



**HAL**  
open science

# Participation and Regeneration in the UK: The Case of the New Deal for Communities

Lorna Dargan

► **To cite this version:**

Lorna Dargan. Participation and Regeneration in the UK: The Case of the New Deal for Communities. *Regional Studies*, 2009, 43 (02), pp.305-317. 10.1080/00343400701654244 . hal-00516176

**HAL Id: hal-00516176**

**<https://hal.science/hal-00516176>**

Submitted on 9 Sep 2010

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



**Participation and Regeneration in the UK: The Case of the New Deal for Communities**

Journal:	<i>Regional Studies</i>
Manuscript ID:	CRES-2007-0014.R1
Manuscript Type:	Policy Debates
JEL codes:	D7 - Analysis of Collective Decision-Making < D - Microeconomics, I3 - Welfare and Poverty < I - Health, Education, and Welfare, O18 - Regional, Urban, and Rural Analyses < O1 - Economic Development < O - Economic Development, Technological Change, and Growth, R - Urban, Rural, and Regional Economics
Keywords:	New Labour, NDC, Regeneration, Participation, Community, Discourse

SCHOLARONE™  
Manuscripts

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Participation and Local Urban Regeneration: The Case of the New Deal for  
Communities in the UK<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Lorna Dargan,  
Global Urban Research Unit,  
School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape,  
Claremont Tower,  
Newcastle University,  
Newcastle upon Tyne,  
NE1 7RU.  
lorna.dargan@ncl.ac.uk

1  
2  
3  
4 Participation and Local Regeneration: The Case of the New Deal for Communities in  
5  
6 the UK  
7  
8  
9

10 Abstract  
11

12  
13  
14  
15 The contention of this paper is that the policy discourses of ‘community’ and of  
16  
17 ‘participation’ underpinning area-based regeneration programmes are overly  
18  
19 simplistic, and their use in regeneration policy is, as a consequence, highly  
20  
21 problematic. Based on an analysis of a regeneration partnership in the north of  
22  
23 England, this paper will demonstrate that, while partnership members share the same  
24  
25 levels of access in decision-making structures, the members of partnership boards  
26  
27 have such different understandings of the purpose of participation and the role of  
28  
29 residents in the regeneration process that it has created conflict serious enough to  
30  
31 affect delivery of regeneration.  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

39 Key words  
40  
41  
42

43 New Labour; NDC; regeneration; participation; community; discourse.  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 JEL Classifications  
49  
50  
51  
52

53 D7: Analysis of collective decision-making; I3 Welfare and Poverty; O18: Regional,  
54  
55 Urban, and Rural Analyses; R: Urban, rural and regional economics  
56  
57  
58  
59

60 Introduction

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6 Since poverty was 'rediscovered' in the 1960s, Western democracies have sought to  
7  
8 find solutions to the poverty problem (ATKINSON, 2000). Area-based initiatives  
9  
10 (ABIs) have proved to be an enduring policy instrument, providing time-limited,  
11  
12 spatially-bounded sources of funding to address the intense forms of deprivation  
13  
14 found in many urban areas. ABIs are now designed and utilised by all levels of  
15  
16 government, from the local (e.g. Going for Growth in Newcastle, England) to the  
17  
18 supra-national (e.g. EU Structural Funds).  
19  
20  
21

22  
23  
24 ABIs have always had some measure of community involvement. The early schemes  
25  
26 of the 1960s and 1970s typically engaged local people as the *subjects* of regeneration,  
27  
28 attempting to tackle deprivation by changing the personal and social characteristics of  
29  
30 those living in deprived areas through community development projects. Since the  
31  
32 late 1980s, however, residents of deprived areas have increasingly been involved as  
33  
34 the *managers* of regeneration, participating in decision-making structures including  
35  
36 partnership boards. 'Community participation' is now an established feature of area-  
37  
38 based regeneration, and is often seen as a panacea to regeneration 'failure'  
39  
40 (DARGAN, 2007).  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48  
49 A closer examination of the discourses of community and of participation built into  
50  
51 contemporary regeneration policies reveals that communities are perceived to be  
52  
53 united and consensual entities with a shared understanding of the participation  
54  
55 process. However, the experience of recent regeneration initiatives in the UK would  
56  
57 suggest that community participation is a difficult and contentious process, and that  
58  
59 the failure of policy discourses to recognise the realities and complexities of  
60

1  
2  
3 participation can have a serious impact upon relationships within communities and on  
4  
5 the delivery of regeneration.  
6  
7  
8  
9

10 The paper examines the participation process through the case study of the New Deal  
11 for Communities (NDC) in the UK, a regeneration initiative that was designed to be a  
12 'showcase' for community-based regeneration (SEU, 1998), but which has suffered  
13 problems of community in-fighting, underspend, delays and hostilities. The paper will  
14 argue that it is the specific discourse of community participation built into the NDC  
15 programme which has undermined the successful execution of NDC. The paper will  
16 first examine the discourses of community and of participation which underpin the  
17 programme, before examining their implications for both the way in which NDC was  
18 constructed as a policy, and the way in which it has been implemented in practice.  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33

34 The specific case study for this paper is NDC Newcastle West Gate, which is based in  
35 the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne. The programme is managed by a partnership of  
36 23 people, including residents, councillors, and representatives from the public and  
37 voluntary sectors, which was set up in June 1999. The fieldwork for the case study,  
38 based on semi-structured interviews with partnership members, was undertaken  
39 between December 1999 and March 2001. This incorporated both the development of  
40 the partnership and early delivery phases, when local actors were engaged in the task  
41 of defining the nature of the problems in the area and devising their agenda for  
42 change.  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57

58 Theoretical framework  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 The theoretical framework of this paper is informed by a discourse analysis approach.  
4  
5 The use of discourse analysis in urban research is a relatively recent development,  
6  
7  
8 emerging in the late 1990s (HASTINGS, 1999). A special issue of Urban Studies  
9  
10 demonstrated the use of discourse in understanding partnership processes, government  
11  
12 policy on participation and the process of urban policy change (for example,  
13  
14 HASTINGS, 1999; and ATKINSON, 1999).  
15  
16

17  
18  
19  
20 Discourse theorists argue that language is structured into discourses, and are a means  
21  
22 by which people make sense of the world (MILLS, 1997). They are frameworks for  
23  
24 interpreting and understanding reality in particular ways. Each discourse presents  
25  
26 different perspectives of the same issue, highlighting some facets of debate and  
27  
28 marginalising others. As discourses define problems within the framework of a  
29  
30 discourse, so they also posit solutions. Discourses define what is thinkable or  
31  
32 possible, and steer action and debate in a way that is compatible with that discourse  
33  
34 (ATKINSON, 1999). As such, discourses frame particular facets of a problem,  
35  
36 legitimising and de-legitimising certain practices and actions. Discourses are not  
37  
38 simply a means of describing or viewing the world, but they serve to structure action  
39  
40 in a manner congruent with that discourse (ATKINSON, 1999; MILLS, 1997).  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48  
49 A discourse analysis approach presents a useful theoretical framework for this paper  
50  
51 for a number of reasons. It provides a tool for identifying how policy discourses of  
52  
53 community and of participation affect the design of regeneration programmes. It also  
54  
55 enables an exploration of the ways in which different actors within an NDC  
56  
57 partnership understand the process of participation, by exploring the language and the  
58  
59 terms of reference that they use to describe and analyse their own role within the  
60

1  
2  
3 process. Once identified, it is possible to explore how these local discourses of  
4 participation affect the ways in which people participate in regeneration; and the ways  
5 in which the interplay of different discourses affects the nature of partnership work.  
6  
7  
8  
9

### 10 11 12 A history of participation in regeneration 13

14  
15  
16  
17 In the aftermath of the Second World War, many Western democracies attempted to  
18 address issues around poverty and deprivation using mainstream policy instruments,  
19 such as the provision of social housing and welfare support. Such was the faith in  
20 these measures that one UK observer was moved to remark that “the Welfare State  
21 has feverishly increased its responsibilities until no-one is ill-clad or hungry, and no-  
22 one experiences real want or poverty” (MACCALMAN, quoted in SODDY, 1955:  
23 57). However, in the 1960s it became clear that poverty still thrived within many  
24 cities (ATKINSON, 2000; LAWLESS, 1989), and increasing levels of urban unrest  
25 prompted many governments to rethink their approaches towards tackling deprivation.  
26 This led to the creation of area-based initiatives (ABIs) such as the Community  
27 Action Program in the US, and the Urban Programme and the Community  
28 Development Projects (CDPs) in the UK. These initiatives provided discrete packages  
29 of funding to address poverty in particular areas. ABIs have since become one of the  
30 principal policy instruments through which governments intervene to deliver urban  
31 regeneration.  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54

55 From the very outset ABIs have involved and engaged local residents, but their role in  
56 the regeneration process has changed significantly over the last four decades. The  
57 regeneration programmes of the 1960s and 1970s involved residents as the *subjects* of  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 regeneration. The dominant understanding of poverty at that time, social pathologism,  
4 deemed that poverty was the fault of the poor themselves for failing to make good of  
5 the opportunities presented to them by the welfare state (ATKINSON and MOON,  
6 1994). The object of regeneration was to re-socialise the poor, bringing them into line  
7 with the mores and values of the day. It intended to instil a work ethic and teach them  
8 to better manage their finances, their children, and their lives. In the 1980s, residents  
9 were largely excluded from the regeneration process. Urban regeneration strategies  
10 adopted market oriented approaches that aimed to increase private sector investment  
11 (MARINETTO, 2003), an approach embodied in the UK's Urban Development  
12 Corporations (UDCs). Community development was not part of the remit of the  
13 UDCs, so residents were not targeted for assistance (IMRIE and THOMAS, 1992),  
14 nor were they consulted on many of the decisions that were taken (PARKINSON and  
15 EVANS, 1990).

16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36 It was in the late 1980s and early 1990s that residents took a much more active role in  
37 ABIs. While the market-led approaches of the 1980s had effected major physical  
38 changes in the inner cities, they had failed to substantially alter the circumstances of  
39 the poor. In the case of the UDCs, this failure was blamed on the lack of resident  
40 participation (PARKINSON, 1993). At the same time, the nature of government in  
41 many Western democracies was changing. The state shifted from assuming sole  
42 responsibility for the management and delivery of services, to engaging the public,  
43 private and voluntary sectors in service provision. This was said to be broadly  
44 indicative of a shift from *government* to *governance* (GOODWIN AND PAINTER,  
45 1996). This shift was clearly reflected in the changing management structures for  
46 regeneration in the early 1990s, which involved partnerships between local  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 government, public institutions and voluntary organisations (BULL AND JONES,  
4 2006; GOVERNA AND SACCOMANI, 2004; JONES, 1997). These changes in the  
5  
6 nature of government opened up space for the participation of local residents in  
7  
8 regeneration. Residents became involved in initiatives such as Denmark's Urban  
9  
10 Regeneration Programme (PLØGER, 2001) and the UK's Single Regeneration  
11  
12 Budget (SRB), not only as the subjects, but also as the managers, of regeneration  
13  
14 (WARD, 1997). Resident participation is now firmly established in the regeneration  
15  
16 process, and is not only viewed as an inherently necessary practice, but as a panacea  
17  
18 to regeneration failure (DARGAN, 2007).  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26

### 27 Critiquing participation

28  
29  
30  
31  
32 Despite such a longstanding tradition of involving residents in regeneration, the  
33  
34 participation process remains fraught with difficulties. Many studies have shown that  
35  
36 residents are frequently excluded and disempowered in a process that is meant to be  
37  
38 empowering. One of the first studies to explore the problems around participation and  
39  
40 power was Sherry Arnstein's seminal work "*A Ladder of Community Participation*"  
41  
42 (1969), which has formed the basis of many subsequent analyses of participation. She  
43  
44 criticised the blanket acceptance of participation as an inherently 'good thing', and  
45  
46 questioned what exactly could be understood by the term citizen participation.  
47  
48 Arnstein argued that participation should not simply be concerned with involving  
49  
50 people in decision-making. For Arnstein, participation was about *power*:  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57

58 My answer to the critical *what* question is simply that citizen participation is a  
59  
60 categorical term for citizen power... In short, it is the means by which they

1  
2  
3 can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the  
4  
5 benefits of the affluent society (*ibid.*: 216, emphasis in the original).  
6  
7  
8  
9

10 Without the redistribution of power, Arnstein argued that participation was an empty  
11  
12 experience. She developed an eight-point typology of the participation process  
13  
14 (Figure 1), depicted as rungs on a ladder, with each rung representing the particular  
15  
16 degree of power of the participants to determine the end product.  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21

22 Figure 1: Arnstein's ladder of public participation  
23  
24  
25  
26

27 Much subsequent research into participation has been based on Arnstein's work,  
28  
29 modelling participation (FREEMAN et al., 1996; WILCOX, 1994), and exploring  
30  
31 issues around access, power, and the extent to which residents are genuinely involved  
32  
33 in regeneration programmes. Such research has demonstrated that, despite a rhetoric  
34  
35 of empowerment, residents are rarely afforded the same status at the negotiating table  
36  
37 as their professional and political counterparts (FOLEY and MARTIN, 2000;  
38  
39 GEDDES and BENINGTON, 1995; HEALEY, 1997; MURDOCH AND ABRAM,  
40  
41 1998). Residents' perceived lack of skills and resources means that other participants  
42  
43 do not always treat them as equals, as it is felt that they come to the negotiating table  
44  
45 empty-handed (GEDDES and BENINGTON, 1995; PLØGER, 2001). MABBOTT  
46  
47 (1993) and PLØGER, (2001) found that the partners with the greatest power and  
48  
49 influence within partnerships were those who made a significant *financial*  
50  
51 contribution to the process and were able to control resources. They were then able to  
52  
53 act as 'gatekeepers' with the ability to control access to the decision-making process,  
54  
55 which allowed little scope for resident participation. Moreover, a survey by the UK's  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions revealed that one fifth of  
4 local authorities surveyed stated that citizen participation merely confirmed decisions  
5 that had been taken in their absence (DETR, 1998). Finally, the lack of experience of  
6 the community partners means that their concerns and values can more easily be  
7 subsumed within the agendas of other partners. HASTINGS (1996) states that “the  
8 strong imperative which many partners feel to try to persuade others of their own  
9 virtues, undermines the apparently democratic nature of the structure” (*ibid.*: 266).  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21

22 The UK Government’s approach to community participation  
23  
24  
25  
26

27 Despite the difficulties of securing effective community involvement, it remains a key  
28 feature of urban regeneration initiatives. In the UK, successive regeneration  
29 programmes have attempted to address the criticisms surrounding participation and  
30 give residents a more powerful voice in management and decision-making processes.  
31 This drive to improve participation assumed a new urgency in 1997 with the election  
32 of the Labour government. ‘Community participation’ is a defining feature of  
33 Labour’s regeneration agenda, which was articulated as a National Strategy for  
34 Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR) (SEU, 1998; 2000; 2001). Within the NSNR, the  
35 Government argues that active citizen participation is key to ensuring success and the  
36 sustainability of regeneration programmes, and states that one of the major failings of  
37 previous ABIs is that they lacked quality participation. Almost all of the regeneration  
38 schemes emerging from government since 1997 have stipulated that they must be  
39 managed in partnership, and must include local residents in all aspects of decision-  
40 making (HALL and NEVIN, 1999; MARINETTO, 2003).  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 The Government's rhetoric of participation was given substance after the publication  
4 of a detailed guidance manual: *Involving Communities in Urban and Rural*  
5 *Regeneration: A Guide for Practitioners* (DETR, 1997). The manual provides a  
6 comprehensive guide to the complexities of the participation process, including  
7 establishing participation, capacity building, and involving minority groups in  
8 regeneration.  
9

10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20 While the very existence of the manual demonstrates the strength of the  
21 Government's commitment to participative processes, it reveals a commitment to a  
22 particular *type* of participation which appears at odds with the rhetoric of  
23 empowerment openly espoused. First, the manual is not written for local people but  
24 provides advice for officials in partnerships on how to foster local participation,  
25 indicating that the manual is addressed to partnerships which have already been  
26 formed in the absence of community participation (ATKINSON, 1999). Thus, the  
27 community will become involved in an organisation which already has its own  
28 hierarchy, with its own rules and operating procedures (*ibid.*). The members of this  
29 partnership act as gatekeepers to participation, with the power to determine who can  
30 become involved in the regeneration and in what capacity.  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48  
49 Second, in spite of a strong rhetoric of 'empowerment', the manual positions  
50 members of the community in an *advisory* capacity to the partnership. Although the  
51 wishes and views of the community are important, they are subordinate to the  
52 interests of the partnership as a whole. Community members are placed in the position  
53 of 'mediator' between the partnership and the wider community, and have the  
54 responsibility of explaining difficult decisions to residents and attempting to deal with  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 their grievances. As such, community members are placed in the position of  
4 representing the partnership to the community, rather than representing the  
5 community to the partnership.  
6  
7  
8  
9

10  
11  
12 The manual also articulates the Government's vision of 'community', a concept  
13 which is central to the 'New Labour'<sup>2</sup> project (MARINETTO, 2003). It has not only  
14 been used to distance the 'New Labour' from the Labour party of old, but has also  
15 formed the basis for a critique of the individualism of neo-liberalism, and more  
16 specifically, of Thatcherism. Whereas Thatcher argued that "there is no such thing as  
17 society", the current Labour Government believes that individuals are created by  
18 society and form their identities through their relationships with others. Furthermore,  
19 while Thatcher argued that it is through the pursuit of the individual's self-interest  
20 that society benefits, the Government argues that it is in pursuing the interests of the  
21 community that the individual benefits. Thus, for Labour, the notion of community is  
22 reciprocal, imbued with the idea of both rights and responsibilities.  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40

41 The decline of good communities is often cited by the Government, and especially by  
42 Tony Blair, as the cause of criminality, social exclusion and the breakdown of society.  
43 During his leadership campaign, Blair argued that "the break-up of family and  
44 community bonds is intimately linked to the breakdown of law and order" (quoted in  
45 RENTOUL, 1997: 368). The solutions to these problems, therefore, lie in the  
46 rebuilding of community:  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57

58 The only way to rebuild social order and stability is through strong values,  
59 socially shared, inculcated through individuals, family, government, and the  
60

1  
2  
3 institutions of civil society (Blair, quoted in DRIVER and MARTELL, 1998:  
4  
5 29).  
6  
7  
8  
9

10 In this sense, the Government views community as an entity in which people are  
11 interdependent, and have shared values and a moral obligation to one another. This  
12 shared morality is central to the Government's vision of community. Community is  
13 presented as a tightly-knit unit, in which members are loyal, committed and  
14 responsible to each other (LEVITAS, 1998).  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23

24 The guidance manual on involving communities in regeneration (DETR, 1997) argues  
25 that communities are made up of people with similar or common characteristics  
26 including age, ethnicity, and interest. Individuals may belong to multiple communities  
27 at the same time, and their involvement in particular communities can change over  
28 time.  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

39 Although recognising that communities are complex and difficult to define, in the  
40 context of regeneration, communities are defined spatially. Furthermore, these spatial  
41 communities are imbued with the sense of togetherness and shared purpose that  
42 defines the Government's more general vision of community as outlined above. The  
43 manual acknowledges that there may be some conflict between members of a  
44 regeneration community, and that partnerships should not expect an immediate  
45 consensus within a community. However, these conflicts are portrayed as being only  
46 temporary.  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Given the diversity of interests and of people living in an area, do not expect a  
4  
5 consensus to emerge as a result of involving the community in regeneration.  
6

7  
8 *At least initially* there may be divergent opinions and conflict (*ibid.*: para.  
9  
10 2.15, emphasis added).  
11

12  
13  
14  
15 The implication is that partnerships will be able to develop a consensus amongst  
16  
17 community members shortly after they become involved in the regeneration process.  
18  
19 Thus, while the guidance accepts that members of communities may have differing  
20  
21 opinions, there somehow remains an underlying sense of shared-ness that can be  
22  
23 uncovered through dialogue. Community participation is founded on the belief that  
24  
25 people will pull together to raise their area out of poverty. It is this sentiment which  
26  
27 underpins Labour's ABIs which seek to involve 'the community'.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33

#### 34 New Deal for Communities

35  
36  
37

38  
39 The flagship of the Government's approach to participative area-based regeneration  
40  
41 was the New Deal for Communities (NDC). The programme, "a showcase for state of  
42  
43 the art intensive regeneration" (SEU 1998: 55) was developed by several government  
44  
45 departments, including the then Department for Environment, Transport and the  
46  
47 Regions (DETR), the Treasury and the newly established Social Exclusion Unit  
48  
49 (SEU). It formed the cornerstone of New Labour's regeneration agenda, and had the  
50  
51 Government's discourses of community and participation at its heart.  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56

57  
58 NDC was launched in 1998 when 17 'pathfinders' were awarded funding under  
59  
60 Round 1 of the programme (a further 22 areas were given funding the following year

1  
2  
3 in the second, and final, round of the programme). It was designed to fund projects  
4  
5 operating within a clearly identified urban neighbourhood of not more than 4,000  
6  
7 households over a ten year period. Each eligible area was chosen by central  
8  
9 government using the Index of Local Deprivation (ILD), which was used to identify  
10  
11 districts suffering from intense and multiple forms of deprivation. These districts were  
12  
13 then invited to apply for NDC funding. Central government provided approximately  
14  
15 £50 million over the lifetime of each individual NDC programme, and additional  
16  
17 funding was levered in through the private, voluntary and other public sectors.  
18  
19 Programmes were managed through multi-sectoral partnerships.  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26

27 NDC was more flexible than previous initiatives insofar as its aims were not too  
28  
29 prescriptive, requiring only that bids focused on poor job prospects; high levels of  
30  
31 crime; a rundown environment; and poor neighbourhood management and lack of co-  
32  
33 ordination of the public services that affected it. This allowed bids to be tailored to  
34  
35 better suit local needs. The guidance for NDC gave example projects, listed in Table  
36  
37  
38  
39 1.  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Table 1: Round 1 bidding guidance suggestions for projects under NDC

One of the key features of the NDC was its strong rhetoric of participation. Bids had to demonstrate that local residents were involved at every stage, from selecting the NDC area to the design and management of projects. The Government promised to reject bids or withhold funding from those partnerships which did not sustain good quality participation throughout the life of the programme. The rationale for this participative approach was to allow the community to feel it had ownership over the

1  
2  
3 decisions which were taken, which would in turn improve the sustainability of the  
4  
5 programme when the funding came to an end (DETR, 1997; SEU, 1998).  
6  
7  
8  
9

### 10 Critiquing the design of NDC 11

12  
13  
14  
15 Despite a strong rhetoric of community participation and empowerment, NDC was  
16  
17 beset by delays, hostility and in-fighting, particularly in its early years. Problems have  
18  
19 included in-fighting and unresolved tensions between residents, local authorities and  
20  
21 public sector agencies; and clashes between local authority schemes and projects  
22  
23 funded by NDC (HALL, 2003; PRESS ASSOCIATION, 2004). Board meetings at  
24  
25 the Aston Pride partnership in Birmingham were described as “poisonous and  
26  
27 anarchic” (WEAVER, 2004). The NDC programme in Finsbury experienced conflict  
28  
29 amongst residents and between residents and the council, and had its funding  
30  
31 suspended due to allegations that the board was undemocratic (WEAVER, 2002c;  
32  
33 2002d). NDC Shoreditch clashed with the local authority over housing plans, and had  
34  
35 funding withheld by the Government because its plans were deemed inappropriate  
36  
37 (WEAVER, 2001; 2002a; 2002b). All in all, WEAVER (2002c) estimated that by  
38  
39 February 2002, NDC partnerships failed to spend two thirds of their budgets due to  
40  
41 mounting tensions.  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49

50  
51 It is the contention of this paper that the community participation element of the  
52  
53 programme played a significant role in undermining the success of NDC. This was  
54  
55 not a failure of partnerships to properly execute the process of participation, but rather  
56  
57 a design flaw in the NDC programme itself, resulting from the specific discourses of  
58  
59 community and of participation built into the NDC programme.  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6 First, the discourse of community underpinning NDC is problematic suggesting as it  
7  
8 does that communities are united entities seeking to pursue the same goals. This  
9  
10 idealistic notion of community was, for some time, a feature of many analyses of the  
11  
12 participation process. Arnstein's work, for example, arguably homogenised  
13  
14 participants on the ladder of participation into one consensual citizen. However,  
15  
16 recent research has identified that communities are composed of diverse, sometimes  
17  
18 competing, groups. FOLEY and MARTIN (2000: 486) state that "community  
19  
20 aspirations are nowhere near as homogenous as government pronouncements  
21  
22 frequently imply", and SHIRLOW and MURTAGH (2004: 58) challenge the  
23  
24 assumption "of community as a distinctive stakeholder with a shared set of values".  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31

32 Despite practical evidence that communities do not speak with one voice (FOLEY  
33  
34 and MARTIN, 2000), and despite the Government's acknowledgement that  
35  
36 communities are both complex and diverse (DETR, 1997), NDC was founded upon  
37  
38 the notion of community as a united, consensual and spatial entity. Implicit in this is  
39  
40 an assumption that the people who live within a shared space will have a common set  
41  
42 of goals and priorities, and will work towards a collective vision of how their  
43  
44 'community' should develop. This is reflected in the timetable for NDC. All NDC  
45  
46 partnerships were given a maximum of eighteen months in which to develop and  
47  
48 prepare to deliver a multi-million pound regeneration strategy based on the needs of  
49  
50 the 'community', as articulated by that community. During this eighteen month  
51  
52 period, bidders were required, in consultation with local people, to select an area of  
53  
54 not more than 4,000 households; to formulate a working partnership involving local  
55  
56 residents, the public, private and voluntary sectors; to ascertain the type and causes of  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 problems to be addressed by the initiative based on a sound locally-developed  
4 evidence base; to submit an outline bid after three months; to put in place a  
5 constitution and guidelines for good working practice including, for example, an  
6 equalities policy; to develop management and support structures to assist delivery  
7 (including a staff team); and to develop a detailed plan for delivering a ten year multi-  
8 million pound community-led regeneration programme which would succeed where  
9 all others had failed, all in constant dialogue with local residents, including  
10 traditionally hard-to-reach groups.  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24

25 There was no scope within this time frame for conflict or delay, but conflict was not  
26 anticipated. While the Government guidance on participation accepts that members of  
27 communities may have differing opinions and viewpoints, it also argues that there  
28 remains an underlying sense of shared-ness that can be uncovered through dialogue.  
29 The time-scale for developing an NDC partnership and a programme for regeneration  
30 reflects this presumption of consensus. No time was given to resolve conflicts or to  
31 find a way forwards if different groups expressed different opinions as to how they  
32 would like the regeneration to proceed.  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45

46 Crucially, this assumption of uniformity also extends to the participation process.  
47 While acknowledging that there are different *levels* of participation (such as  
48 'information', and 'citizen power'), government policy does not tend to distinguish  
49 between the different *strategies* that people might use to participate at these levels. In  
50 other words, everyone who participates at the level of 'deciding together' is  
51 understood to be participating in the same way, according to the rules set by the  
52 gatekeepers of the participation process. Therefore, not only does the Government  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 presume that people think alike, but it also assumes that they will participate using the  
4 same methods according to the same code in order to achieve their common goals.  
5  
6 These issues are not confined to government policy alone. The differences in the ways  
7  
8 in which people participate are rarely addressed in academic analyses of participation,  
9  
10 which tend to favour issues of access and power. However, as this paper will  
11  
12 demonstrate, the methods people use to participate can have a significant impact upon  
13  
14 their experiences of participation and on the success of regeneration.  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21

22 The contention of this paper is that the discourses of community and of participation  
23  
24 underpinning ABIs are overly simplistic, and their use in regeneration policy is, as a  
25  
26 consequence, highly problematic. Based on an analysis of an NDC partnership in the  
27  
28 north of England, this paper will demonstrate that participants in NDC do not act as a  
29  
30 homogenous unit and do not always participate using the same methods in order to  
31  
32 achieve their goals. While partnership members share the same levels of access in  
33  
34 decision-making structures, the members of partnership boards act more as  
35  
36 individuals than as a united community, and have such different understandings of the  
37  
38 purpose of participation and the role of residents in the regeneration process that it has  
39  
40 created conflict serious enough to affect delivery of the programme  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

In order to examine the process of 'community' participation at a local level, the  
paper will examine a New Deal for Communities partnership in Newcastle upon Tyne  
(NDC Newcastle West Gate), a Round 1 pathfinder invited to bid for NDC resources  
in 1998. NDC West Gate was managed through a partnership of 23 people, which was  
responsible for developing the bid and managing the programme once funding was  
awarded in April 2000. This body was called the Interim Steering Group (ISG), which

1  
2  
3 became a fully constituted Board in 2002. The methodology for the study was based  
4  
5 around semi-structured interviews with partnership members undertaken during the  
6  
7 first 3 years of the programme. These interviews explored, amongst other things, the  
8  
9 role of residents in the regeneration process; what individuals understood by the term  
10  
11 participation; and their experiences of participating in NDC. This information was  
12  
13 supplemented by document analysis and observations of partnership meetings.  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19

### 20 Defining the role of residents

21  
22  
23  
24 The ISG was designed to operate as a partnership with multi-sectoral interests  
25  
26 represented on the Board. The ISG had 23 seats, 12 for local residents (three from  
27  
28 each local political ward covered by the scheme), four councillors (one from each  
29  
30 ward), a voluntary sector representative, a private sector representative, and five  
31  
32 partner agency representatives. The residents, known as community reps, either  
33  
34 volunteered themselves at a special meeting, or at ward sub-committees.  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40

41 Although many local actors involved in the partnership felt that participation was a  
42  
43 highly skilled task, none of the ISG members interviewed received any training prior  
44  
45 to their involvement in NDC. Furthermore, none of those members had been given a  
46  
47 'job description' or any explanation as to what their role on the ISG would be. In the  
48  
49 absence of any training or guidance as to how they should participate, the members of  
50  
51 the ISG carved out their own roles within the process and established their own ideas  
52  
53 as to the purpose of their participation. Both residents and agency partners alike  
54  
55 agreed that the principal role of the residents was to articulate the needs of their  
56  
57 communities. However, the process of using this local knowledge was described in  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 three very different ways by the participants, in terms of directing; advising; and  
4  
5  
6 controlling.

7  
8  
9  
10 First, the majority of the residents (often with prior experience of partnership or  
11  
12 voluntary work), saw themselves as *directing* the programme. They described  
13  
14 themselves as integral members of the partnership, communicating the needs of their  
15  
16 community, and judging whether or not the solutions proposed by partners and  
17  
18 residents would work. They were confident of their role in the partnership, and  
19  
20 considered themselves to be on an equal footing with the professionals at the table.  
21  
22 These residents were confident of their role on the ISG and felt their local knowledge  
23  
24 was a valuable asset to the partnership. They felt that they were respected and  
25  
26 important members of the Board.  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33

34 Participation means sitting around a table and bringing to it the skills that you  
35  
36 have acquired from living and working in a place twenty-four hours a day,  
37  
38 seven days a week for umpteen number of years. And I mean that is a huge, a  
39  
40 *huge* gift to bring to anybody's partnership... that is as valuable as somebody  
41  
42 saying I can bring £50 million (Resident).  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 Second, while the agency partners also viewed local knowledge as a highly valuable  
49  
50 asset for the partnership, and they agreed that participation was about residents  
51  
52 identifying problems, unlike the residents above they understood that this would be  
53  
54 undertaken in an *advisory* rather than directorial capacity.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 I am very happy with the concept of *with* people, engaging people, letting  
4 them have their say and making sure that you take their views and wishes into  
5 account (Government Office North East).  
6  
7  
8  
9

10  
11  
12 I think they should be providing the information, because otherwise we don't  
13 know what people want or what they think they need. I also think they have to  
14 have a say in what's being done, or what's being agreed. They have to feel  
15 confident that what they are saying will be listened to (Partner representative).  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21

22  
23  
24 Although the residents and the partners both valued the contribution of local people,  
25 the process of contributing that knowledge was described in two different ways.  
26  
27 Whereas the residents placed themselves at the *head* of the partnership, the  
28 professional participants placed the residents more at the *periphery*, *informing* the  
29 Partnership Board rather than *directing* it. Their view was that residents were there to  
30 provide information to the partnership, because "we don't know what people want".  
31 This information would then be "taken into account". As far as the professional  
32 participants were concerned, therefore, the residents were not there to direct the  
33 process but to provide information for the partners to consider when they made  
34 decisions.  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49

50  
51 Finally, a small group of local residents<sup>3</sup> with little prior experience of regeneration or  
52 partnership working believed that their role in NDC was to steer the regeneration and  
53 participation as they saw fit. They drew very clear distinctions between the residents  
54 on the one hand, and the partners and local authority on the other. When they used  
55 'we' in their speeches, they were referring only to themselves, and not to the wider  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 partnership, which suggests that they did not see themselves as working in partnership  
4  
5 with the other members of the ISG.  
6  
7  
8  
9

10 When we got on board, we couldn't believe what was happening. And when  
11 we sussed it all out, we thought 'yeah, well, it's going to stop'. We know what  
12 we want and we want this done right (Resident).  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17

18 They were of the view that, once they had articulated local needs, these needs should  
19 then be met without question or negotiation. Their own role, therefore, was not simply  
20 to inform the process or even to direct it, but to *control* it.  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27

28 The local actors involved in the partnership clearly had very different ideas about the  
29 role of residents within the process. Furthermore, NDC's strong rhetoric of  
30 participation gave them the confidence to participate as they chose, and the other  
31 members of the ISG were reluctant to challenge them. The members of the ISG  
32 subsequently followed their own beliefs about how they should participate. What was  
33 particularly interesting (and, as it transpired, rather problematic) was that participants  
34 did not share a single, unified vision of the participation process. This is significant  
35 given that the Government acknowledges different *levels* of participation but does not  
36 make mention of different *strategies* for participation, presuming that participants all  
37 participate in the same way. This uniform approach to participation was not evident in  
38 NDC West Gate. Instead, participants viewed the participation process through the  
39 lenses of two very different and conflicting discourses – the collaborative and the  
40 confrontational – and it is to these that the paper will now turn.  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Discourses of participation  
4  
5  
6  
7

8 The collaborative discourse of participation was employed by the agency partners and  
9 the majority of residents on the ISG. This group believed that there was a 'right way'  
10 to participate (WHITE, 1996), which involved replicating professional practice,  
11 particularly in terms of the ways in which people communicated at ISG meetings.  
12 They argued that there were specific ways in which it was acceptable to communicate  
13 in meetings, and that residents should be made aware of these if they were to  
14 participate effectively and make a valid contribution. They advocated calm, clearly  
15 articulated and rational forms of communication.  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

29 I'm all for free speech and I'm all for individuals having their voice heard, but  
30 in the right forum and in the right way and in a constructive way (Partner  
31 representative).  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

39 People shouldn't shout. People shouldn't swear. I'm not saying you shouldn't  
40 get irritated and frustrated and annoyed, but there are ways to behave and  
41 there is a social etiquette (Partner representative).  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

49 Effective participation was equated with *constructive* participation: working with the  
50 process not against it; compromising; and reaching consensus. Participation was  
51 viewed as a process of discussion and negotiation in partnership with other local  
52 stakeholders, in which individuals should subordinate their own personal agendas to  
53 the greater good of the partnership in order to reach consensus.  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 [Residents] have just got to say “well look, I can hear what you’re saying, I  
4  
5 don’t agree what you’re saying, my idea would be this. But if eight out of  
6  
7 twelve people say yes, then I’ll go along and I’ll support you wholeheartedly”,  
8  
9 you know? (Resident).  
10  
11

12  
13  
14  
15 The dissident residents, however, advocated more *confrontational strategies* for  
16  
17 participation, and did not subscribe to the view that individual needs should be  
18  
19 subordinated to the needs of the majority. Rather than viewing participation as a  
20  
21 process of compromise, they viewed it as a process of control. This was born of their  
22  
23 own fears of being excluded from regeneration. They came into the NDC process  
24  
25 expecting that they would be excluded and disempowered. They viewed participation  
26  
27 as a battle in which they tried to forcibly exercise their rights, which they believed  
28  
29 would be taken from them. They described participation by employing war-like  
30  
31 metaphors, portraying participation as a *battle*, a *struggle* against authority. They  
32  
33 described themselves as *fighting* the partnership board, *fighting* for their rights, and  
34  
35 *fighting* to be heard. They perceived themselves going to meetings as “lambs to the  
36  
37 slaughter”, of having to speak out and get angry “otherwise we’re just colluding with  
38  
39 our own oppression” (personal interviews).  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 Our energy has been sapped by the process and we’re losing the will to fight.  
49  
50 In a lot of so-called deprived areas, you know what’s right and what’s wrong  
51  
52 and know that things are being done very underhandedly, you become  
53  
54 anaesthetised. Your fight goes out of you... That fight, that action seems to  
55  
56 have been very cleverly sucked out of us (Resident).  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 This NDC is like you've been through World War One, World War Two and  
4  
5  
6 you're trying to stop World War Three... I'm fighting for our lot (Resident).  
7  
8  
9

10 This view of participation as a battle was reflected in the ways in which these  
11  
12 residents expressed themselves. Their arguments, while valid and often insightful,  
13  
14 were not always clearly articulated or expressed in a calm and rational fashion. These  
15  
16 residents often had an aggressive tone of voice; they frequently raised their voices;  
17  
18 and used abusive language.  
19  
20  
21

22  
23  
24 Why shouldn't we act like that? If we want to get angry, if we want to swear,  
25  
26 it's in every document about participation and NDC that people will be angry  
27  
28 because they haven't got anything, and after 30 years of spending money on  
29  
30 the West End you can't see the benefits. So of course people will be angry  
31  
32  
33 (Resident).  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

39 Their interactions with other participants were also confrontational, and they made  
40  
41 personal comments about and to other participants, and their speeches, when directed  
42  
43 at others, were punctuated by sighs, hostile looks and short, jabbing hand gestures.  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 For this group of residents, the issue of control was paramount and to subordinate  
49  
50 their views to the greater good or to hold their counsel was tantamount to being  
51  
52 silenced. When they were asked to go along with the majority view, and when their  
53  
54 demands for projects and funding were not met, they argued that they were being  
55  
56 excluded and disempowered.  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 They were, furthermore, firmly of the belief that residents on the partnership should  
4 vote as one, and those who did not vote with them were considered to be somehow  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

They were, furthermore, firmly of the belief that residents on the partnership should vote as one, and those who did not vote with them were considered to be somehow 'against' them. As a consequence, this group sought to undermine other residents. They accused them of being unrepresentative, of being afraid of the local authority, of collaborating with the local authority, of abusing their position and neglecting local people. Participation for them was less of a process of *partnership*, than one of *control*. However, the aggressive tone and the continued anger and suspicion of these residents led some members of the ISG to simply dismiss their contributions as emotive or irrelevant. As these residents did not have access to the linguistic capital that would allow their utterances to be accepted as legitimate by other members of the ISG (ATKINSON, 1999), they were unable to control the regeneration in the way that they might have liked.

Feeling unable to exercise their power through debate, these residents used their role and identity as a weapon to achieve a particular end. SCOTT (1985) examined strategies of 'everyday resistance' amongst peasants in a village in the Muda region of Malaysia. He suggested that the ordinary weapons of powerless groups generally required no co-ordination or planning, and included foot-dragging, false compliance, feigned ignorance, slander and sabotage. The dissident residents on the ISG used similar weapons as a means of achieving their goals and protesting against decisions with which they did not agree. They employed tactics such as deliberately delaying and drawing out debates; continuing debates after votes had been taken; demanding re-votes if decisions went against them; (all examples of foot-dragging), and walking out of meetings (sabotage)<sup>4</sup>, as a means of exercising power. The use of gossip and slander, also identified by Scott (*ibid.*), has proved to be an important tactic by both

1  
2  
3 the dissidents and other partnership members as a means of undermining the  
4 credibility, and the confidence, of their opponents. Although the dissidents were not  
5 able to achieve their positive ends (pushing a particular project through, for example),  
6 they were able to damage NDC, by delaying progress, drawing out meetings, and  
7 pushing items off the agenda for discussion when the ISG ran over time in meetings.  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14

15  
16  
17 As the tactics of the dissidents were not accepted as legitimate, those who subscribed  
18 to the collaborative approach subsequently employed counter strategies as a device to  
19 silence or undermine the ‘troublemakers’. Some members of the ISG argued that this  
20 was necessary to protect the ISG and ensure that the regeneration progressed. The  
21 members of the ISG employed four counter strategies against the confrontational  
22 residents. The first was to simply *ignore* the ‘troublemakers’ by allowing them to  
23 make an argument and then not responding to it, either by moving on to the next item  
24 of business, or by continuing a discussion as though the argument had never been  
25 made. The second strategy was to *rebuff* the residents, allowing them to express  
26 themselves and afterwards flatly stating that their arguments were not valid or true.  
27 The third was to *cajole* the residents. This initially involved them being accused of  
28 being troublemakers, of delaying the process, of threatening the bid, of letting down  
29 their communities. They were told that should the Phase 2 bid for funding fail, they  
30 would only have themselves to blame. A code of conduct was later used as a means to  
31 silence more vocal expressions of dissent. The fourth strategy was employed outside  
32 meetings, where members of the ISG sought to *undermine the credibility* of the  
33 ‘troublemakers’. The members of the ISG called into question the representativeness  
34 of the residents, their motivations for participating and their *ability* to participate.  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Members described them as “not very intellectually sound”, “barking mad”, and  
4  
5  
6 “difficult” (personal interviews).  
7  
8  
9

10  
11 The dissident residents were not swayed by efforts to undermine or exclude them, and  
12  
13 remained a dissenting voice on the ISG. Similarly, the residents who employed more  
14  
15 collaborative strategies failed to be persuaded of the virtues of the alternative  
16  
17 approach. Indeed, the conduct of the confrontational residents persuaded other  
18  
19 residents to become *less* confrontational, for the sake of progressing the regeneration.  
20  
21 However, the more that the other members of the ISG rebuffed or ignored the  
22  
23 dissenting residents, the more likely they were to become confrontational. The two  
24  
25 different approaches became locked in a struggle for dominance. As a consequence of  
26  
27 the hostility and what was described as ‘aggressive’ and ‘intimidating’ behaviour, ISG  
28  
29 meetings were frequently fraught, characterised by arguments and enmity. As a result,  
30  
31 the partnership gained a bad reputation amongst local people for its lack of progress  
32  
33 and in-fighting. The unwillingness of residents, local groups and agencies to become  
34  
35 involved was attributed to this poor reputation. Furthermore, many of the Board  
36  
37 members found participating in NDC very stressful. They held almost wholly  
38  
39 negative associations of the process because the ISG was so hostile and  
40  
41 confrontational. Some of the Board members described how they disliked and, in  
42  
43 some cases, dreaded going to the ISG. Participants across the board felt that the  
44  
45 experience had affected them personally and, for some, the experience had seriously  
46  
47 affected their mental and physical health.  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53

54  
55  
56  
57 [My predecessor] talked me through the difficulties and the political  
58  
59 difficulties of what was happening, around the fact that the meetings were  
60

1  
2  
3 meetings from hell, to put it like that. I mean, really, that he found the ISGs  
4 extremely stressful. And I may be wrong, but I suspect that's part of the  
5 reason he took early retirement. I think NDC was the final straw for him  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 (Partner representative).

11  
12  
13  
14  
15 We've never gained nothing but a bad head, sore feet, tireless nights,  
16 depression. Sometimes, I feel like hanging myself outside that Civic Centre,  
17 hanging myself literally, with a big plaque around my neck, you know?  
18  
19 Because I've got that depressed. She has been in tears before, I've been in  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
tears. What have we got ourselves into? (Resident)

The ISG was accused of being little more than a talking shop, and the partners, public and Government Office North East expressed their frustrations at the lack of visible progress. One of the consequences of this lack of progress was an underspend in their first year of some £1 million. Now in its seventh year, NDC West Gate has become significantly less adversarial and has made better progress in meeting spending targets. However, this required several years of hard work with residents and local agencies in order to change NDC's image and persuade those outside the Partnership that the programme was worth becoming involved in.

## Discussion

Clearly, this level of conflict within partnerships was not what the Government envisaged when it described NDC as a "showcase for state of the art intensive regeneration" (SEU, 1998: 55). It is the contention of this paper that one of the critical

1  
2  
3 factors in creating problems in the Newcastle case was the existence of two  
4  
5 conflicting discourses of participation, and that this situation was itself the result of a  
6  
7 series of complex interconnected issues.  
8  
9

10  
11  
12 First, the naïve sociology of community underpinning NDC served to structure the  
13  
14 programme in a particularly problematic way. The Government's vision of community  
15  
16 supposes that individuals within spatial communities share a common mindset; that  
17  
18 they share a vision for their area, and that they will work together, pulling in the same  
19  
20 direction, to see that vision realised. Conflict and division were not anticipated,  
21  
22 leading to a very tight timetable for NDC, in which bidders had 18 months to establish  
23  
24 functioning partnership boards that would prepare and deliver a multi-million pound  
25  
26 regeneration strategy based on the needs of the community, as articulated by that  
27  
28 community. There was no scope within this timetable for any form of mediation or  
29  
30 conflict resolution between disparate factions within partnerships and communities.  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

39 This situation was then compounded by the simplistic conception of participation  
40  
41 underpinning the programme. Assuming that people would engage in the process in  
42  
43 the same way in order to achieve their common goals, the Government focused on  
44  
45 resolving issues of access to decision making structures rather than on the strategies  
46  
47 that participants would use to participate. As a result, none of the participants in NDC  
48  
49 received a 'job description', and the partnership did not have time to meet to negotiate  
50  
51 their roles, expectations or their understandings of participation prior to beginning  
52  
53 their work in the area. Participants were, therefore, left to carve out their own roles in  
54  
55 the process, and the strong rhetoric of community-led regeneration meant that many  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 participants were unwilling to compromise their approach, leading to the existence of  
4  
5 multiple, conflicting discourses of participation.  
6  
7  
8  
9

10 The policy expectation that residents would choose to participate in the same way, as  
11 a united and homogenous community, was arguably naïve. The participants in NDC  
12 West Gate acted as individuals, rather than a collective. The very fact that no single  
13 discourse of participation dominated NDC West Gate created a situation in which the  
14 advocates of different discourses of participation were locked in a struggle for power  
15 and authority that threatened the progress of the regeneration. This failure to  
16 recognise the realities and complexities of community participation, and to account  
17 for them in policy, compounded the inherent difficulties of regeneration work. There  
18 is clearly a need for policymakers to be more circumspect about the almost uncritical  
19 use of 'community' and 'participation' in policy and to try to make better allowances  
20 for the realities of human nature, particularly in the timetabling of initiatives.  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

### 39 Conclusions

40  
41  
42 For many years, 'community participation' was viewed by academics and  
43 policymakers as an inherently 'good thing', like spinach (ARNSTEIN, 1969: 216) or  
44 apple pie (PECK and TICKELL, 1994: 251). It has long been considered a 'benign'  
45 process and a solution to regeneration failure (DARGAN, 2007; JONES, 2003).  
46  
47 However, recent academic research into regeneration has begun to question the  
48 uncritical use of 'community' in policy, both as a response to its pervasiveness in the  
49 Government's regeneration agenda, and overwhelming evidence that communities do  
50 not speak with once voice (FOLEY AND MARTIN, 2000; MEEGAN AND  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 MITCHELL, 2001; SHIRLOW and MURTAGH, 2004; WILSON, 2005). Building  
4  
5 on that work, this paper has critiqued the concept of 'community', arguing that it is  
6  
7 far more complex than the idealistic vision underpinning many area-based  
8  
9 regeneration programmes. Simply living within the same neighbourhood is not  
10  
11 enough to foster a sense of shared-ness – of community – amongst the people who  
12  
13 live there. The reality of working in deprived urban areas is that the sense of  
14  
15 abandonment and exclusion felt by residents has fostered a sense of suspicion and  
16  
17 mistrust of those outside of their community (be that a spatial or social community),  
18  
19 and of those in authority. This is particularly true in those areas with a long history of  
20  
21 involvement in regeneration, in which residents have competed with each other for  
22  
23 scarce resources, and have come into conflict with statutory agencies when  
24  
25 regeneration has failed to significantly alter their quality of life. This type of suspicion  
26  
27 helped to promote the confrontational discourse of participation in NDC West Gate,  
28  
29 where residents were so distrustful of those in authority that they viewed all of their  
30  
31 interactions within the partnership as a fight to protect the interests of their  
32  
33 community.  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42

43  
44 However, no *real* allowances are made within regeneration programmes for the  
45  
46 difficulties inherent in working with, and fostering participation in, fragmented,  
47  
48 excluded, and what some may even argue are 'abandoned' communities. To merely  
49  
50 acknowledge the existence of these problems and the difficulties of partnership  
51  
52 working is insufficient to surmount the age-old tensions and hostilities which have  
53  
54 been a feature of previous ABIs. The true complexity of deprived communities has  
55  
56 yet to be reflected in policy, but perhaps the difficulties experienced by NDC  
57  
58 partnerships will provide a catalyst for change.  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6 Finally, this research has highlighted the complexities of the participation process,  
7  
8 and the difficulties that occur when participants adopt different understandings of the  
9  
10 function of participation and their own role within that process. Traditionally,  
11  
12 research on participation has focused on issues of access, representation and power.  
13  
14 These remain important subjects for research, as residents continue to be  
15  
16 disempowered in a process that is meant to be empowering. However, a more  
17  
18 thorough examination of the different strategies of participation employed by  
19  
20 participants is also required. Just as research has recognised that communities are  
21  
22 complex and do not think with one mind, so it must also recognise and reflect upon  
23  
24 the complexities of the participation process. There has been a tendency in some  
25  
26 research to 'homogenise' participants, and although the different needs and  
27  
28 expectations of participants are recognised, there is an assumption that people  
29  
30 participate in regeneration in the same ways. However, this research has shown that  
31  
32 participants do not act as one unit, but instead understand the participation process in  
33  
34 very different ways, holding divergent opinions about what participation should aim  
35  
36 to achieve, and what they themselves hope to get out of the experience. These  
37  
38 differences can create serious conflict and division within partnership structures.  
39  
40 Research must look beyond the issues of access first raised by Arnstein, and critically  
41  
42 examine the strategies employed by participants which, as this paper has  
43  
44 demonstrated, can reveal much about the nature of relationships and struggles for  
45  
46 authority within partnership structures.  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57

58 References  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 ARNSTEIN. S. (1969). "A ladder of community participation" *Journal of the*  
4  
5 *American Institute of Planners* **35**(4) pp. 216-24.  
6  
7

8  
9  
10 ATKINSON, R. (1999). "Discourses of partnership and empowerment in  
11  
12 contemporary British urban regeneration." *Urban Studies* **36**(1): pp. 59-72.  
13  
14

15  
16  
17 ATKINSON, R. (2000). "Combating social exclusion in Europe: the new urban policy  
18  
19 challenge". *Urban Studies* **37**(5/6) pp. 1037-1055.  
20  
21

22  
23  
24 ATKINSON, R. and MOON, G. (1994). *Urban Policy in Britain*. London,  
25  
26 Macmillan.  
27

28  
29  
30  
31  
32 BULL, A. and JONES, B (2006). "Governance and social capital in urban  
33  
34 regeneration: a comparison between Bristol and Naples". *Urban Studies* **43**(4)  
35  
36 pp. 767-786.  
37  
38

39  
40  
41 DARGAN, L. (2007). "Conceptualising regeneration in the New Deal for  
42  
43 Communities". *Planning Theory and Practice*, forthcoming.  
44  
45

46  
47  
48 DETR (1997). *Guidance on Involving Communities in Urban and Rural*  
49  
50 *Regeneration*. London, DETR.  
51  
52

53  
54  
55 DETR (1998). *New Deal for Communities: Phase 1 Proposals Guidance for*  
56  
57 *Pathfinder Applicants*. <http://www.regeneration.detr.gov.uk/newdeal.htm>  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 DRIVER, S. and MARTELL, M. (1998). *New Labour: Politics After Thatcherism*.  
4  
5 Cambridge, Polity Press.  
6  
7

8  
9  
10 FOLEY, P., and MARTIN, S. (2000). "A new deal for the community? Public  
11 participation in regeneration and local service delivery". *Policy and Politics*  
12  
13 **28**(4): pp. 478-91.  
14  
15

16  
17  
18 FREEMAN, C., LITTLEWOOD, S. and WHITNEY, D. (1996). "Local government  
19 and emerging models of participation in the Local Agenda 21 process." *Journal*  
20  
21 *of Environmental Planning and Management* **39**(1): pp. 65-78.  
22  
23  
24

25  
26  
27 GEDDES, M. and BENINGTON, J. (1995). *The role of partnerships in promoting*  
28  
29 *social cohesion: research report for the UK*, University of Warwick Business  
30  
31 School.  
32  
33  
34

35  
36  
37 GOODWIN, M. and PAINTER, J. (1996). "Local governance, the crises of Fordism  
38 and the changing geographies of regulation." *Transactions of the Institute of*  
39  
40 *British Geographers* **21**: pp. 635-648  
41  
42  
43  
44

45  
46  
47 GOVERNA, F. and SACCOMANI, S. (2004). "From urban renewal to local  
48 development. New conceptions and governance practices in the Italian  
49 peripheries". *Planning Theory and Practice* **5**(3) pp.327-348.  
50  
51  
52  
53

54  
55  
56 HALL, S. (2003). "Teething problems for poverty scheme". *The Guardian* 21.10.03  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 HALL, S. and NEVIN, B. (1999). "Continuity and change: a review of English  
4 regeneration policy in the 1990s." *Regional Studies* **33**(5): pp. 477-481.  
5  
6  
7

8  
9  
10 HASTINGS, A. (1996). "Unravelling the process of 'partnership' in urban  
11 regeneration policy." *Urban Studies* **33**(2): pp. 253-268.  
12  
13  
14

15  
16  
17 HASTINGS, A. (1999). "Discourse and Urban Change: Introduction to the Special  
18 Issue." *Urban Studies* **36**(1): pp. 7-12.  
19  
20  
21

22  
23  
24 HEALEY, P. (1997). *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented*  
25 *Societies*. England, Macmillan.  
26  
27  
28

29  
30  
31 IMRIE, R. and THOMAS, H. (1993). Urban policy and the Urban Development  
32 Corporations. *British Urban Policy and the Urban Development Corporations*. R.  
33 Imrie and H. Thomas. London, Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

39  
40  
41 JONES, M. (1997). "Spatial selectivity of the state? The regulationist enigma and  
42 local struggles over economic governance." *Environment and Planning A* **29**: pp.  
43 831-864.  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49

50  
51 JONES, P. (2003). "Urban regeneration's poisoned chalice: is there an impasse in  
52 (community) participation-based policy?" *Urban Studies* **40**(3) pp. 581-601.  
53  
54  
55

56  
57  
58 LAWLESS, P. (1989). *Britain's Inner Cities*. London, Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 LEVITAS, R. (1998). *The Inclusive Society?* London, Macmillan.  
4  
5  
6  
7
- 8 MABBOTT (1993). "The role of community involvement." *Policy Studies* **14**(2): pp.  
9  
10 27 - 35.  
11  
12  
13
- 14 MARINETTO, M. (2003). "Who wants to be an active citizen? The politics and  
15  
16 practice of community involvement". *Sociology* **37**(1) pp.103-120.  
17  
18  
19
- 20 MEEGAN, R. and MITCHELL, A. (2001). "'It's not community round here, it's  
21  
22 neighbourhood': neighbourhood change and cohesion in urban regeneration  
23  
24 policies". *Urban Studies* **38**(12) pp. 2167-2194.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29
- 30 MILLS, S. (1997). *Discourse*. London, Routledge.  
31  
32  
33
- 34 MURDOCH, J. and ABRAM, S. (1998). "Defining the limits of community  
35  
36 governance." *Journal of Rural Studies* **14**(1): pp 41-50.  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42
- 43 PARKINSON, M. and EVANS, R. (1990). Urban Development Corporations. *Local*  
44  
45 *Economic Policy*. M. Campbell. London, Cassell Education Limited.  
46  
47  
48  
49
- 50 PARKINSON, M. (1993). "A new strategy for Britain's cities?" *Policy Studies* **14**(2):  
51  
52 pp. 5-13.  
53  
54  
55  
56
- 57 PECK, J. and TICKELL, A. (1994). "Too many partners...the future for regeneration  
58  
59 partnerships." *Local Economy* **9**: pp. 251-265  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6 PLØGER, J. (2001). "Public participation and the art of governance". *Environment*  
7  
8 *and Planning B* **28** pp.219-241.

10  
11  
12 PRESS ASSOCIATION (2004). "Disputes dogging regeneration schemes, MPs say".  
13  
14  
15 *The Guardian* 14.09.04

16  
17  
18 RENTOUL, J. (1997). *Tony Blair*. London, Little, Brown.

19  
20  
21 SCOTT, J. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak*. London, Yale University Press.

22  
23  
24  
25 SEU (1998). *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood*  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32 *Renewal*. London, HMSO.

33  
34  
35  
36 SEU (2000). *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: A Framework for*  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
*Consultation*. London, HMSO.

SEU (2001). *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal: National Strategy*  
*Action Plan*. London, HMSO.

SHIRLOW, P., and MURTAGH, B. (2004). "Capacity-building, representation and  
intra-community conflict". *Urban Studies* **41**(1): pp. 57-70.

SODDY, K. (1955). *Mental Health and Infant Development* London, Routledge and  
Kegan Paul.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

WARD, K. (1997). "The Single Regeneration Budget and the issue of local flexibility." *Regional Studies* **31**(1): pp. 78-81.

WEAVER, M. (2001). Housing row threatens pioneering regen project. *The Guardian* (Society supplement) 03.10.01.

WEAVER, M. (2002a). Flagship scheme under threat. *The Guardian* (Society supplement) 14.02.02.

WEAVER, M. (2002b). Latest flagship project flounders. *The Guardian* (Society supplement) 20.02.02.

WEAVER, M. (2002c). Friction slows New Deal. *The Guardian* (Society supplement) 20.02.02.

WEAVER, M. (2002d). Fresh dispute hits New Deal scheme. *The Guardian* (Society supplement) 04.03.02.

WEAVER, M. (2004). "Divided and spoiled". *The Guardian* 14.04.04

WILCOX, D. (1994). *The Guide to Effective Participation*. Brighton, Delta Press Ltd.

WILSON, N. (2005). "The dark side of community development". *Planning Theory and Practice* **6**(4) pp. 519-526.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

---

<sup>1</sup> Although the author was involved in the national evaluation of New Deal For Communities on behalf of The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in the Office Of The Deputy Prime Minister, the research for this paper took place before the evaluation began in late 2001 and is in no way based upon material from that evaluation. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'New Labour' refers to a political brand name, used by a small group around Tony Blair prior to the election of 1997, in order to signal that the Labour Party had undergone a process of change and reform.

<sup>3</sup> These residents will be referred to as the dissident residents, as they frequently represented a dissenting voice on the partnership.

<sup>4</sup> Until July 2000, residents had to be in the majority on the ISG before any vote could be taken. The Board could not take any major decisions unless meetings were quorate. By walking out of meetings, residents could render the ISG inquorate, thereby preventing any decisions from being taken.

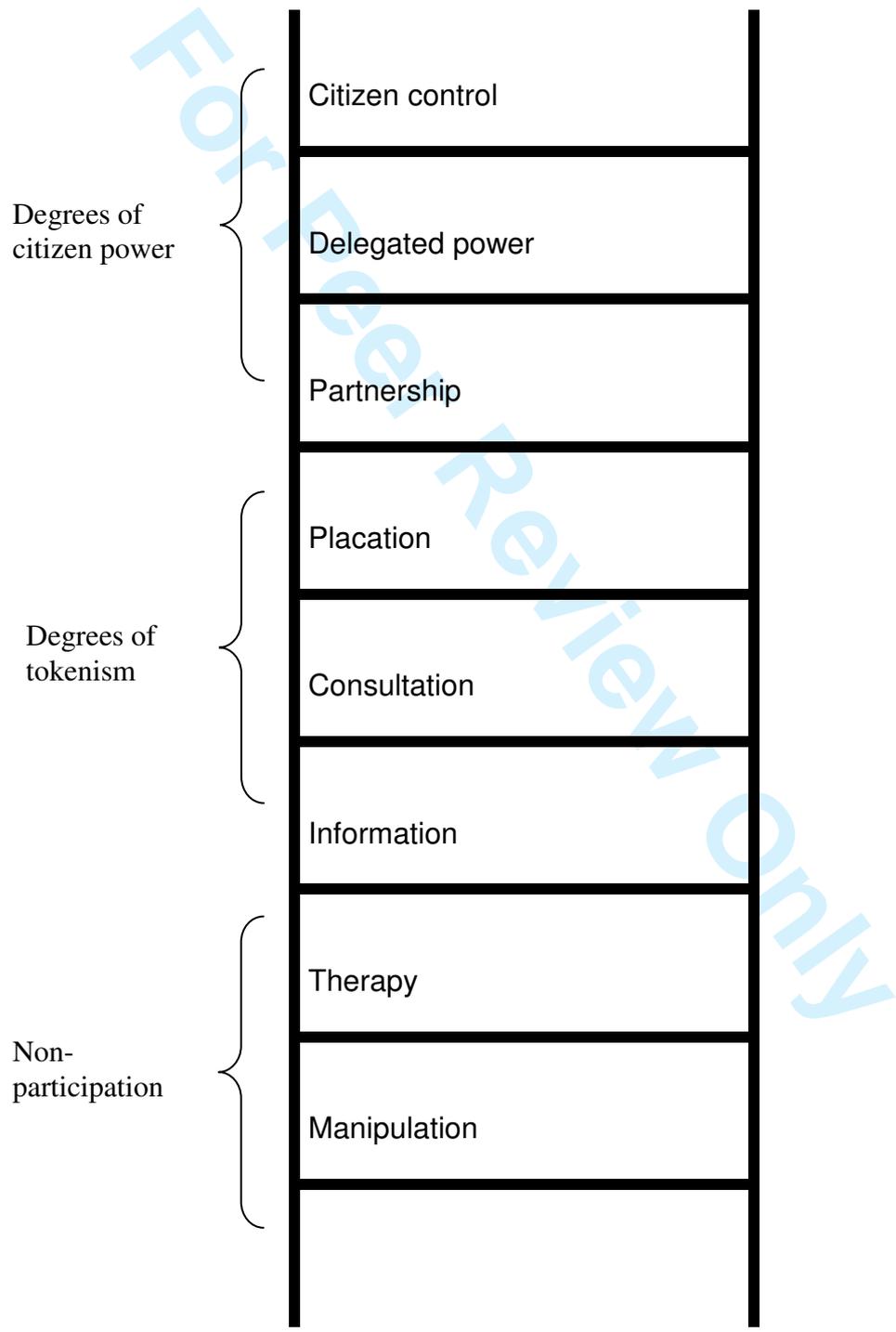
Acknowledgements

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 The author would like to thank Rose Gilroy, Andy Pike, Gary Simpson, Geoff Vigar  
6  
7 and Neil Ward for comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Thanks also to the  
8  
9 anonymous referees for their comments.  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

“Participation and Local Regeneration in the UK: The case of the New Deal for Communities”

Figure to accompany text

Figure 1: Arnstein’s ladder of public participation



From Arnstein (1969).

“Participation and Local Regeneration in the UK: The case of the New Deal for Communities”

Table to accompany text

Table 1: Round 1 bidding guidance suggestions for projects under NDC

<b>Aim</b>	<b>Project Suggestion</b>
Housing	Refurbishment
Neighbourhood management	Employing neighbourhood wardens to co-ordinate services
Encouraging enterprise	Business start-up, co-ops, community businesses
Crime and drugs	Work with crime and disorder partnerships
Education	Links with schools, adult education
Health	Improving access to services, health promotion and education
Families	Providing health visitors, childcare, early learning programmes
Access to services	Providing transport to outside services, encouraging services to relocate within the area
Access to information	Providing access to IT
Community building	Cultural and sports programmes
Worklessness	Training, skills, encouraging employers to create jobs in the area

Adapted from DETR (1998).