derelict industrial land. The focal point of development were the 145 properties built on the site of the Tate and Lyle Sugar Refinery that closed down in 1981 whilst further developments included the site of a derelict church (15 units) and 150 properties built on other industrial land. The encouragement of a variety

of new-house builders in the Village maintains the momentum of development as well as ensuring the architecturally designed space to those both living within the community and those living beyond its boundaries. The social interaction within the group, set in the context of opposition from within and support from without the wider city, provided the 'behaviour and interaction' that mark out 'community'. That interaction—those overlapping social networks—also provides the 'conceptual identity' and 'sense of place' both in terms of cognitive (it is called the *Eldonian Village*) and affective dimensions (in the residents' sense of attachment, sense of security, empowerment and co-operative behaviour). It seems to make sense to talk about the 'Eldonian community' within North Liverpool.

Not quite across the road from the Eldonians, but almost, is another distinguishable neighbourhood-based group equally forged out of a history of struggle against redevelopment and a desire by residents to remain in and regenerate the local area. This community takes the form of the Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council (VNC) and, like the Eldonians, can be seen visibly in the landscape in the shape of its newly built multi-activity community centre, the Vauxhall Millennium Centre. Established in 1975 as a registered charity, the VNC acts as an umbrella organisation for some 34 affiliated community groups in the Vauxhall area (including a couple of housing co-operatives and 10 tenants' housing associations, community care groups and play and youth projects). These neighbourhood-based groups together constitute the VNC's geography within the Vauxhall area. With an annual turnover of over £1 million and employing 75 full-time staff, it is the largest single voluntary-sector organisation in north Liverpool. Like the Eldonians, the VNC can trace its origins to the planning blight and uncertainty created by urban renewal in the 1970s

There was very little in the way of community groups, virtually none ... The new Mersey tunnel was being built in the com-

munity and houses, well maisonettes and properties which had only been up for what four, five years were now coming down. Nobody knew where they were going, where they would be rehoused ... There was a lot of uncertainty, that was all going on at the time. The area had awful housing conditions. Originally the tunnel was not proposed to go in this area, it was supposed to go in another part of the city but because of opposition from people who were more articulate ... It was actually based, put down here and, of course, there was no opposition to it and people just accepted it (Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council representative, interview, March 1999).

The VNC, however, has a very different political history from that of the Eldonians. Its roots can also be traced back to the Community Development Projects (CDPs) of the early 1970s. Indeed, some of the current management team of the registered charity were community volunteers/workers attached to the CDP team and the VNC still houses the community paper (the 'Scotty Press', named for the Scotland Road, the main road that cuts through the area) set up 25 years ago by the CDP initiative. Until recently, its Chief Executive was a Deputy Leader of the Labour group on the City Council and its management team also includes a (left, breakaway) 'Ward Labour' councillor. The City Council remains its largest funder (even under the recently elected Liberal Democratic administration) and it is not, therefore, difficult to appreciate the political reasons why it has developed separately from the Eldonians, albeit in such close geographical proximity. But, like the Eldonians, its very existence carries with it the marks of neighbourhood-based social relations and identity.

Another more recent example of a neighbourhood-based organisation is the Everton Development Trust whose roots can be traced back to the West Everton Community Council founded in 1992 to tap into City Challenge funding. This organisation, like both the Eldonians and the VNC, a registered

charity, is carefully grounding its activities in the area with accountability tracing directly back to its own group of tenants' associations, youth and community projects. From just 3 staff and an annual turnover of £90 000 in its early years, it has expanded to 20 staff and a turnover of £440 000 and is engaged in a range of activities from business advice, employment brokering and managed workspaces.

What all these organisations have in common is their strong roots in their local neighbourhoods—roots that help to explain their relative success in engaging with socially excluded individuals and groups in contrast with 'outside' agencies. There is, of course, the danger that such organisations adopt a defensive, inward-looking attitude or that their organisational strength works to the detriment of less-organised groups in other neighbourhoods

Well the strengths are ... in community and voluntary work. It is strong in a lot of organisations who have got a lot of experience. As I say it's a double edged sword because you've got to be careful that they don't sort of crowd out others ... but there's a lot of experience and expertise around and you know they'll tackle anything, sometimes not in the way you'd wish and sometimes ... the political infighting that goes on is horrendous and counter-productive but it's certainly a strength (local Partnership worker, interview, March 2000).

The negative side of the double-edged sword was revealed on one occasion in a complaint about perceived imbalances in power being made formally to the local MP

So there's still rivalry there, still organisations saying ... how come they're getting so much and we're not, you know, that spurious personalised level (local development worker, interview, April 1999).⁶

What this incident served to highlight were the difficulties that arise in areas in which neighbourhood-based groups have necessarily had to organise and effectively plough

their own furrows in what were singularly adverse economic and political circumstances. Strong personalities in leadership positions and established organisations inevitably place them in strong positions in the partnership, not least in relation to bidding for funds. Yet partnership working in a cross-neighbourhood context appears to have encouraged a process in which cross-neighbourhood and interagency working is developing that is beginning to give a social reality to the operationally defined 'Pathways area'. Thus, for example, the five community-based economic development initiatives in the North Liverpool Partnership Area (the Eldonians, the VNC, the Everton Development Trust, the Breckfield and North Everton initiatives) have agreed to minimise duplication and competition by signing up to a common 'Routes to Work' initiative covering the entire North Liverpool area. This agreement has meant that the different organisations recognise not just the differing areas of expertise of each of the organisations but also their territorial area of operation—recognising, in other words, their place-based roots. The operation of the partnership itself has also served to reinforce the point that co-operation is needed to access the funding

I think people suddenly realised, hang on, there's plenty of money to go round here so the tensions and ideas have dissipated in terms of the competition for the resources. What tensions did emerge were over projects ... However, them issues were resolved ... because what the partnership did if you like it ... forced people, they came voluntarily initially but it forced them, that if we want a say within the partnership as a community ... if you don't speak as one voice the other two [public and private sector] will carve you up, and that's the nature of the game (local development worker, interview, April 1999).

The Action Plan for Pathways funding under the second round of Objective 1 (North Liverpool Pathways Partnership, 2001) also reveals an acceptance that more collaborative

working is needed if the weaknesses, identified particularly strongly in a mid-term evaluation of the SRB programme, that the partnership has experienced in engaging with the wider residential and business communities are to be addressed. Another factor in encouraging this collaboration has been a proposal by the City Council to redraw the boundaries of the 'Pathways areas'.

4.4 Re-drawing the Boundaries: Operational versus 'Neighbourhood-based' Criteria

What the 'Pathways to Integration' initiative has served to underscore to date is the existence of 'natural neighbourhoods' within the operationally defined Pathways areas. These neighbourhoods are the ones that have Neighbourhood and Community Councils (like the Breckfield and North Everton and Vauxhall Neighbourhood Councils and West Everton Community Council in North Liverpool) alongside neighbourhood-based Development Trusts and Community and Tenants Associations. In North Liverpool, for example, these neighbourhood-based organisations operate within the three main electoral wards from which community members of the North Liverpool Pathways Partnership are elected. There is thus a complex social geography building upwards from neighbourhood to ward to partnership area.

The contours of this geography have been dramatically revealed—in Liverpool at least—in the reactions to a recent proposal by the City Council to redraw the map of Pathways areas. The background to this proposal was set by the City Council becoming a 'New Commitment to Regeneration' Pathfinder Authority, the negotiations over the new Objective 1 programme and a change in Council administration (with the Liberal Democrats taking overall control) (Meegan, 1999b).

As a 'New Commitment to Regeneration' Pathfinder Authority, the City Council has stated its intention to rationalise the number of partnerships operating in the city (over 60 at the last count). It has consequently developed a strategy—'Liverpool First'—to drive

the New Commitment to Regeneration programme based around three 'strategic drivers' (emphasising competitiveness, cohesion and environmental sustainability). 'Joined-up spending' and 'thinking' permeate the strategy along with the notion of 'subsidiarity' and a proposed move to a three-tier spatial structure of city, district and area for service planning on an interagency basis. The aim is to achieve co-terminosity between operational and management areas of statutory services. To complicate further the co-terminosity issue, the newly elected Liberal Democrat administration, in its enthusiasm for the 'modernisation of local government' agenda, is also adding a new political geography of District and Area Committees.

The negotiation of the new Objective 1 programme for Merseyside was also influential in the Council's wish to move towards a new geography. The original proposals were for just three 'drivers' or priorities ('developing businesses', 'people and communities' and 'creating an environment for growth'). But again, like the first programme, a spatial focus was retained with the prompting of the European Commission and local partners (mainly the voluntary sector and, importantly, the co-ordinating network for the community representatives on the Area Partnerships—the 'Merseyside Pathways Network'). This fourth priority—'developing locations and communities'—means that 'Pathways' rides again in the second round of Objective 1. Driven in part again by the issue of co-terminosity of areal boundaries, the City Council proposed to change the boundaries of the current 'Pathways areas'. The proposal was to incorporate the existing 11 areas (and their constituent 'natural neighbourhoods') into 5 'regeneration clusters' which would, in turn, be linked to 5 'strategic spatial development areas' (SSDAs) into which investment was to be steered—'linking need with opportunity' (see Figure 3). A consultation process was, therefore, set up with the existing Area Partnerships. The response overall from the local partnerships and community representatives, however, was a rather re-

sounding 'no thanks' (Liverpool City Council, 2000).⁷

Of the 11 Pathways areas, only 2 (Queens and 580) expressed a willingness to merge.⁸ The other 9, whilst recognising the need to liaise with other Partnerships as part of broader geographical and strategic 'clusters', were resolute in wishing to retain their own identities and powers. Two Area Partnerships (Stanley and Granby/Toxteth) felt that joint programmes should only be developed on a voluntary, 'organic' basis.

The consultation exercise made clear that the rationale for these objections was to be found in the geography of neighbourhood and community. The principal concern of the 'Pathways' representatives consulted was the belief that larger geographical areas could not expect to secure the same degree of community participation, ownership and influence as that being achieved—however painfully in some cases—by the existing Area Partnerships. The need for community involvement and for Partnerships to be able to work effectively at grass-roots level was a recurrent theme in the consultation exercise. It was strongly felt that all the 'natural neighbourhoods' that the 'Pathways' initiative to date was helping to define (see Figure 3) should be represented at Area Partnership level and a move to a larger geographical area might jeopardise this involvement. In other words, the capacity-building, the development of trust and networking achieved to date between neighbourhood-based organisations could be undermined. As one of our interviewees expressed it

I thought the point was to be focused and to get down to grass roots and to encourage this like 'trickle up' stuff. And how do you do that if you make the geographical area even bigger? Don't get it, just don't get it. I wouldn't do it (local Partnership worker, interview, February 2000).

There was also an issue of ownership at stake, which served to highlight some of the complexities of multilayered governance. The 'Pathways areas' were the product of the Objective 1 programme and the European Commission made it clear that they could

Proposed 'clustering arrangements' for Pathway Area Partnerships

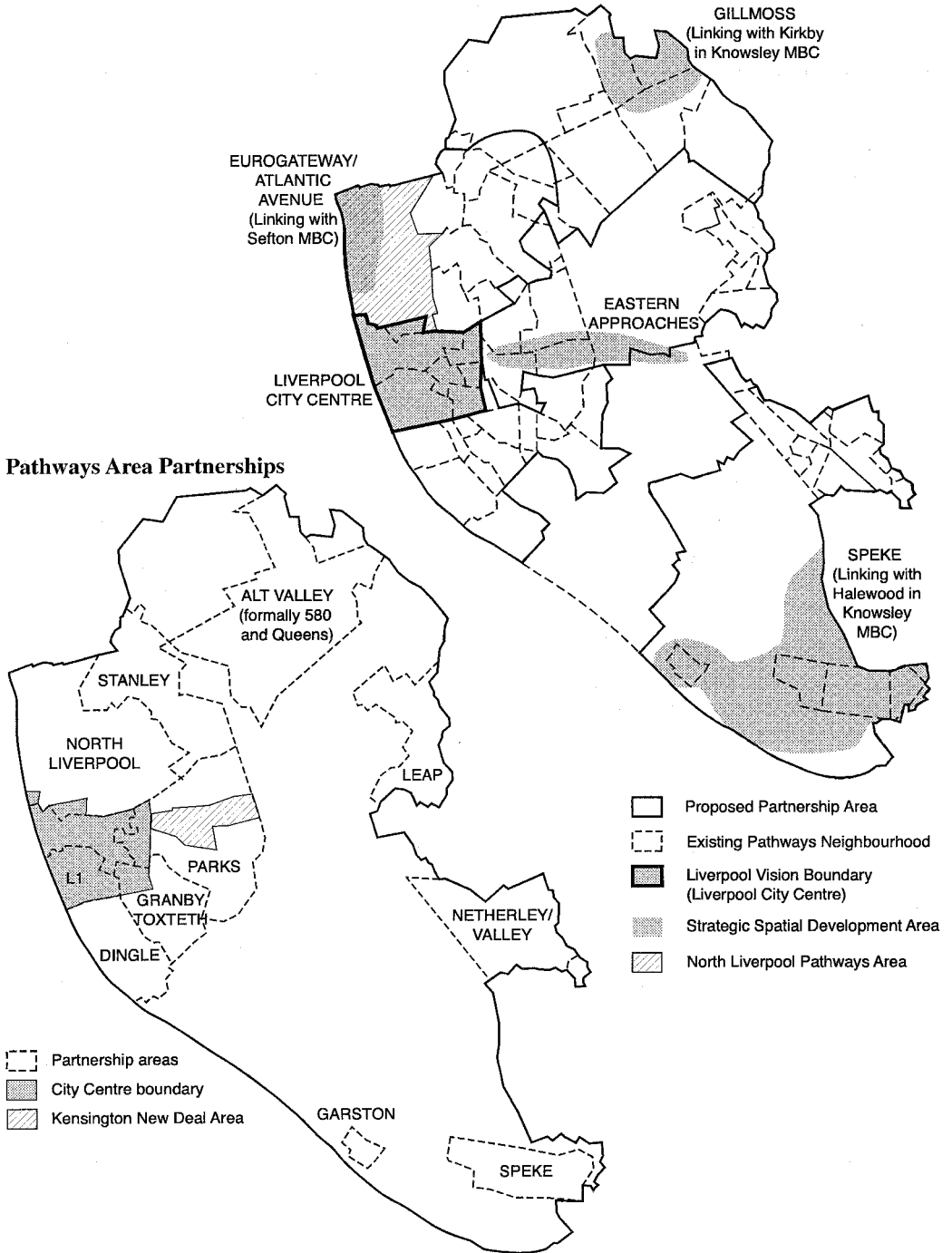


Figure 3. North Liverpool Partnership areas, 2000. Source: Liverpool City Council.

only be changed with the consent of the area partnerships themselves. The local authorities do not 'own' them, and to be fair to the City Council, it had implicitly recognised this fact by going out to consultation over the proposed changes in the first place. What was revealing, however, was the degree to which community representatives were themselves prepared to claim ownership of partnership areas that had, after all, been operationally defined from the 'top-down'. There was a sense in which these were viewed as having stood the test of time without endangering neighbourhood-based involvement and were beginning to show results.

While 'defence of turf' inevitably played a part in the response to the proposal, the overall stance was far from inward-looking. This was revealed in the argument for a wider geography of regeneration than that which seemed to be suggested by the clustering arrangements. Thus, for example, the North Liverpool community representatives strongly objected to the presumption that its residents would be tied to the job opportunities offered by the docks-related 'SSDA' on which its proposed cluster was centred. This objection, heavily informed by the historical experience of such links, was not to linkage with SSDAs *per se* but to linkages defined in a narrow geographical sense. Why should 'Pathways' residents be confined to opportunities in the strategic spatial development areas to which they were closest geographically? Job opportunities, they argued, should be city- and city-region-wide. Again, ownership issues arose in this context, with calls for direct community control of SSDAs or, at least, the imposition of sanctions on those failing to deliver identifiable benefits to Pathways residents.

The consultation exercise clearly revealed a tension in the geography of regeneration between neighbourhood and an intermediate, operational level, between neighbourhood and city (and city-region). The 'Pathways' community representatives (with the exception of the two areas that opted for merger) clearly preferred the existing 'Pathways ar-

reas' arrangements for such an intermediate level, which vindicates to a degree the 'felt tip pens on maps' exercise of officers at the beginning of the Objective 1 programme. What appears to have happened is that, with a couple of exceptions, the 'top-down' definition of areas has been accepted from the 'bottom-up'. The message, nevertheless, would still appear to be that it is not enough for operationally defined areas to be sensitive to the existence of neighbourhoods and neighbourhood-based organisations; these arrangements also need to be 'made' in a process that involves the latter. It is an evolutionary political process of community engagement.

In the event, Liverpool's 'clustering' of Partnerships is going ahead but with explicit recognition of the integrity of the constituent 'Pathways areas' and the various neighbourhoods within them. Whether the city's 'clustering' arrangement is a workable, operational tier of governance will eventually be revealed. What is important, however, is the political recognition that, for it to have any chance of success, it needs to be 'owned' by the partnerships themselves. It is these who are working, from the neighbourhood level upwards, to develop the social capital on which the eventual success of the programme will be dependent.

5. Conclusions

Neighbourhood renewal is clearly at the heart of the current government's policies for addressing social exclusion and achieving cohesion and competitiveness. Its national strategy will form part of a new raft of area-based policies. We have attempted to argue that there is a rationale for area-based policies as long as the political and policy context in which these policies are introduced recognises the interaction between macro-structural and local, reinforcing processes. 'People-based' policies need to be complemented by 'people and place' ones.

Social exclusion can be at once social and spatial and a way to understanding the social-spatial construction of exclusion is through

an understanding of the way in which social relations are articulated in place. From this perspective, the 'neighbourhood' can be seen as an appropriate spatial scale for exploring the construction and operation of 'everyday life-worlds'. 'Neighbourhood', however, is a deceptively simple concept. It is both social and spatial and approaching it using Davies and Herbert's (1993) distinction between 'neighbourhood' and 'place-based communities' seems, to us, a useful way to proceed.

As the 'Pathways to Integration' initiative on Merseyside illustrates, area-based policies and spatial targeting are political as well as technical exercises. Mapping of areas for the design and implementation of area-based policies needs to recognise the social and spatial construction of 'neighbourhoods'/'place communities'. The 'natural neighbourhoods' that have emerged in Liverpool are constructed and being constructed around social proximity, self-definition (in part in relation to others) and all the complexities of 'place-oriented process' (through, for example, the territorially based activities of tenants' associations or community-based economic development initiatives) and overlapping social networks that sociologists and geographers have long agonised over. It is a fluid process and policy needs to be able to balance the strengths of these 'natural neighbourhoods' (their rootedness in 'place-communities') with their potential weaknesses (fragmentation and competition).

The proposal by Liverpool City Council to cluster 'Pathways areas', and the reaction to it, reinforced this message and underlined the need for the operational definition of areas to be part of an evolutionary process of community engagement—'top-down' meets 'bottom-up'. The areas need to make social sense to the neighbourhoods and neighbourhood-based organisations within them. The 'Pathway area' community representatives seemed to prefer a clustering of neighbourhoods (five or six at most) to a clustering of what were already groups of neighbourhoods. 'Not too small but not too large' appears to be the message for securing community engagement at the same time as en-

couraging an outward-looking perspective on the part of participants. It also recognises the operational problems that targeting small areas (single or part-neighbourhoods) can raise. These problems, experienced by some of the St Helens and Wirral 'Pathways areas', include: resource problems (and, by extension, the nature of projects that can be undertaken); the small scale or absence of private- and voluntary-sector activity (with implications for 'match funding' and partnership working); and the potentially smaller 'pool' of community activists and community organisations (with implications for community engagement).

Regeneration is political as well as economic and social. If inclusion in decision-making of communities affected is a goal of regeneration policy—and it would be our argument that it should be—then there needs to be space for community influence on the evolution of the policy. A test for any national strategy for neighbourhood renewal will, therefore, be the degree to which the national strategy is modified by its operation on the ground in truly empowered neighbourhoods.

Notes

1. For example, Annex G of the SEU National Strategy Action Plan (SEU, 2001) suggests defining neighbourhoods in terms of electoral wards or other areas with populations of several thousand. By using quality-of-life indicators at this level, priority neighbourhoods can be identified. There is an acknowledgement that the choice of definition will depend on local circumstances, but nevertheless it is implicit that the comprehensiveness of statistics at ward level may be better suited for the identification of priority neighbourhoods.
2. This research, 'Pathways to Integration: Tackling Social Exclusion on Merseyside' was funded by the ESRC (Award Ref: L130251044) as part of its 'Cities, Competitiveness and Cohesion' Research Programme.
3. Objective 1 provides the highest level of funding for what are recognised as 'lagging regions', regions with per capita levels of gross domestic product less than 75 per cent

of the average for the European Union as a whole.

4. The Shadow Monitoring Committee was the precursor to the formally established Monitoring Committee responsible for the overall management of the programme.
5. A finer definition of areas was thus chosen than that favoured by the Social Exclusion Unit (ward level—see note 1).
6. This mistrust was also revealed, somewhat obliquely, in the extent to which groups went to distance themselves from the complaint when it was investigated.
7. A similar, albeit less developed, proposal on the Wirral met the same response.
8. Interestingly one of these, 580, was one in which, as already noted, there had been very little community development and interaction. The 'Pathways' process had clearly changed this state of affairs.

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