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To what extent is the New Deal for Communities an appropriate basis on which to tackle social exclusion?

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis provides an examination of the theory and practice of the New Labour government's New Deal for Communities regeneration programme. It provides an account of how New Labour conceptualises socially excluded neighbourhoods and argues that it conceives of three crucial components integral to its prescription for 'regenerating' such spaces. These comprise three models:

- Agency
- Community
- Exclusion

This thesis argues that, collectively, these three models amount to a policy 'recipe' encompassing both analysis of alleged deficiencies of excluded spaces and their inhabitants and prescriptions for their physical and social regeneration.

In order to explore these models and their explanatory and normative potential, fieldwork was conducted in a New Deal community with a focus on interviewing residents and other intended participants in the regeneration process. The thesis argues, on the basis of this empirical work, that each model is conceptually suspect and produces some questionable practical effects. In particular, it asks whether there is an appropriate understanding of how communities are reproduced by human agents and assesses the expectations placed on residents to be 'active citizens' and 'owners' of urban regeneration. This raises, in turn, some important questions about the inclusive nature of the New Deal for Communities programme as a whole.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of whether the programme can or should be reformed and situates that discussion within an acknowledgement of the tension between central government's vision for socially excluded areas and its commitment to localism and devolved decision-making.

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List of abbreviations used in the text

ABI	Area-based initiative
ACE	Agency, Community, Exclusion
ASBO	Antisocial Behaviour Order
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CCTV	Close Circuit Television
CDP	Community Development Project
CHAP	Community Health Action Partnership
CRESR	Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research
DSS	Department of Social Security
DTTO	Drug Treatment and Testing Order
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
HMRF	Housing Market Renewal Fund
ICE	Interest, Community, Exclusion
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MIRAS	Mortgage Interest Tax Relief at Source
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NIMBY	Not-in-my-backyard
NRU	Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PA	Participatory Appraisal
PALS	People and Life Support in Sneinton
PCT	Primary Care Trust
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
TSO	The Stationery Office
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

As early as the 1930s, George Orwell was commenting on the concern induced by the looming shadow cast by ‘the slums’:

‘...even people with comfortable incomes are vaguely troubled by the thought of ‘the slums’. Hence the clatter about ‘re-housing’ and ‘slum clearance’ which we have had at intervals ever since the war. Bishops, politicians, philanthropists and whatnot enjoy talking piously about ‘slum clearance’, because they can then divert attention from more serious evils and pretend that if you abolish the slums you abolish poverty.’ (2001; 59) ¹

What we might call spatial concentrations of poverty has indeed been a concern for government policymakers and other assorted interested parties in the UK for some time. Over the last eighty years or so, the nature of that concern has shifted, as have ideas about solving this seemingly intractable social ‘problem’. This is evinced by an examination of policy responses over this period that have sought to either manage, renew, regenerate, develop or simply demolish incarnations of concentrated poverty, identified by commentators variously as slums, ghettos, ‘dump’ or ‘sink’ estates or excluded neighbourhoods. However, as Hoban and Beresford have pointed out, the existence of such areas at the beginning of the new century is *‘living testimony to the failed regeneration policies of the past’* (2001; 312) and illustrates how policy failure is the point around which these responses coalesce. Again, Orwell had prefaced this debate when he noted presciently in 1937 that *‘all this talk has led to surprisingly small results.’* (2001; 60)

However, underwriting these approaches and the different analytical or political trends they reflect is a common belief at the ‘high’ policy level of the need to prescribe area based policy

¹ Throughout the thesis, quotation marks and italics will signify direct quotations. Italics may also occasionally be used for emphasis in the main text. Bold type is also used in places for emphasis where the quote is already italicised.

measures to 'treat' poor areas and address the conditions of those who reside in them. Therefore, despite changing social and political contexts, there have been successive programmes that have emerged, all aimed at tackling some aspect of areas designated as being 'in need'. This process began with the slum clearance programmes in the 1930s, which demonstrated a rather fundamentalist belief in razing the physical habitat of the urban poor, and continues today with New Labour's more developmental Neighbourhood Renewal agenda, which combines some physical re-development with improvements in local service delivery and a range of didactic measures for residents of such areas, under the banners of 'participation', 'partnership' and 'empowerment'.

Whilst it can be difficult to pin down the origins of the anxiety surrounding concentrated poverty and its consistent status as a policy concern, the belief in the need to devise area-based programmes to address it remains an important and totemic aspect of government policy. As far as New Labour is concerned, it has continued this tradition and aimed to analyse and 'tackle' the problems experienced by residents of poor areas and 'Bring Britain Together' (SEU 1998):

'Over the past twenty years, hundreds of poor neighbourhoods have seen their basic quality of life become increasingly detached from the rest of society...Many neighbourhoods have been stuck in a spiral of decline. Areas with high crime and unemployment rates acquired poor reputations, so people, shops and employers left.'
(SEU 2001a; 7)

However, New Labour differs from its immediate predecessors in government in some key aspects. Firstly, as Ginsburg has noted, New Labour has emphasised the 'social' elements of urban regeneration and its place in wider anti-poverty agendas. The reclaiming of regeneration as a social welfare arena contrasts with previous Conservative administrations that focused on economic investment as the solution to areas perceived to be in decline (1999; 58). According to Cochrane, this reflected a New Right conviction that social welfare could not be decoupled from economic development and a questioning of the efficacy of public sector professionals. (2000; 190) Moreover, New Labour has constructed 'detached' poor areas not as 'deprived' as in previous eras, but as 'socially excluded.'² This appears to convey residents of poor areas as both materially and spatially distinct from the 'mainstream'. New Labour's urban policy focus on 'renewing' specified 'neighbourhoods' and 'communities' is designed to bridge the 'gap' that is deemed to permeate both the physical and moral landscape

² Although it defines poor areas via its index of 'deprivation', illustrating that the term is still in use.

of post-industrial Britain. Only identifying and ‘renewing’ these areas (thereby closing the gap) will produce the orderly, inclusive and productive society New Labour desires. From this viewpoint, the ‘renewal’ agenda is one that fits with broader welfare objectives derived from a distinctive New Labour social vision founded upon reframing the relationship between citizen and state (Clarke 2005, Heron and Dwyer 1999, Lund 1999).

1.2 Explaining the policy concern with poor spaces

Given the sustained policy interest in spatial manifestations of inequality over recent years, it is perhaps surprising that there have been apparently few attempts in the academic literature to fully explain this trend. However, there appear to be a number of critical frameworks to analyse this interest nonetheless. For example, one framework would be to adopt the radical argument that the policy agenda is controlled by an elitist or bourgeois agenda whereby the consent of the ‘dangerous classes’ for the iniquities of capitalism is maintained through localised poverty programmes. Cochrane has explained what is known as ‘*gilding the ghetto*’ (Community Development Project 1977):

‘From this perspective the role of urban policy was to make cities safe (and productive) for ‘global capitalism’, to manage the conflicts within them and particularly to manage the poor or the socially excluded, so that they did not disrupt the processes of social and economic restructuring.’ (2000; 200)

Indeed, this is a framework of analysis adopted by Bennington and Donnison (1999) to assess the early policy direction of New Labour.

Furthermore, these elites may construct urban programmes as challenging a ‘culture’ of poverty and changing the pathology of poor residents and intercepting the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Lupton 2003; 9). In this case, programmes reflect a judgement about the inherently feckless character of the poor or the corrosion of their character by poverty (see for example, Wilson 1987). Either way, residents have no role other than as passive policy subjects who are a problem to be solved by programmes devised by ‘experts’.

Conversely, a less cynical analysis could suggest that such programmes actually represent a genuine attempt to repair some of the damage inflicted by industrial change and improve the conditions of those who live in affected areas. Furthermore, one could say they demonstrate

the success of residents or ‘community’³ workers in placing the conditions of their areas onto the central Government policymaking radar. Indeed, perhaps it is shortsighted to view urban regeneration programmes as a domain purely of the welfare professions where social problems are selected for treatment from on high. The potential influence of claims made on government resources by ‘poor’ or excluded people *themselves* or those who work with them cannot be discounted in an analysis of policy responses. This was seen most clearly in the late 1960s, when ‘community’ work became a mechanism by which central regeneration policy was questioned and subverted at the local level (Cochrane 2000; 190). The Community Development Project, set up by the Home Office under the auspices of Jim Callaghan in 1969 embodied this tension. Those workers who were employed by the state to investigate and ‘help’ designated poor areas found themselves ‘going native’ to some extent and undermining some of the assumptions of the welfare professionals and clashing with local authorities and politicians, ostensibly their employers (Community Development Project 1977; 4).

In a similar vein of analysis, Robert Furbey has attempted to theorise successive government’s preoccupation with poor places. That is, what lies behind the anxiety provoked by areas of poverty or perceived squalor and the subsequent need to ‘regenerate’ (or demolish)? In response, he argues firstly that it derives from a fear on the part of the nineteenth century establishment, but still resonating today, of the physical and moral effects of living in the ‘*stunting environmental slums*’ (1999; 426).⁴ Stedman Jones illustrates some of these fears by citing several observers of the time who highlighted the apparent effects of ‘*decaying slum life*’ (1971; 287). For example, in 1886 Lord Brabazon wrote:

‘Let the reader walk through the wretched streets...should he be of average height, he will find himself a head taller than those around him; he will see on all sides pale faces, stunted figures, debilitated forms...’ (Stedman Jones 1971; 308)

Secondly, Furbey suggests that respectable fears about the ‘stunting’ effects reflected concerns about ‘*the evolution of the social organism*’ (1999; 426). Here Furbey locates anxiety about ‘the slums’ (and resultant urban policymaking) in two schools of nineteenth century thought: Social Darwinism and Enlightenment Organicism. He argues that those who subscribed to such thinking constructed concentrations of poverty as an ‘ailment’ of the *social* body to be ‘treated’. If ‘unmedicated’, there would be consequences for the progression of

³ The term community will be placed in inverted commas throughout the thesis. This decision will become clear as my critical engagement with the concept proceeds over the coming chapters, but suffice to say at this point that there are some misgivings about its meaning and usage in policy and academic discourse.

⁴ A concern that resonates in today’s ‘neighbourhood effects’ debate (E.g. Atkinson and Kintrea 2001).

society as a whole, destined perhaps, to remain as 'uncivilised' as its poorest extremities. Stedman Jones suggests that a 'theory of degeneration' in the 1880s succeeded in shifting middle class analysis of poverty from moral inadequacy to *'the deleterious influences of the urban environment'* (1971; 313). It became clear, he suggests, that poverty and degeneracy had to become concerns of the state as the sense of threat from the presence and possible spread of an impoverished mass began to grow (1971; 313).

Furbey continues by arguing that the theoretical fusion that created this physiological metaphor re-emerged in early Fabian fears of moral deterioration and then in later social democratic interventions into the 'welfare' of the poor (1999; 426). Certainly, poor areas are often described and rhetorically mapped by politicians and planners through a range of negative motifs such as 'disorder', 'spiral of decline', 'cycles of deprivation', 'overcrowding' and 'exclusion'. This is may be to accentuate their 'otherness' and diagnose the problems apparently peculiar to these spaces thereby differentiating them from 'healthy' (social) body parts. An excerpt from Jim Callaghan, then Home Secretary, explaining the Government's new Urban Aid programme in 1968 is typical of the way poor spaces are constructed: *'It is intended to arrest...and reverse the downward spiral which afflicts so many of these areas. There is a deadly quagmire of need and apathy.'* (Community Development Project 1977; 10)

Here we see the construction of poor spaces as defective and stunting terrain. There is a subtext of moral deterioration and a belief in the need for the state to intervene and 'treat' the 'problem'.

In contemporary terms, we can perhaps locate New Labour's preoccupation with socially excluded neighbourhoods within Furbey's (1999) explanatory framework. Certainly, the adoption of the concept of 'social exclusion' could reflect fears about the malfunction of the social body. A malfunction that manifests in neighbourhoods and people being 'cut off' from mainstream society, a situation considered morally unacceptable as well as socially problematic and economically wasteful (SEU 2001b). As Tony Blair noted:

'Over the past two decades the gap between the 'worst' estates and the rest of the country has grown. It has left us with a situation that no civilized country should tolerate... (and) we all have to pay for the costs.' (SEU 1998; 1, brackets added)

This may or may not reflect New Labour's alleged commitment to a quasi-functionalist philosophy (see for example Levitas 1998, Prideaux 2001), one that derives from the same body of Enlightenment thought Furbey discusses. Nonetheless, there is an obvious fear for

New Labour of the negative effects of living in one of the 'worst' estates and a resulting commitment that no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live (SEU 2001b; 44). New Labour maps out with familiar language the seemingly inevitable processes that cause neighbourhoods to decline:

'As areas become unpopular, those who can move out do so and families with little choice move in. As a result, the area becomes poorer...For those who live in these areas, prolonged spells out of work can lead to disaffection and exclusion, and a lack of commitment to the area. This may lead to more crime and vandalism, which leads to further decline.' (DSS 1999, cited in Deacon 2003; 133)

Therefore, this New Labour government conceives of excluded areas as a concern both because they symbolise a divided, perhaps malfunctioning society and because they believe such conditions contribute to reducing the quality of life of residents. It is this concern that the thesis will argue underpins the government's desire to refurbish excluded 'communities' and partly explains the strategy adopted to achieve this refurbishment.

1.3 The objectives of the thesis and chapter summaries

Whatever the explanation for New Labour's concern with 'excluded neighbourhoods', it is undoubtedly the case that it has prioritised urban renewal as part of its social welfare reform agenda. Indeed, it is this deployment of urban regeneration as a mechanism for delivering social change that provides the focus of this thesis. This represents the first key objective of my investigation - to establish a link between the 'New Deal for Communities' (NDC) programme, the specific policy example used to represent the wider Neighbourhood Renewal agenda, and New Labour's philosophical framework for reforming the relationship between citizen and state. This will entail a focus on what Stuart White has defined as New Labour's '*value framework*' of community, opportunity and responsibility. (2001: 4) It is through an analysis of these concepts that the linkage between NDC and the wider welfare reform project will be theorised.

The second and related objective of the thesis will be to illustrate clearly how New Labour has conceptualised excluded spaces. How do they analyse the 'communities' and residents who comprise those areas and what solutions have they devised to socially 'include' them? Again, New Labour's fetish for 'community' will form part of this discussion as it is this concept that frames much of their analysis of what is deficient and needs addressing in poor areas. As we will see, New Labour, whilst a disparate project with some inherent contradictions and tensions, has propounded a consistent vision of 'community' in which it

anchors its belief in individual responsibility - another cornerstone of its vision of a functioning, cohesive social system. Moreover, for New Labour, 'community' offers protection from social exclusion and damaging cycles of disadvantage that blight the post-industrial and inner city landscape. 'Community' is the filter through which New Labour constructs the problems of excluded spaces as well as expressing its normative vision about the future trajectory of such spaces. It is both a measuring stick and a key aspiration.

Chapter two will develop these points fully. This will be the first of two literature review chapters in which I will examine the philosophy and agenda of the New Labour 'project' with reference to articles and speeches by prominent politicians and affiliated intellectuals, as well as policy documents and reports plus academic and media commentaries. In this chapter, I hope to introduce the key elements of the welfare reform agenda and relate them, where relevant, to the conceptual framework of NDC. This will provide some context for our understanding of NDC and a basis on which the thesis can begin to explore the efficacy of both that programme and the norms and values being woven into the fabric of public welfare by New Labour's reforms.

Having clearly demonstrated the theoretical nexus that underpins NDC and how that relates to wider welfare goals, the thesis will then attempt to problematize the assumptions inherent in that nexus. In the form of a second literature review, chapter three will draw upon academic literature and research to construct a set of research questions designed to critically examine NDC and pave the way for empirical fieldwork. The literature discussed here appears to contradict New Labour's analysis of excluded spaces as well as some of its prescriptions for tackling socially excluded people and 'communities'. In the main, this is based around a destabilizing of 'community' in which scholars have sought to illustrate how assumptions of consensus and homogeneity are exaggerated. In fact, a range of articles and studies has emerged that emphasise the divided and contested nature of spatial groupings, which pose crucial questions for a programme such as NDC that is inscribed with positive notions of 'community' as a basis on which the social exclusion of people and spaces can be addressed. In particular, the way in which the needs of excluded people (the understanding of which is the first step in tackling exclusion) are conceptualised in this context appears problematic because 'community' is used to neatly package the needs and experiences of residents. Moreover, the role of social relations in creating and shaping exclusion is not considered, constrained as it is by the idea of a consensual 'community' and poverty experience.

At the outset of this research process therefore, I was aware of two distinct sets of knowledge. On the one hand, ideas and concepts found in government policy documents and ministerial

statements influenced by a pool of key thinkers and the political climate of 'New' Labour in the late twentieth century and, in contrast, academic research in articles, chapters and debates that sounded a discordant note with what government was arguing and advocating. The dislocation between the two was a major factor in provoking my research interest, but in addition provided a critical angle on New Labour that I set out to exploit. An examination of the discordant literature posed a number of questions about NDC that were necessary to explore. At the conclusion of chapter three, I hope to have illustrated how a range of authors have contributed to my critical analysis of NDC and how my research questions grew out of an exploration of that literature.

Having constructed my key research questions out of the schism between New Labour and discordant analyses, chapter four is concerned with outlining my research strategy and design. The core of the thesis is to offer some empirically grounded reflections upon NDC and New Labour by examining some of the theoretical criticisms identified in chapter three. Therefore, by way of a practical research project conducted in a specific NDC area, I wanted to generate data that would shed some light on the ability of the programme to tackle social exclusion. Chapter four will describe the variety of decisions taken to facilitate that process. These encompass methodological, epistemological and ontological decisions that impinged on the fieldwork phase of my enquiry.

The empirical fieldwork that forms the basis of the thesis was conducted in the NDC zone in Salford, Greater Manchester – what has been branded the Charlestown and Lower Kersal NDC. Chapter four will provide some background information on the area by way of context and introduction.

Following this in chapters five and six, there will be a recounting of the data generated by my research. Chapter five will firstly provide an account of the decisions taken in the field, followed by an account of data generated about NDC. This data is based around the effect NDC has had in practice and some of the debates around its relationship with residents. Chapter six follows on from these discussions by focusing on data generated with and about the residents of the NDC zone. The data will be organised according to corresponding research questions and provide the bulk of the 'evidence' on which further discussion will draw.

Chapter seven will be a discussion chapter in which I will use the data outlined in the two preceding chapters to reflect upon NDC and its ability to tackle the social exclusion of its

target residents. The thesis will conclude in chapter eight with a summary and some final conclusions.

1.4 Motivations for investigating NDC

I was drawn towards this project for two distinct reasons. In the most prosaic terms, it seemed interesting as well as important. Initially, a general sociological interest in ongoing debates around poverty and the role and function of public welfare policy in addressing material inequality; and then specifically, my curiosity with New Deal for Communities' rhetorical commitment to 'community' and 'social exclusion'. That is, NDC, one component in New Labour's 'neighbourhood renewal' programme, was an example of a public welfare policy that had a dual concern with challenging spatial concentrations of deprivation and (re)creating 'community'. NDC's combination of two of *the* contentious concepts in recent academic debate was an interesting proposition that appeared to provide fertile ground for critically grounded research and analysis.

Closer inspection revealed that NDC's conceptual configuration embodied a firm New Labour belief in the utility of 'community' to be deployed as a *mechanism* for tackling stubborn concentrations of deprivation in urban areas. Moreover, it held the view that successful (or 'sustainable' in New Labour parlance) regeneration must link an amelioration of 'social exclusion' with the behavioural reconstruction of local (excluded) residents. Therefore, it argued for a programme of not just 'renewal', but of social *change* in designated policy spaces. Extra resources must be delivered, but only reshaping the behaviour of local populations will ensure sustainable improvement.

Such scrutiny revealed that New Labour view 'communities' as *a priori* social facts borne out of shared material conditions or aspirations, as well as having beneficial *effects* for those who experience or 'have' it. That is, it implicitly perpetuates a common (mistaken?) assumption of exaggerated solidarity amongst 'working class' or disadvantaged social housing estates that can be harnessed and translated into a reified 'community' with a branded identity. NDC's role is in transforming *a priori* functioning social networks into a recognizable collective entity to which all residents can relate and respond thereby engendering responsibility and respect. The effects of this process can then provide a robust bulwark against further social exclusion created by weak social ties and disorder (in addition to material disadvantage and unequal housing and job markets). Such diagnoses of the ills of excluded urban spaces and prescriptions for tackling them provided a stimulating framework of ideas to explore. How this exploration was organised is explained below.

As noted, NDC reflects an explicit attempt to change and regulate the behaviour of individual social agents in the process of ‘building’ ‘community’. ‘Community’ being conceived as an inherent social good. That is, it relates to a much wider New Labour ‘responsibility’ agenda that encompasses encouraging active citizenship, instilling social cohesion and increasing the accountability of the state to its citizens. Examining NDC as an example of how public policy attempts to instigate such behavioural change forms the basis of a thesis that also engages with how New Labour understands the social world and the inequalities that appear entrenched within it. If there is any ‘importance’, albeit tentative, attached to the thesis, it lies at this level of examining such ‘big’ themes. As noted above, it can be argued that New Labour’s attempt to implement a responsibility agenda is consistent with a ‘Third Way’ politics integral to the genesis of ‘New’ Labour. The dominant narrative of this political transformation was that it was borne out of both a political impasse and a desire to transcend the traditional dichotomy of ‘old’ Left and ‘new’ Right and the need to reconfigure social democratic ideas and approaches to meet the ‘new’ challenges of a globalized world (Giddens 1994). This narrative is discussed further in chapters two and three.

This is a development on the political Left that should be rigorously examined for its efficacy and implications. The ‘responsibility’ component of this ‘Third way’ triumvirate is of particular interest to me because it raises some important considerations about the nature of the relationship between the individual and the state. For instance, is there a role for the state in any circumstances in regulating the behaviour of individual citizens? Assuming it does have a role, how strong should any behavioural demands be, and what is the effect (if any) of material inequality in the allocation of such demands. Indeed, the context of disadvantage is integral because, as Stuart White notes, many argue that a prerequisite for demanding responsibilities from citizens is a fair distribution of resources and opportunities⁵, what he terms a ‘civic minimum’ (2003). Whether New Labour have moved or are moving towards greater social justice to a sufficient degree is open to debate, but its commitment to a responsibility agenda is unswerving.⁶ Chapter three will explore the balance between citizen obligation and rights specifically, but much of the subsequent discussion of the government’s appetite for civic participation and active citizenship is underpinned by this crucial relationship.

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The mobilisations through NDC of 'community' and 'responsibility' to regulate or change behaviour form the backdrop of my enquiry and it is the philosophical and political ideas that inspire such an agenda that this thesis ultimately wants to engage with. That is, if such an agenda is a pillar of centre-left thinking in contemporary Britain, it requires scrutiny, debate and above all a judgement of not just its practical effectiveness, but of its egalitarian merit. I hope this thesis can play some small part in scrutinising New Labour's social agenda, using NDC as a starting point.

It is clear therefore, that the approach of the thesis is to examine NDC with reference to its ability to understand the 'communities' it seeks to regenerate and strike the correct balance between seeking to transform residents' behavioural and moral capacities and providing requisite opportunities. In a traditional sense, the focus is on how NDC conceives of the agency of its residents rather than how it addresses the material and cultural disadvantages (the structures) that created and sustained such a 'community' in the first instance. The materiality of the 'community' does feature throughout the thesis, but mainly as context as well as focal points around which 'community' relationships are negotiated. The extent to which NDC regenerates this aspect of the 'community' is of course crucial, but for this thesis will remain secondary.

1.5 The limitations of the research

The thesis clearly has limits. Firstly, the empirical conclusions reached are based on one case study of one NDC area. This necessitates that any reflections made are tentative and

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qualified. Moreover, my research is not representative of the ‘community’ under study. I was unable to gain access to minority ethnic individuals, disabled people or asylum seekers due to problems negotiating access and lack of opportunities for random encounters with people from these groups. However, I do not believe that these limitations undermine the thesis in a substantive way as I will explain in greater detail in chapters four and five.

Overall, it is my contention that this thesis offers an original contribution to a number of key debates. It is based on ‘lay accounts’ that are used to assess government policy – a research approach that is growing in influence and becoming increasingly vital to improving understandings of ‘grassroots’ experiences of policy. Additionally, the thesis seeks to enhance the theorising of ‘community’ and challenge its presence and use in policy debates. Finally, the thesis uses qualitative empirical data to explore the implementation of New Labour’s ‘recipe’ for renewing excluded areas. It unpacks that recipe before subjecting its practical and ethical components to close critical scrutiny.

Overall, I would contend that the thesis contributes to both understandings of New Labour and its approach to poor spaces and offers a critical framework by which those understandings can be cogently assessed.

Having introduced the thesis and given an account of how the ensuing discussion will proceed, I would like to turn now to the next chapter which will be an exposition of New Labour’s philosophy and policy agenda.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

As early as the 1930s, George Orwell was commenting on the concern induced by the looming shadow cast by ‘the slums’:

‘...even people with comfortable incomes are vaguely troubled by the thought of ‘the slums’. Hence the clatter about ‘re-housing’ and ‘slum clearance’ which we have had at intervals ever since the war. Bishops, politicians, philanthropists and whatnot enjoy talking piously about ‘slum clearance’, because they can then divert attention from more serious evils and pretend that if you abolish the slums you abolish poverty.’ (2001; 59)¹

What we might call spatial concentrations of poverty has indeed been a concern for government policymakers and other assorted interested parties in the UK for some time. Over the last eighty years or so, the nature of that concern has shifted, as have ideas about solving this seemingly intractable social ‘problem’. This is evinced by an examination of policy responses over this period that have sought to either manage, renew, regenerate, develop or simply demolish incarnations of concentrated poverty, identified by commentators variously as slums, ghettos, ‘dump’ or ‘sink’ estates or excluded neighbourhoods. However, as Hoban and Beresford have pointed out, the existence of such areas at the beginning of the new century is *‘living testimony to the failed regeneration policies of the past’* (2001; 312) and illustrates how policy failure is the point around which these responses coalesce. Again, Orwell had prefaced this debate when he noted presciently in 1937 that *‘all this talk has led to surprisingly small results.’* (2001; 60)

However, underwriting these approaches and the different analytical or political trends they reflect is a common belief at the ‘high’ policy level of the need to prescribe area based policy

¹ Throughout the thesis, quotation marks and italics will signify direct quotations. Italics may also occasionally be used for emphasis in the main text. Bold type is also used in places for emphasis where the quote is already italicised.

measures to 'treat' poor areas and address the conditions of those who reside in them. Therefore, despite changing social and political contexts, there have been successive programmes that have emerged, all aimed at tackling some aspect of areas designated as being 'in need'. This process began with the slum clearance programmes in the 1930s, which demonstrated a rather fundamentalist belief in razing the physical habitat of the urban poor, and continues today with New Labour's more developmental Neighbourhood Renewal agenda, which combines some physical re-development with improvements in local service delivery and a range of didactic measures for residents of such areas, under the banners of 'participation', 'partnership' and 'empowerment'.

Whilst it can be difficult to pin down the origins of the anxiety surrounding concentrated poverty and its consistent status as a policy concern, the belief in the need to devise area-based programmes to address it remains an important and totemic aspect of government policy. As far as New Labour is concerned, it has continued this tradition and aimed to analyse and 'tackle' the problems experienced by residents of poor areas and 'Bring Britain Together' (SEU 1998):

'Over the past twenty years, hundreds of poor neighbourhoods have seen their basic quality of life become increasingly detached from the rest of society...Many neighbourhoods have been stuck in a spiral of decline. Areas with high crime and unemployment rates acquired poor reputations, so people, shops and employers left.'
(SEU 2001a; 7)

However, New Labour differs from its immediate predecessors in government in some key aspects. Firstly, as Ginsburg has noted, New Labour has emphasised the 'social' elements of urban regeneration and its place in wider anti-poverty agendas. The reclaiming of regeneration as a social welfare arena contrasts with previous Conservative administrations that focused on economic investment as the solution to areas perceived to be in decline (1999; 58). According to Cochrane, this reflected a New Right conviction that social welfare could not be decoupled from economic development and a questioning of the efficacy of public sector professionals. (2000; 190) Moreover, New Labour has constructed 'detached' poor areas not as 'deprived' as in previous eras, but as 'socially excluded.'² This appears to convey residents of poor areas as both materially and spatially distinct from the 'mainstream'. New Labour's urban policy focus on 'renewing' specified 'neighbourhoods' and 'communities' is designed to bridge the 'gap' that is deemed to permeate both the physical and moral landscape

² Although it defines poor areas via its index of 'deprivation', illustrating that the term is still in use.

of post-industrial Britain. Only identifying and ‘renewing’ these areas (thereby closing the gap) will produce the orderly, inclusive and productive society New Labour desires. From this viewpoint, the ‘renewal’ agenda is one that fits with broader welfare objectives derived from a distinctive New Labour social vision founded upon reframing the relationship between citizen and state (Clarke 2005, Heron and Dwyer 1999, Lund 1999).

1.2 Explaining the policy concern with poor spaces

Given the sustained policy interest in spatial manifestations of inequality over recent years, it is perhaps surprising that there have been apparently few attempts in the academic literature to fully explain this trend. However, there appear to be a number of critical frameworks to analyse this interest nonetheless. For example, one framework would be to adopt the radical argument that the policy agenda is controlled by an elitist or bourgeois agenda whereby the consent of the ‘dangerous classes’ for the iniquities of capitalism is maintained through localised poverty programmes. Cochrane has explained what is known as ‘*gilding the ghetto*’ (Community Development Project 1977):

‘From this perspective the role of urban policy was to make cities safe (and productive) for ‘global capitalism’, to manage the conflicts within them and particularly to manage the poor or the socially excluded, so that they did not disrupt the processes of social and economic restructuring.’ (2000; 200)

Indeed, this is a framework of analysis adopted by Bennington and Donnison (1999) to assess the early policy direction of New Labour.

Furthermore, these elites may construct urban programmes as challenging a ‘culture’ of poverty and changing the pathology of poor residents and intercepting the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Lupton 2003; 9). In this case, programmes reflect a judgement about the inherently feckless character of the poor or the corrosion of their character by poverty (see for example, Wilson 1987). Either way, residents have no role other than as passive policy subjects who are a problem to be solved by programmes devised by ‘experts’.

Conversely, a less cynical analysis could suggest that such programmes actually represent a genuine attempt to repair some of the damage inflicted by industrial change and improve the conditions of those who live in affected areas. Furthermore, one could say they demonstrate

the success of residents or ‘community’³ workers in placing the conditions of their areas onto the central Government policymaking radar. Indeed, perhaps it is shortsighted to view urban regeneration programmes as a domain purely of the welfare professions where social problems are selected for treatment from on high. The potential influence of claims made on government resources by ‘poor’ or excluded people *themselves* or those who work with them cannot be discounted in an analysis of policy responses. This was seen most clearly in the late 1960s, when ‘community’ work became a mechanism by which central regeneration policy was questioned and subverted at the local level (Cochrane 2000; 190). The Community Development Project, set up by the Home Office under the auspices of Jim Callaghan in 1969 embodied this tension. Those workers who were employed by the state to investigate and ‘help’ designated poor areas found themselves ‘going native’ to some extent and undermining some of the assumptions of the welfare professionals and clashing with local authorities and politicians, ostensibly their employers (Community Development Project 1977; 4).

In a similar vein of analysis, Robert Furbey has attempted to theorise successive government’s preoccupation with poor places. That is, what lies behind the anxiety provoked by areas of poverty or perceived squalor and the subsequent need to ‘regenerate’ (or demolish)? In response, he argues firstly that it derives from a fear on the part of the nineteenth century establishment, but still resonating today, of the physical and moral effects of living in the ‘*stunting environmental slums*’ (1999; 426).⁴ Stedman Jones illustrates some of these fears by citing several observers of the time who highlighted the apparent effects of ‘*decaying slum life*’ (1971; 287). For example, in 1886 Lord Brabazon wrote:

‘Let the reader walk through the wretched streets...should he be of average height, he will find himself a head taller than those around him; he will see on all sides pale faces, stunted figures, debilitated forms...’ (Stedman Jones 1971; 308)

Secondly, Furbey suggests that respectable fears about the ‘stunting’ effects reflected concerns about ‘*the evolution of the social organism*’ (1999; 426). Here Furbey locates anxiety about ‘the slums’ (and resultant urban policymaking) in two schools of nineteenth century thought: Social Darwinism and Enlightenment Organicism. He argues that those who subscribed to such thinking constructed concentrations of poverty as an ‘ailment’ of the *social* body to be ‘treated’. If ‘unmedicated’, there would be consequences for the progression of

³ The term community will be placed in inverted commas throughout the thesis. This decision will become clear as my critical engagement with the concept proceeds over the coming chapters, but suffice to say at this point that there are some misgivings about its meaning and usage in policy and academic discourse.

⁴ A concern that resonates in today’s ‘neighbourhood effects’ debate (E.g. Atkinson and Kintrea 2001).

society as a whole, destined perhaps, to remain as ‘uncivilised’ as its poorest extremities. Stedman Jones suggests that a ‘theory of degeneration’ in the 1880s succeeded in shifting middle class analysis of poverty from moral inadequacy to *‘the deleterious influences of the urban environment’* (1971; 313). It became clear, he suggests, that poverty and degeneracy had to become concerns of the state as the sense of threat from the presence and possible spread of an impoverished mass began to grow (1971; 313).

Furbey continues by arguing that the theoretical fusion that created this physiological metaphor re-emerged in early Fabian fears of moral deterioration and then in later social democratic interventions into the ‘welfare’ of the poor (1999; 426). Certainly, poor areas are often described and rhetorically mapped by politicians and planners through a range of negative motifs such as ‘disorder’, ‘spiral of decline’, ‘cycles of deprivation’, ‘overcrowding’ and ‘exclusion’. This is may be to accentuate their ‘otherness’ and diagnose the problems apparently peculiar to these spaces thereby differentiating them from ‘healthy’ (social) body parts. An excerpt from Jim Callaghan, then Home Secretary, explaining the Government’s new Urban Aid programme in 1968 is typical of the way poor spaces are constructed: *‘It is intended to arrest...and reverse the downward spiral which afflicts so many of these areas. There is a deadly quagmire of need and apathy.’* (Community Development Project 1977; 10)

Here we see the construction of poor spaces as defective and stunting terrain. There is a subtext of moral deterioration and a belief in the need for the state to intervene and ‘treat’ the ‘problem’.

In contemporary terms, we can perhaps locate New Labour’s preoccupation with socially excluded neighbourhoods within Furbey’s (1999) explanatory framework. Certainly, the adoption of the concept of ‘social exclusion’ could reflect fears about the malfunction of the social body. A malfunction that manifests in neighbourhoods and people being ‘cut off’ from mainstream society, a situation considered morally unacceptable as well as socially problematic and economically wasteful (SEU 2001b). As Tony Blair noted:

‘Over the past two decades the gap between the ‘worst’ estates and the rest of the country has grown. It has left us with a situation that no civilized country should tolerate... (and) we all have to pay for the costs.’ (SEU 1998; 1, brackets added)

This may or may not reflect New Labour’s alleged commitment to a quasi-functionalist philosophy (see for example Levitas 1998, Prideaux 2001), one that derives from the same body of Enlightenment thought Furbey discusses. Nonetheless, there is an obvious fear for

New Labour of the negative effects of living in one of the ‘worst’ estates and a resulting commitment that no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live (SEU 2001b; 44). New Labour maps out with familiar language the seemingly inevitable processes that cause neighbourhoods to decline:

‘As areas become unpopular, those who can move out do so and families with little choice move in. As a result, the area becomes poorer...For those who live in these areas, prolonged spells out of work can lead to disaffection and exclusion, and a lack of commitment to the area. This may lead to more crime and vandalism, which leads to further decline.’ (DSS 1999, cited in Deacon 2003; 133)

Therefore, this New Labour government conceives of excluded areas as a concern both because they symbolise a divided, perhaps malfunctioning society and because they believe such conditions contribute to reducing the quality of life of residents. It is this concern that the thesis will argue underpins the government’s desire to refurbish excluded ‘communities’ and partly explains the strategy adopted to achieve this refurbishment.

1.3 The objectives of the thesis and chapter summaries

Whatever the explanation for New Labour’s concern with ‘excluded neighbourhoods’, it is undoubtedly the case that it has prioritised urban renewal as part of its social welfare reform agenda. Indeed, it is this deployment of urban regeneration as a mechanism for delivering social change that provides the focus of this thesis. This represents the first key objective of my investigation - to establish a link between the ‘New Deal for Communities’ (NDC) programme, the specific policy example used to represent the wider Neighbourhood Renewal agenda, and New Labour’s philosophical framework for reforming the relationship between citizen and state. This will entail a focus on what Stuart White has defined as New Labour’s ‘*value framework*’ of community, opportunity and responsibility. (2001: 4) It is through an analysis of these concepts that the linkage between NDC and the wider welfare reform project will be theorised.

The second and related objective of the thesis will be to illustrate clearly how New Labour has conceptualised excluded spaces. How do they analyse the ‘communities’ and residents who comprise those areas and what solutions have they devised to socially ‘include’ them? Again, New Labour’s fetish for ‘community’ will form part of this discussion as it is this concept that frames much of their analysis of what is deficient and needs addressing in poor areas. As we will see, New Labour, whilst a disparate project with some inherent contradictions and tensions, has propounded a consistent vision of ‘community’ in which it

anchors its belief in individual responsibility - another cornerstone of its vision of a functioning, cohesive social system. Moreover, for New Labour, 'community' offers protection from social exclusion and damaging cycles of disadvantage that blight the post-industrial and inner city landscape. 'Community' is the filter through which New Labour constructs the problems of excluded spaces as well as expressing its normative vision about the future trajectory of such spaces. It is both a measuring stick and a key aspiration.

Chapter two will develop these points fully. This will be the first of two literature review chapters in which I will examine the philosophy and agenda of the New Labour 'project' with reference to articles and speeches by prominent politicians and affiliated intellectuals, as well as policy documents and reports plus academic and media commentaries. In this chapter, I hope to introduce the key elements of the welfare reform agenda and relate them, where relevant, to the conceptual framework of NDC. This will provide some context for our understanding of NDC and a basis on which the thesis can begin to explore the efficacy of both that programme and the norms and values being woven into the fabric of public welfare by New Labour's reforms.

Having clearly demonstrated the theoretical nexus that underpins NDC and how that relates to wider welfare goals, the thesis will then attempt to problematize the assumptions inherent in that nexus. In the form of a second literature review, chapter three will draw upon academic literature and research to construct a set of research questions designed to critically examine NDC and pave the way for empirical fieldwork. The literature discussed here appears to contradict New Labour's analysis of excluded spaces as well as some of its prescriptions for tackling socially excluded people and 'communities'. In the main, this is based around a destabilizing of 'community' in which scholars have sought to illustrate how assumptions of consensus and homogeneity are exaggerated. In fact, a range of articles and studies has emerged that emphasise the divided and contested nature of spatial groupings, which pose crucial questions for a programme such as NDC that is inscribed with positive notions of 'community' as a basis on which the social exclusion of people and spaces can be addressed. In particular, the way in which the needs of excluded people (the understanding of which is the first step in tackling exclusion) are conceptualised in this context appears problematic because 'community' is used to neatly package the needs and experiences of residents. Moreover, the role of social relations in creating and shaping exclusion is not considered, constrained as it is by the idea of a consensual 'community' and poverty experience.

At the outset of this research process therefore, I was aware of two distinct sets of knowledge. On the one hand, ideas and concepts found in government policy documents and ministerial

statements influenced by a pool of key thinkers and the political climate of 'New' Labour in the late twentieth century and, in contrast, academic research in articles, chapters and debates that sounded a discordant note with what government was arguing and advocating. The dislocation between the two was a major factor in provoking my research interest, but in addition provided a critical angle on New Labour that I set out to exploit. An examination of the discordant literature posed a number of questions about NDC that were necessary to explore. At the conclusion of chapter three, I hope to have illustrated how a range of authors have contributed to my critical analysis of NDC and how my research questions grew out of an exploration of that literature.

Having constructed my key research questions out of the schism between New Labour and discordant analyses, chapter four is concerned with outlining my research strategy and design. The core of the thesis is to offer some empirically grounded reflections upon NDC and New Labour by examining some of the theoretical criticisms identified in chapter three. Therefore, by way of a practical research project conducted in a specific NDC area, I wanted to generate data that would shed some light on the ability of the programme to tackle social exclusion. Chapter four will describe the variety of decisions taken to facilitate that process. These encompass methodological, epistemological and ontological decisions that impinged on the fieldwork phase of my enquiry.

The empirical fieldwork that forms the basis of the thesis was conducted in the NDC zone in Salford, Greater Manchester – what has been branded the Charlestown and Lower Kersal NDC. Chapter four will provide some background information on the area by way of context and introduction.

Following this in chapters five and six, there will be a recounting of the data generated by my research. Chapter five will firstly provide an account of the decisions taken in the field, followed by an account of data generated about NDC. This data is based around the effect NDC has had in practice and some of the debates around its relationship with residents. Chapter six follows on from these discussions by focusing on data generated with and about the residents of the NDC zone. The data will be organised according to corresponding research questions and provide the bulk of the 'evidence' on which further discussion will draw.

Chapter seven will be a discussion chapter in which I will use the data outlined in the two preceding chapters to reflect upon NDC and its ability to tackle the social exclusion of its

target residents. The thesis will conclude in chapter eight with a summary and some final conclusions.

1.4 Motivations for investigating NDC

I was drawn towards this project for two distinct reasons. In the most prosaic terms, it seemed interesting as well as important. Initially, a general sociological interest in ongoing debates around poverty and the role and function of public welfare policy in addressing material inequality; and then specifically, my curiosity with New Deal for Communities' rhetorical commitment to 'community' and 'social exclusion'. That is, NDC, one component in New Labour's 'neighbourhood renewal' programme, was an example of a public welfare policy that had a dual concern with challenging spatial concentrations of deprivation and (re)creating 'community'. NDC's combination of two of *the* contentious concepts in recent academic debate was an interesting proposition that appeared to provide fertile ground for critically grounded research and analysis.

Closer inspection revealed that NDC's conceptual configuration embodied a firm New Labour belief in the utility of 'community' to be deployed as a *mechanism* for tackling stubborn concentrations of deprivation in urban areas. Moreover, it held the view that successful (or 'sustainable' in New Labour parlance) regeneration must link an amelioration of 'social exclusion' with the behavioural reconstruction of local (excluded) residents. Therefore, it argued for a programme of not just 'renewal', but of social *change* in designated policy spaces. Extra resources must be delivered, but only reshaping the behaviour of local populations will ensure sustainable improvement.

Such scrutiny revealed that New Labour view 'communities' as *a priori* social facts borne out of shared material conditions or aspirations, as well as having beneficial *effects* for those who experience or 'have' it. That is, it implicitly perpetuates a common (mistaken?) assumption of exaggerated solidarity amongst 'working class' or disadvantaged social housing estates that can be harnessed and translated into a reified 'community' with a branded identity. NDC's role is in transforming *a priori* functioning social networks into a recognizable collective entity to which all residents can relate and respond thereby engendering responsibility and respect. The effects of this process can then provide a robust bulwark against further social exclusion created by weak social ties and disorder (in addition to material disadvantage and unequal housing and job markets). Such diagnoses of the ills of excluded urban spaces and prescriptions for tackling them provided a stimulating framework of ideas to explore. How this exploration was organised is explained below.

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This is a development on the political Left that should be rigorously examined for its efficacy and implications. The ‘responsibility’ component of this ‘Third way’ triumvirate is of particular interest to me because it raises some important considerations about the nature of the relationship between the individual and the state. For instance, is there a role for the state in any circumstances in regulating the behaviour of individual citizens? Assuming it does have a role, how strong should any behavioural demands be, and what is the effect (if any) of material inequality in the allocation of such demands. Indeed, the context of disadvantage is integral because, as Stuart White notes, many argue that a prerequisite for demanding responsibilities from citizens is a fair distribution of resources and opportunities⁵, what he terms a ‘civic minimum’ (2003). Whether New Labour have moved or are moving towards greater social justice to a sufficient degree is open to debate, but its commitment to a responsibility agenda is unswerving.⁶ Chapter three will explore the balance between citizen obligation and rights specifically, but much of the subsequent discussion of the government’s appetite for civic participation and active citizenship is underpinned by this crucial relationship.

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In particular, the thesis is concerned with responsibility - one of the cornerstones of New Labour's 'community' requiring as it does members who cooperate to uphold shared values and maintain an active stake in the collective. In policy terms, a responsibility agenda necessitates a clear distinction between 'good' and 'bad' citizenship and entails a fascinating array of carrots and sticks as government tries to combine nurturing civility and kinship and above all *participation*, with policing or prodding the 'antisocial' or apathetic. Both nurturing and policing approaches involve, to varying degrees, some element of behavioural change and illustrate, I would argue, how New Labour is using an ethos of 'responsibility' to help 'build' 'community' in trying to create order and cohesion in what it believes to be an increasingly uncertain and insecure (post)-modern world.⁷ How this agenda plays out in a regeneration context is a key focus for the thesis.

The mobilisations through NDC of 'community' and 'responsibility' to regulate or change behaviour form the backdrop of my enquiry and it is the philosophical and political ideas that inspire such an agenda that this thesis ultimately wants to engage with. That is, if such an agenda is a pillar of centre-left thinking in contemporary Britain, it requires scrutiny, debate and above all a judgement of not just its practical effectiveness, but of its egalitarian merit. I hope this thesis can play some small part in scrutinising New Labour's social agenda, using NDC as a starting point.

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Chapter Two

New Labour, welfare reform and the New Deal for Communities

2.1 Introduction

As alluded to in chapter one, my research approach is located at the intersection between two sets of knowledge – the ideas and understandings that underpin New Labour’s social welfare reform agenda, and a body of academic research and commentary that contradicts or at least raises important questions about those ideas and understandings. My investigation into the New Deal for Communities (NDC) occurs at that juncture. This chapter is the first of two literature reviews providing context for the research problem through an exposition of both these sets of knowledge. The first chapter will provide an account of ‘New Labour’ as a political and philosophical project, illustrating both the genesis of its philosophy and policy direction, including discussions of ‘Third Way’ concepts and strategies and how they have influenced New Labour’s approach to welfare reform. Beyond that, the focus of the chapter is to trace the origin of the concepts that frame NDC and discuss what assumptions and analyses they reflect. The chapter concludes its exposition of New Labour’s welfare project by providing an introduction to the NDC programme. An account of the specific policy details will compliment the earlier examination of its conceptual roots.

2.2 Introducing the New Labour project

It is generally considered that the political project of ‘New’ Labour is the culmination of a process of policy and intellectual ‘modernisation’ that began under Neil Kinnock in the aftermath of the watershed general election defeat of 1983 (Burden, Petrie and Cooper 2000; 4; Fairclough 2000; 84). The three successive Blair governments since 1997 have continued to embody this project; marked out equally by their preoccupation with media representation as a dogged occupation of the political centre-ground.¹ Ideologically, New Labour was borne out of a gradual shift away from traditional ‘old’ Labour commitments to public ownership,

¹ This thesis refers to a capitalised ‘New Labour’ in order to convey a sense of the political agenda under discussion. That is, the *New Labour* brand has come to symbolise a rather sanitised social-democratic narrative that is distinct from *Labour* (Fairclough 2000). Indeed, the adoption of this brand has become widespread in academic and media discourse as commentators deploy it as part of their critical armoury – possibly subverting the original intention of party spin-doctors. *New Labour* has often become a rhetorical stick with which to beat the self-conscious ‘modernisers’.

Keynesian economic management and explicit wealth redistribution (Driver and Martell 2000; 148). The architects of New Labour were keen to distance the ‘modernised’ party under Tony Blair from the perceived failures of post-war social democracy, whilst creating a viable centre-Left political alternative to combat the conservative ‘New Right’ that had dominated British elections in the 1980s and 1990s. To some extent, the transition from ‘old’ to ‘new’ Labour also reflected an intellectual development that occurred within and without the party. A range of influences impinged on the modernising of the party and its policy direction: from the reports emerging from the Commission for Social Justice, set up by John Smith before his death, to media commentators such as Polly Toynbee and Will Hutton. A concerted effort to reconfigure left of centre politics took place over this period, a tide of intellectual endeavour that party modernisers appropriated or discarded as they felt necessary.

Much has been made of the importance placed on media presentation and political ‘spin’ by New Labour, however it would be facile to suggest that the values that they espouse can be defined according to *what they are not* (that is, ‘old’ Labour) or that the ‘project’ amounts to nothing more than a victory of style over substance (see Scammel 2003; 133). Whilst there might be question marks over the extent of their ‘newness’, New Labour embodies a definite set of values, often shaped by the personalities at the centre of the government (Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Blunkett probably being the most influential in recent years). Their policy approach is underpinned by various positions adopted in relation to poverty, the family, morality, community and wider social change. Their social and economic analyses come from a multitude of sources ranging from strands of Christian socialism (Deacon and Mann 1997), American welfare reforms (Powell 2000, Deacon 2000), Democratic party strategies in the USA (Giddens 2000; 2) and social commentaries by theorists such as Anthony Giddens and communitarian political scientists such as Amitai Etzioni (Prideaux 2004, Deacon and Mann 1997). Nor should we overlook the influence of some key ideas from the conservative Right such as the fear of (social) welfare dependency (Lister 1998; 219) and cycles of disadvantage (Deacon 2002a; 190).

Therefore, despite sporadic tensions and inevitable differences between key figures in the upper echelons of the party, it is possible to speak of a definite synthesised New Labour project encompassing a range of beliefs and aspirations. The main area of policy that has garnered most discussion is probably how New Labour has come to conceptualise inequality, disadvantage and poverty. Seen by some as the litmus test of any left of centre political party, there have been a glut of commentaries identifying the jettisoning of traditional ‘old’ Labour rhetoric about poverty and corresponding commitments to egalitarianism, equality of outcomes and wealth redistribution. They have also identified how such goals have been

supplanted by ‘third way’ concerns with reconciling social justice with economic efficiency, ‘community’, equality of opportunity and social exclusion (Levitas 1998; Lister 1998, 2000; Powell 2000, 2002; Burden, Petrie and Cooper 2000; Fairclough 2000). For example,

‘The paradigm shift in Labour party thinking on ‘welfare’ can be summed up as a move away from an equality agenda to one comprising the trinity of responsibilities, inclusion and opportunity...’ (Lister 2000; 9)

Similarly, Powell has argued that New Labour subscribes to a view that,

‘...rejects both the inequality of the new right and the equality of outcome which it associates with the old left. The new goal is social inclusion.’ (2000; 23)

It would be wrong to suggest that all of these ‘third way’ concerns were novel, but the relevant point is that they mark a break from a recent past where the Labour party was still committed to the equality of outcome and aggressive taxation of high earners. This shift, described by Ruth Lister above, has provided the basis for a distinctly New Labour social and economic agenda, as well as reflecting their political expediency. For example, when in Opposition and in the early days of government, Ministers were very careful to avoid language that might remind floating voters of their previous incarnation as a party of the socialist Left and so concepts like ‘poverty’ were displaced by discussions of ‘social exclusion’ (Deacon 2003; 6).² Similarly, Lister has noted, *‘Redistribution has become the ‘r’ word, whose name the government dare not speak...’* (2000; 10)

It seems therefore, that the transition to New Labour entailed both a genuine intellectual reformation aimed at thinking differently and a pragmatic, self-conscious effort to be *seen* to be thinking differently, which required a reformation of language not just ideas (Fairclough 2000). This went as far as attempts to disguise its redistributive policies from middle class voters – a conscious space opened between rhetoric and reality created to navigate competing voter tastes (Fairclough 2000; 143).

2.3 The Third Way

The ‘third way’ is an agenda for economic and welfare reform based on a diagnosis of the challenges facing individuals and nation states in the late 20th century. It is synonymous

² That is not to say that ‘social exclusion’ has less validity than ‘poverty’ as an analytical concept. Considerable debate has occurred around this very topic, (see for example Room 1995, Jordan 1996, Levitas 1998) but it appears, nonetheless, to be deemed less evocative in voters imaginations.

with the renaissance of the (new) Labour party during the 1990s and lent the aforementioned project of modernization a degree of intellectual gravitas. Politically, this manifested in what was portrayed as a radical agenda that celebrated going ‘beyond left and right’ (Giddens 1994). Tony Blair allied himself closely to this ‘third way’ and stated at the time,

‘The ‘Third Way’ is to my mind the best label for the new politics which the progressive centre-left is forging in Britain and beyond...It is founded on the values which have guided progressive politics for more than a century – democracy, liberty, justice, mutual obligation and internationalism. But it is a third way because it moves decisively beyond an Old Left preoccupied by state control, high taxation and producer interests; and a New Right treating public investment, and often the very notions of ‘society’ and collective endeavour, as evils to be undone.’ (1998; 1)³

Anthony Giddens, the doyen of ‘third way’ philosophy viewed its core principles as a valid and necessary response to the globalized, post-traditional ‘*runaway world*’ in which social and economic realms are typified by uncertainty and risk (Giddens 1994; 3). He posited the need for a radical ‘*generative*’ politics that must engage with this changed world, no longer structured by nature or tradition, to reform welfare systems to enable individuals to make meaningful, ‘*reflexive*’ choices by which they can successfully negotiate their own life course. In his discussion of pension provision, Mann asserts that a post-traditional, Giddensian approach believes ‘*traditional perceptions of risk are inadequate*’ for organizing public welfare provision, premised as it is on ‘*traditional welfare solutions predicated on the (insured) male ‘breadwinner*’ (2003; 220). This necessitates a reformed welfare system underpinned by an awareness of how risks and traditional structures have changed.

There are two core dimensions to the ‘third way’ thesis. Firstly, it is argued that the social and economic conditions that frame our lives have fundamentally changed. Indeed, the novel condition of society in this alleged post-industrial or post-Fordist climate is what underpins much of New Labour’s rhetoric and policy. Tony Blair’s attempt to fashion himself as a dynamic, visionary and benevolent leader in times of uncertainty is predicated on this diagnosis of change. Moreover, they are changes that New Labour argues are inevitable and must be anticipated and accepted. For example,

³ At least Tony Blair’s vision of New Labour. Chancellor Gordon Brown, more of a Labour party traditionalist, has never associated himself with ‘third way’ politics. It is a distinctly Blairite project (Naughtie 2003).

'Just as economic and social change were critical in sweeping the Right to power...The challenge for the Third Way is to engage fully with the implications of that change.' (Blair 1998; 6)

He continues by identifying those changes as the *'growth in increasingly global markets and global culture,' 'technological advancement,' 'a transformation in the role of women'* and *'radical changes in the nature of politics'* (1998; 6).

Secondly, according to Giddens these changes are said to have rendered existing models of welfare obsolete or inadequate thus making reform essential. For example,

'Welfare reform should aim to achieve a new balance of risk and security in people's lives...The post war welfare state was built around a passive notion of risk – and a passive notion of security...We now live in much more risk active environments – an observation that stretches all the way from global markets through to family relations and health care systems. Welfare systems need to contribute to the entire spirit, encourage the resilience necessary to cope with a world of speeded up change, but provide security when things go wrong.' (Giddens 1998; 29)

Giddens argues for the importance of a 'social investment state', defined by a 'positive' welfare system that fosters in people a sense of personal responsibility to others and to the state, whilst resisting the temptation of top-down, 'negative' welfare that creates '*perverse consequences*' such as dependency and social stagnation (Giddens 1998; 113). This position is reflected in New Labour's distinction between 'good' and 'bad' public expenditure whereby 'good' spending can be described as 'investment' – in education, job creation, childcare and more recently in children per se (Lister 2006); and 'bad' spending takes the form of unemployment benefit and generally the '*bills of economic and social failure*'. As Blair has explained,

'...part of the budget is spending on pensions, child benefit and people with disabilities: good, we like that. The other part is spending on unemployment and people on benefit when they should be at work: bad, we want to decrease that.' (Blair cited in Powell 1999; 21)

2.3.1 Giddens, 'risk' and the self

Whilst Giddens' theory of social change and his recommendations for welfare reform are central to his work, this actually derives from a concern with individual agents and their

relationship with the structures that govern their lives. For example, whilst his emphasis on 'positive' welfare is a response to the broad transformations that characterise the 'risk' (Beck 1992) or 'post-traditional' (Giddens 1994) society, the prescription for welfare reform is designed to promote the self-development of *individual agents* (McCullen and Harris 2004; 52) and enhance their ability to be effective social actors. Here we can see how Giddens strives for a diagnosis and prescription that will secure the symbiotic agency/structure relationship. For Finlayson, Giddens' project is about *'redeveloping or repairing social cohesion and solidarity.'* (1999; 275) Indeed, this apparent functionalist reading of social and material relations also has echoes of the organicism outlined by Furbey (1999) as discussed in chapter one.

Nevertheless, whilst Ulrich Beck argues that welfare must promote 'critical reflexivity' to negotiate risk (Deacon & Mann 1997), Giddens advocates the promotion, through welfare, of the 'autotelic self' – a normative model of individual consciousness that is more self-reliant and less contingent on certainty. His thesis rests on the belief that we now inhabit an insecure society, characterised by post-Fordist labour markets, changing family structures, widespread societal anxieties, increased scepticism about political authority (Kemshall 2002) and its ability to deliver social improvement (White 2001; xi). Crucially, Giddens differentiates this from 'traditional' society, which he correlates with Modernity. During that period, agents are said to have lived in a state of relative 'ontological security'. Human beings relationship with the external world was mediated by an attachment to certain traditions and customs making people feel secure due to their reliable and consistent social context (Finlayson 1999; 276). Following this logic, for Giddens the transformation to a 'post-traditional' society and the implosion of traditions and security-inducing social structures has a knock-on effect for the individual sense of self, threatening to overwhelm our capacity to participate in social and economic systems. It is here that Giddens argues a 'third way' can help. For Giddens these irrevocable changes require an assertive response that utilizes the welfare state to assist individuals to cope with new and changed risks. What has now become a context of ontological *insecurity* requires political strategies that enable individual agents to *'...translate potential threats into rewarding challenges, someone who is able to turn entropy into a consistent flow of experience'* (Giddens 1994; 192).

He continues by defining the autotelic self as not seeking *'to neutralize risk or to suppose that someone else will take care of the problem': risk is confronted as the active challenge which generates self-actualization'* (Giddens 1994; 192). It is by nurturing this kind of agency that the uncertainties of the transformed world can be negotiated and a sense of order can be

constructed. Crucially, according to Giddens, a negative or passive welfare state cannot equip individuals with the necessary capacity to navigate life successfully.

According to Zygmunt Bauman, this pressure for *flexibility* in absorbing the uncertainties of the risk society can be seen most clearly in today's labour markets, which demands that workers *'dismantle the habits of permanent, round-the-clock, steady and regular work.'* He asserts that, *'the strategy commended today is to make labourers forget, not to learn, whatever work ethic in the days of the modern industry's ascent was meant to teach them'* (2000; 211). Moreover, he suggests that the fetishizing of flexibility now manifests in an existential fear of immobility where freedom and the 'good life' is defined as *'life on the move'* (2000; 216). If we accept this argument, then uncertainty and risk have been reconstituted as lifestyle choices for some social groups, perhaps those Bauman refers to as the 'new global elite' as opposed to those *'who failed to jump on the fast moving train of globalization or were pushed out of it.'* (2000; 221)

2.4 New Labour's reform of public welfare

What Giddens describes as an 'active' welfare state is at the centre of New Labour's welfare reform agenda, designed to forge a *'new welfare deal between the individual and the state'* (Heron and Dwyer 1999; 91). This 'new deal' being implemented by the 'active' state equates to a pretext for reconfiguring the contract between individual and state along increasingly conditional lines (Dwyer 1999; 493). That is, receipt of public welfare is used as a carrot or stick to change the behaviour of recipients (usually to emphasise their responsibilities) and in so doing, redefine the meaning of citizenship (Dwyer; 499). Early in New Labour's first term in office, in the 1998 Green Paper, *'A new contract for welfare: New ambitions for our country'* (DSS 1998), Tony Blair outlined his vision of a 'modernised' welfare state; not dismantled as favoured by neo-liberals, nor unreformed and underperforming; but reformed on the basis of a new contract between the state and individual (Powell 1999). The distinction between 'active' and 'passive' welfare is a feature of New Labour thinking and rhetoric and has informed this 'new deal'. It also reflects an explicit acceptance of the existence of the 'dependency culture' - a much-contested social condition (see Dean and Taylor Gooby 1992). For example, Gordon Brown has commented:

'We must look hard at our own welfare system to ensure that it provides pathways out of unemployment and poverty rather than trapping people in persistent dependency. For the risks and insecurities that the welfare state was set up to combat have changed dramatically over fifty years and the welfare state has to keep up with the times. The welfare state must be about supporting people as they respond to these

challenges – extending their choices and opportunities; acting as a trampoline rather than as a safety net.’ (Cited in Driver and Martell 1998; 107)

Similarly, Tony Blair has identified the problems of a ‘passive’ welfare system,

‘In addition, the way the welfare system works is encouraging dependency, reducing self-esteem and denying opportunity and responsibility in almost equal measure.’ (cited in Heron and Dwyer 1999; 100)

The latest Work and Pensions Secretary John Hutton has recently reiterated New Labour’s belief in a dependency culture created by a passive benefit system:

‘Our predecessors – Hardie, Attlee, Wilson, Callaghan – would have been horrified to see how the notion of personal responsibility gradually became obscured over the decades as parts of our welfare system trapped people between the twin vices of benefit dependency and poverty.’ (2006; 2)

In an attempt to define a link between New Labour’s thinking on welfare reform with its political forebears, Hutton continues by stressing how their aspiration for an ‘active’ welfare state is about restoring, *‘the original Beveridge ethos of the welfare state as an enabler – empowering people to fulfil their potential, their hopes and expectations.’ (2006; 2)⁴*

Ruth Lister has suggested that this analysis of dependency has meant traditional goals such as improving benefit levels for the poorest is dismissed as ‘old’ Labour and an example of ‘passive’ welfare that promotes a dependency culture by *‘making life on benefits too attractive’ (1998; 219)*. Indeed Peter Mandelson has reinforced Lister’s view by stating:

‘The people we are concerned about, those in danger of dropping off the end of the ladder of opportunity and becoming disengaged with society, will not have their long-term problems addressed by an extra pound a week on their benefits...’ (1997; 7)

However, we know there *have* been increases in some benefit levels, although these tend to be child related as New Labour seeks to meet its self imposed child poverty targets and intervene

⁴ This appeal to ‘old’ Labour ideas and philosophy is a common strategy by New Labour politicians as they try to garner support for often controversial ‘modernized’ policies. When contrasted with the early rhetoric denouncing the ‘old’ Left, the slipperiness of how the current generation constructs their political past seems to be revealed.

in ‘cycles of disadvantage’ (Deacon 2003; 124). Presumably, Tony Blair would consider this ‘good’ public spending and in keeping with an ‘investment’ ethos of ‘active’ welfare.

As New Labour has spent time in office, the rhetoric about the ‘active’ welfare state has inevitably developed. John Hutton’s speech to the Work Foundation in 2006 illustrates how latest reforms are responding to different challenges to those identified in 1997. He mentions two specific groups who now require ‘active’ welfare – the over 50 year olds who have high levels of ‘*economic inactivity*’ (2006; 4) and those in the incapacity benefit system which ‘*traps people in poverty*’ (2006; 5). He suggests that these groups need an injection of ‘active’ welfare to increase rates of paid employment and ‘liberate’ them from passivity:

‘...we must extend the principles of active, tailored welfare across the entire welfare state – providing help and support to the key groups that remain left behind.’ (2006; 5)

Therefore, we have the prescription of ‘active’ welfare to address the dependency and economic inactivity of these groups in response to an ageing population and a new policy focus on reducing incapacity benefit rolls. Hutton implies that New Labour believes it has addressed the dependency of many groups, but these groups have fallen through the net requiring targeted, ‘active’ measures to enable them to join the ranks of those already ‘activated’ by the New Labour welfare state.

In sum, New Labour’s ‘active’ welfare state consists of both a protective and moralizing role, which encompasses a range of methods by which individual agents are encouraged or compelled to behave in ‘responsible’ ways, whilst offering a level of social protection from poverty, ill health, unemployment and so on. Deacon goes further, arguing that New Labour’s welfare mix is ‘*more coherent than some of New Labour’s critics allow*’ and includes measures to ‘*level the playing field*’ in addition to ‘*activating the players*’ (Deacon 2003; 135). In contrast to Deacon’s optimistic reading of New Labour, critics like Levitas (1998) suggest that New Labour is more concerned with functional ‘inclusion’ than any radical restructuring of patterns of inequality.

As noted in the previous chapter, Stuart White (2001) has contended that the key organizing principles of New Labour’s conception of welfare are opportunity, responsibility and ‘community’. These have been woven through their welfare reform agenda in recent years and underpin much of New Labour’s social vision. Tony Blair has argued that a reformed

welfare state must be based on this triumvirate of principles : '*(it must)...combine opportunity and responsibility as the foundation of community.*' (Cited in Deacon 1998; 307)

The next section(s) of this chapter will explore these principles and how they have been mobilized in theory and practice.

2.5 New Labour and 'community'

Perhaps the key leitmotif of New Labour is its belief in, and commitment to 'community'. The enthusiasm for 'community' has been well documented. (See for example, Driver and Martell 1997; Goes 2004; Levitas 2000; Heron 2001; Imrie & Raco 2004; Prideaux 2005; Worley 2005) It is generally considered New Labour's most notable attempt at a 'big idea' or narrative that symbolises its 'newness' (Goes 2004; 113) in addition to offering protection from criticism of being too closely associated with the market or the state (Fitzpatrick 2005; 17). For example, Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle stated in 1997 that New Labour's distinctive emphasis was '*on its concept of community*' which was not a '*soft and romantic concept*', but a '*robust and powerful idea*' which meant teamwork, mutuality and justice (cited in Goes 2004; 109). Tony Blair has also pronounced,

"At the heart of my beliefs is the idea of community. I don't just mean the local villages, towns and cities in which we live. I mean that our fulfilment as individuals lies in a decent society of others. My argument...is that the renewal of community is the answer to the challenges of a changing world." (Blair cited in Levitas 2000; 189)

More recently, Home Office Minister Hazel Blears has written about her belief in 'community' wherein she asserts that it tends to be used, '*to mean what politicians want it to mean*' and goes onto note that,

'A more useful notion of community is a way of expressing fellowship, or a sense of belonging to one another in society. In a world of insecurity and globalisation, of a decline in trust and deference, this can be seen as more helpful and attractive. It is used as shorthand for the concept of the interdependence and mutuality of individuals and collections of people.' (Blears 2003; 9)

The use of 'community' as New Labour's '*key collective abstraction*' (Levitas 2000; 191) in both rhetoric and policy is noteworthy for its 'promiscuity' (Levitas 2000; 191) and takes on both an abstract and concrete form depending on context. It is abstract in the sense illustrated by Blair and Blears above, in that there is a belief in a philosophical 'community' that

provides a collective pretext for all individual social action and underpins the progressive principle of exchanging rights and duties - what has been termed *'fair reciprocity'* (White 1999; 171). Indeed, for New Labour 'community' appears to be one of the few certainties in the new insecure, globalized social order. In a more concrete sense, 'community' rather than simply being an *a priori* social fact or philosophical precept, is an instrumental framework constructing moral and behavioural parameters that manifest in a range of rights and responsibilities for its 'members'. It is used to underwrite an *expectation* that individual duties will be performed and as a framework in which punishment is sanctioned. It is the governmental discourse through which citizens are (re)constituted (Clarke 2005) and 'conduct' is governed (Rose 1996), as required by the 'third way' prescription of 'positive' welfare. It is through the invoking of this model of 'community' that New Labour articulates both a demand for responsible forms of behaviour as well as a commitment to a fair distribution of opportunities. It is also a vision of 'community' that bears close resemblance to the functionalism of conservative sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, something Prideaux (2001) has discussed elsewhere. Worley (2005) has also identified how 'community' has been used by New Labour to underpin its thinking on 'community cohesion', replacing 'multiculturalism' as the framework for governing ethnic divisions. The government's recent 'respect' action plan appears to stress the need for this framework to be rooted in shared behavioural values:

'Ethnic and cultural diversity is a source of strength and dynamism for our society...But without a shared framework or respect and rules, people can be susceptible to the argument that difference in culture and lifestyle are undermining community cohesion.' (Respect Task Force 2006; 5)

What is being argued here is that only a 'community' based on shared values can manage the diversity of today's society. That is, we need a 'community' of 'communities' that allows individual cultures (and individuals) to flourish, but which bridges the perceived divisions created by ethnic difference that can erupt as demonstrated in the civil disturbances of 2001 (Worley 2005; 483).

2.5.1 The role of spatial 'communities'

Further, 'community' is deployed in a spatial sense to refer to the physical places that people inhabit. New Labour believes in the existence and positive role of spatial 'communities' and has been committed to both their physical refurbishment and necessity as a behavioural framework. NDC is the clearest policy expression of these commitments, although Lupton has noted that, rhetorically, New Labour usually favours 'neighbourhood' as

its *'key unit of policy delivery'* (2005; 120). Nevertheless, the spatial *'community'* performs a crucial function for New Labour. It is, *'a natural and desirable social formation, based on the diminution of difference and conflict, and the inculcation of shared values'* (Imrie and Raco 2004; 8). It assumes that spatial proximity produces shared values and experiences, what Amin refers to as an assumed *'unitary sense of space'* (Amin 2002; 972) and that this translates into a consistent moral framework that provides the bedrock for civic renewal, social order and inclusion. For example, then Home Secretary Jack Straw pronounced in 2000,

"...if you don't build strong and responsible communities then you end up with wastelands where there really is 'no such thing as society'." (cited in Heron 2001)

Moreover, the desire to *'build', 'empower' and 'strengthen' 'community'* (by which is meant actual collectives of people and families) is a manifestation of a *'third way'* concern with shoring up *'civil society'* and reducing dependency on the state:

'The grievous 20th century error of the fundamentalist Left was the belief that the state could replace civil society and thereby advance freedom...A key challenge of progressive politics is to use the state as an enabling force, protecting effective communities and voluntary organisations and encouraging their growth...' (Blair 1999; 4)

Earlier in 1995, Blair argued:

'People don't want an overbearing state. But they do not want to live in a social vacuum either. It is in the search for this different, reconstructed, relationship between individual and society that ideas about 'community' are to be found. 'Community' implies a recognition of interdependence but not overweening government power.' (cited in Levitas 2000; 191)

Gordon Brown (2000) perhaps conveys the enthusiasm for a *'strong' civil society* more clearly:

'This is my idea of Britain – because there is such a thing as society – community of communities, tens of thousands of local neighbourhood civic associations, unions, charity and voluntary organisations, each one unique and every one special. A Britain energised by a million centres of action and compassion, of concern and

initiative that together embody a very British idea – that of civic society. (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk)

These representations of ‘community’ may or may not reflect the entrenchment of neo-liberalism and the desire of government to offload the responsibilities of the state onto ‘communities’ as suggested by Herbert (2006), but the government now has a dedicated Department for Communities and since coming to power has introduced a *‘bewildering myriad of policies’* (Imrie and Raco 2004) to promote civic engagement and ‘community’ self help. For example, Tony Blair has stated a key goal of government is to, *‘...empower local communities to shape a better future for themselves’* (SEU 1998). In addition, Hazel Blears has written about putting *‘communities in control’* to create *‘real public ownership’* of services and decisions, which entails *‘creating new forms of mutual governance’* and *‘shifting real power, opportunity – and responsibility – into the hands of working people’* (2003; 15). It appears that ‘strong’ ‘communities’ are viewed as a bulwark against the uncertainties unleashed by globalization whereby the state should no longer be relied upon to perform its protective role effectively. The state must be supported by ‘empowered’, self-governing ‘communities’ in which responsible citizenship is cultivated. This is consistent with Finlayson’s analysis of Giddens’ ‘third way’ in which there is an ontological belief that power should not be concentrated in one centre, but dispersed amongst people and ‘communities’ to encourage reflexivity. The role of the state is a ‘generative’ one that facilitates this dispersal of power to the local and individual level. (1999; 276)

Therefore, the belief in ‘community’ is related to the New Labour and ‘third way’ focus on developing a ‘new’ brand of individual agency. However, whilst they emphasise acting responsibly and view citizen participation as a key to tackling social passivity, they do not advocate ‘choice’ and ‘empowerment’ in the name of selfish individualism. Citizens are not to be cast adrift by the state to sink or swim, but remain anchored in a strong civic unit that both protects them from uncertainty and regulates their behaviour. ‘Community’ provides New Labour’s ‘autotelic’ citizens with a *‘grid of regulatory ideals’* (Rose 1996; 145) that shapes their ‘freedom’ to exercise ‘choice’ (Clarke 2005; 451).

2.6 New Labour and responsibility

If ‘community’ provides the guiding precept for a New Labour society, it is bolstered by an ethos of ‘responsibility’, which provides a ‘regulatory ideal’ for individual agency as well as a key goal for welfare reform. That is, New Labour’s normative social vision is one in which everyone knows the rules and contingent rights and responsibilities:

'The rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe: rights and opportunity without responsibility are engines of selfishness and greed.' (Blair 1998; 4)

Also,

'Duty is the cornerstone of a decent society. It recognises more than self...It draws on a broader and therefore more accurate notion of human nature than one formulated on insular self interest. The rights we receive should reflect the duties we owe. With the power should come responsibility.' (Blair 1995 cited Dwyer 1998; 499)

Therefore, 'responsibility' is part of the New Labour redefinition of the relationship between individual and state. This 'new contract' contains some key expectations of citizens and some welfare measures, including both 'carrots and sticks', seen as necessary to uphold the contract and address the alleged dependency and passivity of some citizens. The emphasis on responsibility can be traced back to a 'third way' notion of the welfare state as enabling and 'active', distributing 'equal opportunities' rather than equal outcomes to equip individuals to meet and overcome the potential risks and insecurities of contemporary life. Responsible individual agents are central to this agenda as it is only they who can negotiate the pitfalls of modern life. As Giddens states,

'Social democrats have to shift the relationship between risk and security involved in the welfare state, to develop a society of 'responsible risk takers'...People need protection when things go wrong, but also the material and moral capabilities to move through major periods of transition in their lives.' (1998; 100)

However, Kemshall argues that such a focus on individual responsibility may legitimate the withdrawal or retrenchment of state involvement in the provision of welfare as well as delegitimise the claims of some groups to social welfare. Welfare claimants can be defined as 'unproductive' and 'scroungers' with no one but themselves to blame for their 'predicament' (2002; 27). Dwyer (1998; 2002) offers evidence that such an agenda is being implemented, arguing that New Labour have adopted a 'principle of conditionality' (Deacon 1994 cited in Dwyer 1998) in a number of social policy areas (1998; 494). This has the effect of clearly defining legitimate membership of the welfare community by making entry conditional on certain behavioural requirements. Those who do not meet the 'responsibilities' expected of them can have their benefits cut or face criminal charges (Heron and Dwyer 1999). Indeed, in 2002 Tony Blair asserted,

'We shouldn't carry on paying out benefit to you in circumstances where you are not prepared to give anything back to society...why should the state carry on paying out benefit to these people, subsidising their housing when they are using their housing to inflict misery on other people?' (BBC Newsnight, 16 May)

Deacon has noted that this is quite deliberate, as New Labour have embraced an Americanisation of welfare in which increased attention is being paid to the behaviour and morality of welfare claimants (2000;16). He also argues that this is in response to conservative challenges from Charles Murray, Larry Mead and others to take seriously issues of personal responsibility and social obligation (2000; 11). Moreover, implicit in their welfare reform agenda is a shift from thinking about inequality to thinking about welfare dependency (Deacon 2000; 16) and an associated concern with appearing 'tough' on those who are deemed to fail in meeting their obligations to the wider 'community' (Deacon 2004; 912).

2.6.1 The importance of paid work

The key responsibility of members of a New Labour 'community' is to work. More specifically, paid employment 'for those who can' is considered both the best route out of poverty and the epitome of a responsible contribution to society and oneself (Deacon 2003; Clarke 2005; Levitas 1998; Powell 1999). Clarke has recently described this as,

'...the responsibility to produce the conditions of one's own independence – ideally by becoming a 'hard working' individual or family.' (Clarke 2005; 451)

Indeed, this is a theme that Gordon Brown has emphasised continually during his time in office (HM Treasury 2001a; Brown 2000). New Labour is keen to promote paid work as both economically sensible (providing protection from social exclusion) and indicative of taking personal responsibility for ones future, rather than 'relying' on the state. Therefore, those who do not or cannot work have become subjects of policy interventions designed to address the 'barriers' preventing them taking up paid employment, from welfare to work programmes to recent alterations in claiming incapacity benefit. The New Deal welfare-to-work schemes entail a compulsory interview and the choice between four employment options or benefit sanctions. Here we have the use of welfare-to-work policy to achieve three things – one, to raise employment levels to combat both social exclusion and welfare dependency, and two, to

make clear the behavioural standards that are expected of ‘community’ members, regardless of background.⁵ As Deacon has commented, the New Deal contains a framework,

‘...within which it is possible to recognise the importance of structural inequalities and yet still be ‘hardheaded’ or ‘tough minded’ about behaviour.’ (2000; 11)

Prideaux has identified some similarities between New Labour’s conception of the need for authoritative welfare which is judgemental about dependency and work, and American theorist Lawrence Mead’s arguments that the poor have different values to the middle class and have to be made to work and to embrace the work ethic (2001; 94). However, whilst Deacon has also identified the influence on New Labour of Mead’s assertion that ‘incentives assume competence’ and so welfare should be authoritative, he argues that on the whole, New Labour prefers incentives to compulsion (1998; 310).

2.6.2 Shaping behaviour through welfare

However, lest we forget, welfare to work is not just about social cohesion and flexible labour markets, what Driver and Martell have called the *‘supply side elixir’* (1998; 76). It is underpinned by a desire to (re)shape society and social actors through the welfare system. It is an example of New Labour striving to promote models of behaviour it deems appropriate for a ‘decent’ productive society. David Marquand (1996) has sought to locate New Labour’s moralism (which its preoccupation with ‘responsibility’ and character could be said to illustrate) within a typology of political ideas since 1945 in the UK. He argues that Thatcherism began with a phase of ‘moral’ individualism that mutated into ‘hedonistic’ individualism during the mid 1980s as market forces failed to recreate moral order; a mutation that the New Right encouraged through tax cuts, easy credit and a consumer boom (1996; 26). The important insight of Marquand’s analysis is that New Labour’s rise to power represented a return to ‘moralistic’ collectivism. He argues that the same moralist strand runs through post-war Beveridgean social democracy, (early) Thatcherism and now Blairism. (1996; 28) They all *‘draw on the same reservoir of serious and sober virtues’* (1996; 28). New Labour, then, can be said to have reinvigorated the moralist welfare tradition which emphasises the need for governments to impose or incentivise ‘good’ behaviour. This regulation of conduct is partly based on a principled belief in the ‘community’ (as demonstrated above) - an entity that can only be sustained if the members of that ‘community’ are obligated to behave in a responsible way and a culture of ‘dependency’ is

⁵ A third achievement of welfare-to-work could be improving the supply of a low paid, flexible labour force, subsidised by government to plug hard-to-fill gaps in local labour markets and reduce expenditure on benefits.

challenged. Hence, there is a need for policy measures that will facilitate this ‘community’ whether through the encouraging of paid employment or specific behavioural codes including civic participation. There is also the influence of ‘third way’ thinking on (re)constituting citizens as responsible ‘autotelic’ risk takers and the belief that welfare can be used to engineer behaviour patterns suitable for the ‘new’ world (Mann 1998, 2003).

For New Labour therefore, the role of welfare is to mediate between individuals and the ‘community’, ensuring that rights are fairly allocated and responsibilities fulfilled. Often this involves challenging and changing the character and behaviour of ‘community’ ‘members’. This has tended to most visibly manifest not just in addressing an alleged culture of welfare ‘dependency’ and non-employment, but cultures of citizen apathy and ‘yobbishness’ and general ‘antisocial’ behaviour.

The main influences on New Labour’s thinking on character, welfare and behaviour have been identified as Christian socialism, new communitarianism (Deacon 2002b; 115 Deacon and Mann 1997) and the ‘new paternalism’ of Mead and others. (White, S 2003; 12)⁶ The ‘third way’ is also a key influence as Driver has noted,

‘New Labour welfare reforms demand, as the new paternalism requires, certain types of behavioural response and sanction those forms of behaviour deemed ‘irresponsible’. Third Way politics is not neutral on the ‘good citizen’. (2004; 35)

The Christian socialist doctrine of equal respect for all and personal responsibility for all permeates everything New Labour does (Deacon and Mann 1997; 3). Therefore, New Labour’s ‘good citizen’ is not just one who is self sufficient and takes up paid employment, or does not sap the resources of the state, but is someone who fulfils a range of civic responsibilities with appropriate moral rectitude. Not only has the government been forthright on the responsibility of people to take paid work, they have introduced a variety of initiatives, designed to shape the kind of moral community they envisage. The most recent incarnation of these has been the government’s Respect Action Plan, launched in 2006 and containing a range of measures designed to address ‘bad’ behaviour and provide state support

⁶ The rise of the issue of antisocial behaviour in policy thinking has complex roots, separate from much of the general thinking on welfare and character, but sharing some of the same suspicions of ‘1960s liberalism’ (Blair 2004) that communitarians have expressed. See Squires (2006) for an introduction to these roots.

for people and families who require help in developing appropriate behaviour patterns.⁷ In his foreword to the document, Tony Blair reiterated the New Labour analysis of ‘community’ and those who threaten it:

‘But there are still intractable problems with the behaviour of some individuals and families, behaviour which can make life a misery for others, particularly those in the most disadvantaged communities. What lies at the heart of this behaviour is a lack of respect for values that almost everyone in this country shares – consideration for others, a recognition that we all have responsibilities as well as rights, civility and good manners.’ (Respect Task Force 2006; 1)

The other key influence on Tony Blair was the philosophy of John Macmurray whom he encountered whilst at Oxford University. The influence of Macmurray on the Blair philosophy has been discussed at length elsewhere (See for example Prideaux 2005), but it was Macmurray’s views on ‘community’ that appears to have appealed to Blair. Whilst Blair has not followed Macmurray’s eschewing of organised politics, the notion of a ‘community’, believed to go deeper than any kind of organised society, is said to have stayed with him (Naughtie 2002; 20). As noted above, this ‘community’ bears close similarities to that envisaged by new communitarianism.⁸ Amitai Etzioni, the leading exponent of new communitarianism stresses that it is an attempt to reassert a social and moral order in response to the excessive individualism and ‘rights based’ culture of the 1980s and 1990s (1997). This entails a need for a ‘new golden rule’: *‘Respect and uphold society’s moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy’* (1997; xviii). New communitarians advocate the implementation of measures to strengthen the social order and communal solidarity and balancing of individual freedom with individual responsibility to the wider community in which they live and flourish. They seek to strike a decisive path out of the structural inequality versus moral agency impasse that is said to have hamstrung the political Left in recent years (Deacon 2002b). New Labour have seized upon this moment and embraced the ‘return of the agent’ (Deacon and Mann 1999; 423). Alan Deacon reinforces this view by arguing that New Labour have engaged with ideas of character and behaviour to break with the *‘excessive structuralism and determinism’* that has characterised much of

⁷ The launching of this agenda appears to have been about more than policy details, which as many commentators have noted had been introduced or mooted before, and was actually about attempting to map out a moral vision of the ‘community’ and disseminate this vision via the media.

⁸ The influence of new communitarianism on New Labour has been noted by several authors (for example Driver and Martell 1998; Dwyer and Heron 1999; Levitas 2000; Prideaux 2005).

centre Left thinking on welfare for much of the post war period (2002a; 182).⁹ Hence, they no longer baulk about being ‘tough on crime’ or bad behaviour, as it is framed in new communitarian language about behaviour and ‘responsibility’ to the ‘community’. Etzioni has stated:

‘We must all live with the consequences of children who are not brought up properly, whether bad economic conditions or self-centred parents are to blame. Juvenile delinquents... mug the elderly, hold up stores and gas station, and prey on innocent children returning from school. They grow up to be useless, or worse, employees, and they can drain taxpayers’ resources and patience... Therefore, parents have a moral responsibility to the community to invest themselves in the proper upbringing of their children, and communities – to enable parents to so dedicate themselves.’ (1993; 54)

Echoing Etzioni, New Labour’s vision of responsible citizenship has extended beyond paid work and encroached upon ‘private’ realms of home and family and is comfortable about forming judgements about individual behaviour (Clarke 2005).

Also echoing James Q Wilson’s (1993) analysis of a corrosive ‘spirit of the age’ which enforces a relativistic respect for ‘diversity’ and different behavioural standards, New Labour propounds a social vision which resonates with Wilson’s belief in an inherent, universal ‘moral sense’ that citizens and governments must embrace. ‘Communities’ therefore become nothing less than an embodiment of ‘our’ intuitive but evolved sense of right and wrong (the ‘moral sense’). To pretend that there are acceptable variations of morality and rules governing conduct is a betrayal of ‘our’ natural instincts. The outcome is a strict conception of behavioural parameters and an unswerving belief in forming judgements of those who deviate. We can see the influence of this thinking in New Labour’s attempts to mark out the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and construct deviance as a form of disobedience from what is naturally and self-evidently ‘right’ to the ‘decent’ mainstream. Documents such as the Respect Action Plan share Wilson’s view of the need to,

‘...recover the confidence with which (people) once spoke about virtue and morality... (and) to re-establish the possibility and the reasonableness of speaking frankly and convincingly about moral choices.’ (1993; vii, brackets added)

⁹ Fitzpatrick (2005b) offers a challenge to Deacon’s analysis of the ‘quasi-Titmuss’ paradigm arguing that the focus of Leftist welfare debates has been on contextualising individual behaviour as opposed to ignoring it.

In policy terms, irresponsible parents, antisocial young people, 'nightmare neighbours', truant schoolchildren, binge drinkers, public smokers, squeegee merchants, street beggars and the obese are a few groups who have fallen foul of this moralizing tendency and are all deemed to have transgressed the 'norms' of the 'community'. By contrast, John Clarke suggests that New Labour's ideal citizens are '*...moralized, choice making, self-directing subjects*' which are not just 'responsible', but the product of 'responsibilization' whereby the 'citizen' has been (re)constituted as a '*self regulating subject*' through frames or discourses of 'responsible' behaviour '*across a variety of sites and practices from teenage pregnancy, through the etiquette of summoning ambulances, to clearing up your dog's faeces*' (Clarke 2005; 451-2). Therefore, New Labour's welfare regime can be viewed as helping construct the brand of 'community' it desires by producing a climate of individual 'responsibilization' in which rules and norms circulate the public domain and (they hope) penetrate private spheres. There is a resemblance here with what Etzioni (1997) calls a 'moral voice' where conduct is shaped by both the inculcation of a loud and consistent inner personal voice bolstered by a strong external or communal voice (Deacon 2002b; 71).

However, beyond public discourses of 'good' behaviour (embodied by the media *pronouncements* attached to the publication of Respect Action Plan perhaps) designed to nurture a 'moral voice', there are a concrete range of powers at the disposal of welfare managers designed to compel or persuade people to act in 'responsible' ways. These include benefit sanctions for parents of truant school pupils, curfews, anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), fixed penalty fines for 'yobbish' behaviour, rules for council house tenants that set out 'appropriate' behaviour, probationary tenancy periods and parenting classes. Across all of these is a desire to produce a specific model of social order expressed in New Labour terms as a 'community'. Whether we are children, parents, pupils, employees or service users, New Labour locates our behaviour within this 'community' and is unafraid to mobilize it to challenge or eradicate any behaviour it deems to have transgressed its parameters. This symbiotic process produces both moral cohesion and the 'good citizen'.

A useful example of the mobilization of 'community' (and the external / communal voice) is when Tony Blair has spoken about recasting the criminal justice system and putting the '*decent, law abiding majority in charge*' (Blair cited in Squires and Stephen 2005; 522). This tends to manifest in 'community enforcement' processes, which in theory means a role for 'good' citizens in defining punishments for deviant behaviour (often resulting in public 'naming and shaming' campaigns for ASBO recipients) or receiving reparation from the deviant in the form of initiatives such as 'Community Payback' (Respect Task Force 2006;

35)¹⁰. In addition, Former Home Secretary David Blunkett advocated the role of community groups in the prosecution and punishment of antisocial offenders. He argued that the Crown Prosecution Service should be more engaged with local communities to find out who should be fast tracked to court (<http://www.society.guardian.co.uk/Print/0,3858,4639042,00.html>). The involvement of local ‘communities’ in the policing of offenders and defining offending is a communitarian-type approach that treats the ‘community’ as a moral agent whose values should be enforced to promote order and social cohesion. It is also intrinsic to the alleged ‘empowerment’ of such social groupings whereby they have the power to identify deviants in their midst and ensure ‘community safety’ (Prior 2005).

At the centre of their vision of strong, empowered, cohesive communities, New Labour places the family (Driver and Martell 2002; 201). Jack Straw, another former Home Secretary has stated:

‘Family life is the foundation on which our communities, our society and our country are built. Families are central to this government’s vision of a modern and decent country.’ (2001 Labour Manifesto <http://www.labour.org.uk/ENG1.pdf>)

According to Driver and Martell, New Labour’s attitude to the family is linked with an ethical socialism tradition. They also argue that New Labour share with neo-conservatives the view that excessive individualism in the 1960s led to the break up of the family that has led to welfare dependency and a wider problem of social order. They assert that New Labour make causal connections between changing family forms, growing welfare dependency, social exclusion, the decline of shared moral values, and the rising tide of criminal and anti-social behaviour (2002; 206). Certainly, a recurrent theme of David Blunkett’s speeches was ‘problem families’ and ‘neighbours from hell’ who he saw as a threat to strong communities and social order.¹¹ For example:

‘We have to face the reality that on many of housing estates, in many of our most disadvantaged communities, a handful of those whose lifestyle and behaviour so disrupts the wellbeing of others is creating – literally – havoc. We know it is true. Just perhaps a dozen families...Actually developing a style of behaviour where the

¹⁰ A national project, launched in 2005 that makes ‘unpaid work by offenders visible and promotes the engagement of local communities in selecting the work to be done by offenders’. (Respect Task Force 2006; 35). Media reports have focused on the luminous coloured jackets worn by offenders when undertaking this work.

¹¹ In 2005, the Home Office published a press release with the pejorative title ‘Rehabilitation for Neighbours from Hell’ demonstrating how this label has penetrated political consciousness at the highest offices of state

children learn to be the opinion formers in the gang that are evident on our streets.'
(Blunkett 2002)

Blunkett's concern with social stability and order was said to be rooted in his 'respectable' working class upbringing in Sheffield and his time as leader of Sheffield City Council. Indeed, he recently admitted that these issues were his 'bread and butter' and have '*exercised me ever since I was leader of Sheffield city council*' (Wintour 2003). He holds no truck with the structural explanations of crime that many on the Left propound:

'I just do not agree with the idea that because you are poor, your kids are out of control, that your family is dysfunctional, you can do nothing about it...If you don't enforce respect, disorder magnifies.' (Cited in Wintour 2003)

In sum, New Labour is seeking to reinvigorate a moralising welfare agenda based on a communitarian-type vision of social order, shared moral values and a welfare state that is an '*explicit mechanism for moral regeneration*' (Deacon and Mann 1999; 426). This is fused with a 'third way' desire to '(re)constitute' individual social agents as 'reflexive' and 'responsible' citizens within this collective framework. In order to achieve this, they have sought to 'responsibilize' and introduced a range of welfare measures designed to encourage, condition or impose behavioural codes or responsibilities seen as necessary for the brand of 'community' and 'agency' that they prioritize. Underpinning this approach is the belief in the need to re-assert the 'moral sense' (Wilson 1993) because it offers certainty in forming moral judgements and to 'liberate' the decent majority who are in touch with this sense. New Labour views itself as being at the vanguard of this struggle over moral choices and Tony Blair in particular appears at his most confident when patrolling this divide.

These two objectives merge when New Labour seeks to put the consensual, 'respectable' law abiding majority who *are* the 'community' in charge of regulating the behaviour of a presupposed deviant and antisocial minority of individuals who are deemed to *need* it. This is seen most clearly in 'community enforcement' measures designed to mobilize the (supposedly unified) voice of the majority to police or manage deviant 'others' be they ASBO recipients, 'nuisance' neighbours or benefit 'cheats'. New Labour's 'community' seems to have behavioural and moral parameters that determine entry and membership and is deployed to cultivate responsible citizenship as well as police, moralize and reconstruct the 'problematic' minority. The government has defined some behaviour that goes against these parameters as intrinsically anti-*social* and requiring 'tough' action since it represents a

'...thoroughgoing debasement of community and civic culture itself ...a profound moral challenge to a broad consensus of accepted values.' (Squires 2006; 149)

To an extent therefore, 'community' is used to *'identify New Labour's enemies'* (Levitas 1998; 122), which Mandelson and Liddle (1996) define as, *'the inefficient who let the community down and impede its success'* and *'the irresponsible who fall down on their obligations to their families and therefore their community'* (cited in Levitas 1998; 122).¹²

New Labour believes it has uncovered the correct language by which to assert those obligations and why they must be defended.

Ultimately, at the root of New Labour's welfare agenda is a desire to create, *'a social order in which people behave differently rather than one in which resources are distributed differently'* (Deacon 1998; 306). This is a desire that underpins their 'responsibility' agenda and their vision of 'inclusion' – not material inclusion, (that is, greater equality) but more closely shared behavioural norms and values in accordance with the 'community' that we share. New Labour citizens are both *'actuarial subjects'* who *'understand themselves as responsible and independent agents'* (Clarke 2005; 452) and members of a 'community' which defines their responsibilities to themselves and others. It also returns us to the 'third way' 'active' welfare state that does not seek to redistribute wealth, or regulate the market (Lister quotes Gordon Brown who has said that 'merely' improving benefit levels would *'do nothing more than compensate people for their poverty, without tackling the causes'* (1998; 219)) but seeks to change the behaviour of people to negotiate and profit from the market on their own terms.¹³ It is also a welfare system that challenges the alleged dependency and passivity of some citizens by encouraging or compelling them to not only seek paid employment, but to participate in their 'communities' and 'partner' the state in improving the delivery of public services.

The flip side of the responsibilities that New Labour prioritises – paid employment, civic engagement, good parenting and well-behaved young people - is a concern to allocate opportunities to the members of its 'community'. It is to these that we now turn.

¹² Furthermore, New Labour constructs excluded spaces (such as inner and outer city social housing estates) as containing this behavioural fault line - a theme developed below.

¹³ Although we know the Chancellor has engaged in a moderately redistributive agenda but tending to focus on children in poverty rather than adults. It seems the 'autotelic self' (Giddens 1998) is a resolutely adult expectation.

2.7 New Labour and opportunity

Much has been made so far about the importance New Labour has attached to behaviour and character and the role welfare can play in shaping these. However, it would be unfair to convey that that was the sum of their welfare reform agenda. The existence of structural poverty and social exclusion may not be spoken about too often in public, but it is clear that New Labour accepts their existence, and that acceptance has shaped their welfare agenda to some degree (Deacon 2003). Therefore, New Labour's welfare state is one that shapes behaviour, but also seeks to offer 'protection' and opportunity for its citizens. Gordon Brown has spoken about the necessity of providing opportunities:

'So we must create a country where there are new opportunities for everyone – millions of points of opportunity...And I make no apologies for saying government has a responsibility in creating this new ladder of opportunity...That will allow many, by their own efforts, to benefit from the opportunities once open only to a few' (cited in Levitas 1998; 156).

The government has not shied from identifying the key dimensions of poverty, for example, the 2002 Department for Work and Pensions report *Opportunity for All*, contains a description of these dimensions: lack of resources, lack of opportunities to work or learn, health inequalities, lack of decent housing, disruption of family life, living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood (p16).

There is also recognition that poverty is transmitted and that some groups are more likely to suffer – women, minority ethnic groups, pensioners, disabled people and people from large families (DWP 2002; 21). In this context, New Labour's focus on paid work is rooted in the belief that it offers the best protection from poverty and social exclusion, not just that it is morally right. It seems the balancing act that they are attempting is between protecting people from poverty through welfare to work and tax credits and avoiding perpetuating a passive welfare system that they argue will condemn people to a life on benefits. As noted above, Deacon (2003) has suggested that their response to this balancing act is to both 'level the playing field' and 'activate the players'. The main way in which they are trying to level the playing field is by breaking the cycle of disadvantage that reproduces inequalities over time and generations. The 'cycle of deprivation' is the analytical base of New Labour's understanding of poverty and at the root of their commitment to eradicate child poverty within a generation (Deacon 2003). Gordon Brown, who is said to be keen to retain his reputation of being a champion of the poor (Naughtie 2002; 269), has emphasised the

importance of breaking the cycle of deprivation that threatens to sentence today's children to a lifetime in poverty:

'We know that children who grow up in poor families are less likely to reach their full potential, less likely to stay on at school, or even attend school, more likely to fall into to dead end unemployment and poverty as an adult, more likely to become teenage mothers, more likely to be in the worst jobs or no jobs at all, more likely to be trapped in a no-win situation – poor when young, unemployed when older.' (1999)

The government have identified three ways in which poverty can be transmitted: children can be born poor, so stay poor (through worklessness, low income and ill health); children can inherit poverty (by doing poorly at school the same as their own parents); and poverty can be transmitted by locality and the poor services in that area (DWP 2002; 92).

The 2001 Treasury report on tackling child poverty also attempted to explain the process of poverty transmission through a framework which begins with low family or household income. This can cause two sources of disadvantage: parenting problems or a lack of role models within the family, as well as living in a deprived area which can then lead to a severe reduction in life chances (HM Treasury 2001b; 16). This report focuses on the structural impacts on child poverty and there is no mention of behaviour or agency (or measures to improve these), except where it concerns parents. The government have identified the role that 'bad' parenting can play in reducing life chances and transmitting poverty and have taken steps through Sure Start and parenting orders to address the 'problem' as they see it. Whilst many including Ruth Levitas (1998) have criticised the government for privileging paid work over unpaid care work, Driver and Martell (2002) have argued that New Labour *do* value unpaid parenting work, not always in economic terms, but in terms such as morality, responsibility, security and children's opportunities (2002; 216).

Deacon (2002a) argues that any mention of behaviour by New Labour, in the context of poverty transmission, is presented as a response to or adaptation to adverse circumstances (2002; 181). That is, they do not accept a purely structural explanation of the transmission of disadvantage which denies the role of agency. They do *emphasise* structural factors, as they are central to the problem, but their analysis of agency tends to be 'adaptive' in that they suggest that behaviour plays a small role in perpetuating the cycle of deprivation, but only in response to their structural conditions (Deacon 2003; 133). Hence their concern with parenting. They acknowledge that living in poverty can severely disrupt family life and present problems when raising children. Where New Labour differ from the 'adaptive'

account of the cycle of disadvantage (expressed in 1987 by William Julius Wilson in his book 'The Truly Disadvantaged'), is that where Wilson argued that attempts to change the behaviours and attitudes of the poor were misplaced (all that is needed is more jobs, better housing and schools), New Labour believe that the creation of more opportunities is not enough. In addition, steps have to be taken to ensure the poor or workless are persuaded, encouraged or compelled to take those opportunities. This is what they consider 'activating the players' to mean in creating a truly effective anti-poverty strategy.

New Labour recognises that addressing structural inequalities is vital in their drive towards their vision of a truly meritocratic society with genuine 'opportunity for all' (Blair 1998). The announcement of the introduction of a child trust fund or 'baby bond' is based on this recognition. Tony Blair, writing about the 'baby bond' scheme in The Guardian newspaper acknowledged this:

'Those benefits are not extended through society. Too many children are excluded from life chances before they are born because of poverty. They are forced to leave school at 16, not 18, to begin earning. They lack the capital to pay deposits or stamp duty on a first home. They are daunted by the prospect of going to university. Their ambitions are diminished at an early age. They lack the wealth that is the springboard of opportunity...Overcoming the inequalities of wealth and income that hold people back is one the greatest challenges facing Britain.' (2003)

However, some might have difficulty squaring this acceptance of the need to tackle structural barriers and inequalities with Blair's rejection of a commitment to 'abstract equality' and his comments on BBC's Newsnight before the 2001 general election where he appeared to be comfortable with a fundamentally unequal society:

'It is acceptable for those on lower incomes to have their incomes raised. It is unacceptable that they're not given the chances. To me the key thing is not whether the gap between those who – the person who earns the most in the country and the person who earns the least – is distant or not.' (cited in Naughtie 2002; 184)

Nevertheless, there is a clear recognition of the need to protect people, especially children, from poverty, primarily by breaking the cycle of deprivation. From New Labour's perspective, this means introducing a variety of policy interventions designed to create more, better opportunities for the poorest and tackle the factors they identify as reinforcing the cycle of disadvantage.

2.7.1 New Labour and social exclusion

The government's anti-poverty strategy is underpinned by the concept of social exclusion, a strategy that has received a high profile from the beginning of the Blair administration, symbolised by the setting up of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) within the Cabinet Office in 1998. (Alcock 2004) Peter Mandelson has defined social exclusion thus:

'This is about more than poverty and unemployment. It is about being cut off from what the rest of us regard as normal life. It is called social exclusion, what others call the "underclass"'. (1997; 1)

A slightly more subtle definition has been offered by the SEU:

'...shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown.' (SEU; 2001b)

It appears that New Labour sees social exclusion as being more than income inequality, but the destination that people, families or communities reach if they are not helped to overcome cyclical processes of poverty, lack of skills, poor education and generally substandard public services. Social exclusion is measured by over 50 government indicators (Alcock 2004; 88), indicating the breadth of factors that it believes can exacerbate or precipitate this condition.

As exclusion has become the focus of government social policy, there have been efforts to understand the causes, identify those most 'at risk' and outline the financial and human costs of this social division. This has culminated in a range of interventions, introduced by government and designed to re-attach the excluded to the 'mainstream of society'. They set out three policy strategies for combating exclusion (SEU 2001b):

- o *Prevention*: In-work tax credits, New Deal welfare to work programmes, Sure Start childcare centres, crime reduction partnerships, improving quality of local authority care.
- o *Reintegration*: adult basic skills courses, Drug Testing and Treatment Orders (DTTO), Rough Sleepers Unit, NDC.
- o *Ensuring basic minimum standards*: floor targets for local education authorities, out of school education for excluded children, improving NHS services and access.

These are just some of the measures introduced to address the dynamics of social exclusion, as analysed by New Labour. They appear to contend that policy interventions can prevent some 'at risk' groups arriving at an excluded destination, and hope that other measures can re-integrate those already experiencing such conditions.

The belief that policy initiatives can 're-integrate' appears to include a degree of prescription for changing the behaviour of the excluded. That is, in addition to targeted support and extra resources, there is a strain running through programmes like the DTTOs and NDC that is explicitly aimed at facilitating (or compelling) different modes of behaviour. The following section will unpack NDC in more detail, but it is clear at this point that attempts to distinguish between welfare strategies that offer opportunity or protection and those aimed at changing behaviour have been obfuscated by New Labour. Increasingly, as Dwyer (1998) and others have noted, unqualified social rights to welfare support have been retrenched as citizenship has been redefined along progressively conditional lines. In addition, welfare 'help' has been utilized by government as an instrument for shaping the behaviour of public welfare recipients. Therefore, the notion of being 'socially included' in the 'mainstream' becomes both a material ideal and a predefined cultural or behavioural template to which citizens should aspire and which policy should bolster.

To some extent, this is a key theme in the framing of this discussion. How does New Labour attempt to 'reintegrate' the residents of 'excluded communities'? As we have seen NDC is a key policy intervention designed to achieve just that, but how is it organised to achieve this end? How exactly does this programme impinge on its recipients to banish successfully social exclusion? It is to NDC that we now turn.

2.7 New Deal for Communities

New Deal for Communities (NDC), as part of New Labour's Neighbourhood Renewal agenda is explicitly concerned with addressing social exclusion (Foley & Martin 2000; 482) and grew out of the SEU's concerns with 'problem estates' (Alcock 2004; 88) and a belief that area based initiatives (ABI's) would be the most effective response (Alcock 2004; 88).

NDC is a regeneration programme designed to 'renew' socially excluded spaces by delivering resources to the local level and 'empower' local residents to affect long term change in their 'communities'. It is part of New Labour's identification of, *'the increasing polarisation between thriving communities on the one hand, and deprived ones on the other...over the past 20 years'* (DSS 1999, cited in Hills & Stewart 2005; 12) and was introduced by New Labour

to tackle, *'the unacceptably bad conditions in this country's poorest neighbourhoods'* (SEU 2001a).

As we saw in chapter one, this objective has been a feature of British public policy since at least the 1960s (Cochrane 2000; Lupton 2003; Lupton & Power 2005). As was shown above, the government are clear that they think locality can play a significant part in perpetuating cycles of deprivation (SEU 2001b). Not only that, but they argue that social exclusion can be spatial as well as afflicting individuals or families. Tony Blair has conveyed his impression of the problems of these areas:

'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 and banks and other vital services close.' (cited in SEU 1998)

The Social Exclusion Unit has identified up to 4,000 neighbourhoods which are not only poor, but which are,

'...pockets of intense deprivation where the problems of unemployment and crime are acute and hopelessly tangled up with poor health, housing and education. They have become no-go areas for some and no-exit zones for others.' (SEU 1998; 9)

They have stated that in the 10% most deprived wards in 1998, 44% of residents were receiving means-tested benefits compared to a 22% national average. There is also 43% of homes 'not in a decent state', compared with 29% elsewhere, as well as more family breakdown, increasing availability of illegal drugs and an increased concentration of vulnerable people (SEU 2001a; 12). It is through NDC that the government has set aside £2 billion for the 39 most deprived neighbourhoods in England (measured according to the government's Index of Deprivation). They have made clear that 'communities' should be at the heart of the partnerships which are formed by local agencies (public, business and voluntary sectors), and special efforts should be made to engage hard-to-reach groups in the consultation process (NRU 2001; 11). The partnerships had to identify the needs of the area and formulate a delivery plan and submit it to central government. If plans were approved, implementation procedures could begin. Partnerships will receive funding for 10 years with a budget of between £20-60 million each. (NDC Annual Review; <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/ndcannualreview.asp?pageid=90>)

Cochrane (2000) has pointed out that perhaps the most important policy development under New Labour has been that *'urban regeneration has been reclaimed as a recognisable aspect of social policy...'* (2000; 191) Indeed, New Labour has identified the importance of urban regeneration in tackling disadvantage and social exclusion (Ginsburg 1999; 62). They argue that letting poor neighbourhoods slide further into the mire is both economically and morally unacceptable and believe that refurbishing 'communities' is integral to tackling the social exclusion of individuals and families by improving the services and opportunities in that area.

In terms of New Labour's formulation of the welfare state, NDC's 'renewal' agenda encompasses both a desire to intervene and alleviate 'unacceptably bad conditions' by supplying additional resources,¹⁴ but also to 'activate the players' by ensuring that partnerships engage with local people to build a sense of ownership and a stake in the renewal of their community (Blears 2003; Lupton & Power 2005). This synthesis of top-down and bottom-up approaches has been described as an attempt to balance both *'structure and agency in the planning and delivery of social policy'*. (Alcock 2004; 90) It is also consistent with Giddens' (1998) belief in the importance of refurbishing the physical and social dimensions of 'community', which should be achieved in partnership with non-state agencies within 'civil society' (Prideaux 2005; 111). For example,

'...it has become conventional wisdom that communities need to be involved both in designing what is to be done and in implementing it.' (SEU 1998 cited in Dinham 2005; 302)

This 'conventional wisdom' is probably also related to an analysis of regeneration policies that failed in the past because they were top-down and paternalistic (Blair 2001). For example, in *Bringing Britain Together*, the government stated why it thought previous regeneration policies had failed,

'...the absence of effective national policies to deal with the structural causes of decline; a tendency to parachute solutions in from outside, rather than engaging local people.' (SEU 1998)

At the simplest level, the importance attached to participation of local citizens is premised on policymakers not actually knowing best what 'communities' and individuals require from their public services. Logic follows then that local people should be involved in decision

¹⁴ NDC funding is external to mainstream budgets and intended to be spent by 'communities' not local service providers.

making to mould policies to meet the needs of those at the sharp end of policy delivery. Alcock describes this as being about challenging the *'structural tendencies and top-down approaches of past policy planning.'* (2004; 92) Tony Blair has been explicit on this point:

'Too much has been imposed from above, when experience shows that success depends on communities themselves having the power and taking responsibility to make things better.' (SEU 1998; 7)

This trend towards a 'responsibilizing' (Clarke 2005) of 'community' residents as developers and managers of policy, the government hope, will also cement the social infrastructures and sustain vibrant, strong 'communities' over time. That is, New Labour hopes that inclusion in the policymaking process will not only improve the effectiveness of policy (by being more responsive), but will 'rub off' to create positive and integrated social networks comprising cohesive, sustainable 'communities'. In turn, this will secure the infrastructure of a neighbourhood and produce enough 'social capital' (Putnam 2000) to have a 'community safety' effect and ward off anti-social behaviour and criminality (Kearns 2003).

There has been, therefore, recognition of the need to try to devise 'bottom up' solutions to local problems that engage residents of regeneration zones. However, it has been noted that whilst New Labour may have strengthened the 'turn to community', it is nonetheless the case that citizen participation has been called upon to *'reveal or resolve...the complex problems of urban decline'* since the 1970s (Docherty, Goodlad & Paddison 2001; 2226). Alcock traces a longer history arguing that most UK area based programmes have been based on the US 'War on Poverty' campaign of the early 1960s, which was the first to proclaim the importance of the participation of local citizens (2004; 91).

However, New Labour has been more explicit in its emphasis on 'partnership', encompassing 'community' consultation and participation in developing proposals for 'renewing' local neighbourhoods (Foley 1999; Imrie and Raco 2003; Rowe and Devanney 2003). Rouse and Smith (2002) suggest this is part of New Labour's wider democratic renewal agenda that promotes consultation and participation in welfare governance. That is, the government want to encourage resident participation in the renewal process to foster individual responsibility and the sense of holding a stake within the 'community'. They hope this will improve the quality of lives of the poorest and sustain vibrant communities once funding streams expire. As Prior has noted,

'...the recasting of the citizen as a responsible member of the community...has been articulated through an emerging governmental discourse of 'civil renewal'. (2005; 357)

Governance through NDC is concerned with cultivating new forms of identity for local citizens by enabling or expecting them to be active reproducers of ordered 'communities' and custodians of the social wellbeing of the area.

2.9 Unpacking NDC

In chapter one, I set out the framework for my investigation of NDC. I stated that the focus of reflecting on NDC would be its theoretical underpinning, that is, the ideas and understandings that broadly shape the form and objectives of the policy in practice. Up until this point, this chapter has sought to illustrate the basis of New Labour's welfare reform agenda and locate NDC within that agenda. We have seen how NDC is conceived as combating social exclusion as well as changing the behaviour of its recipients / participants. Further, we have seen how this dual aim is located within a distinctive New Labour welfare programme that seeks to both offer opportunity and protection to its citizens or 'community' members and nurture, persuade or compel certain kinds of behaviour in those same members. To take this a step further, this chapter will explore, specifically, what will be argued to be the three core models that embody NDC. These, it will be argued, are distinctive models of 'community', of individual agency and of exclusion, which frame policy practice and indicate how New Labour conceives of spaces defined as socially excluded. This section will draw upon some of the discussions above on 'community', 'responsibility' and 'opportunity', but will illustrate how these constitute NDC and become New Labour's 'ACE' – agency, community and exclusion.

2.9.1 NDC and 'community'

As shown above, New Labour's enthusiasm for 'community' has been well documented and its Communitarian progenitors consistently evoked (for example, Driver and Martell 1997; Levitas 2000; Heron 2001; Deacon 2002; Imrie & Raco 2004; Prideaux 2005). New Deal for Communities is an expression of a dual belief in both the *existence* of 'communities' as stable, spatial entities inhabited by people and families with similar needs and values; as well as the positive benefits of *promoting* 'community' as a moral framework which (it is alleged) engenders civic renewal, maintains social order and ameliorates social exclusion. Indeed, the existence of 'community' as a unified entity is inscribed in the fabric of NDC. A great deal of focus was placed on '*choosing the right neighbourhood*' that would

have *'the greatest capacity to turn themselves around'* in initial government guidelines for prospective partnerships. Furthermore, guidelines state that NDC areas should be *'recognisable communities (less than 4000 households) with a strong sense of identity and shared aspirations'* (NRU 2001; 8). Therefore, each NDC neighbourhood has been chosen *because* it is perceived to meet this criteria; a specific brand of 'community', it seems, must *pre-exist* government spending via NDC. The government appear to want to reward what it considers 'correct' expressions of 'community' and have calculated that it is from these areas that it can get a positive return for its 'investment'. What this means for those areas of material disadvantage that are *'unrecognisable communities'* is a moot point. Nevertheless, the identification and *privileging* of areas 'suitable' for NDC funding illustrates, it seems, that New Labour views these areas as unitary, stable spaces where local residents have a shared and consistent flow of experience of exclusion and 'community' that NDC can harness. This is how they believe NDC can work – that residents have sufficient shared interest to need and want to row in the same direction. By implication, this relegates those areas deemed to lack unity and accord to being unable or unwilling to construct a 'community' and therefore benefit from public welfare support in the form of NDC.

'Community' is continually reified in government thinking and rhetoric as a mechanism. There is an aspiration to 'build', 'strengthen' and 'empower' 'active communities' (Blair 1998; Blears 2003) that reflects a normative, quasi – moral belief in 'community', which can and will nurture 'responsible' citizenship. It is through New Labour's mobilisation of 'community' that citizens should uphold their civic duties through paid employment, volunteering and social entrepreneurship. NDC is a practical expression of this reification. For example, on the ground, NDC partnerships encourage residents to conceptualize their immediate locale as a 'community' by consulting about improvements and problems of that government-defined zone and through an array of signifiers such as meetings, newsletters and the physical erection of signs that delineate and reify that space as a 'community'. Similarly, government Ministers reify 'community' consistently in their language of individual responsibility being linked to the communal and the importance of accountability to the collective (Flint & Nixon 2006; 941). This has tended to be manifested in discussions of 'punishments' for 'yob' and antisocial behaviour with recent calls for public name and shame campaigns and increased input for residents in the reporting and deciding of punishment of minor offences in their 'communities'. (Manchester Evening News; February 25, 2005) For example, the government White Paper 'Our Towns and Cities' states,

'To help communities fight back against crime we need to ensure all those involved in the community are involved in efforts to cut crime'

www.urban.odpm.gov.uk/whitepaper/ourtowns/fulltext/08.htm#2

The idea being that by locating individual behaviour within a 'community' context, moral and behavioural reconstruction can occur, either as an incentive to 'be part of the community', or by legitimizing punishments with reference to 'communal' values being transgressed. Above all, there is a presupposition of a minority of residents who 'need' community, alongside those 'responsible' citizens who *are* the 'community'. This reflects a belief in a behavioural fault line within excluded spaces between the consensual majority and a deviant minority of unruly residents that cause social disorder and require a moralizing voice. New Labour's 'community', therefore, has behavioural and moral parameters that determine entry and membership and is deployed as a mechanism to both reconstruct citizenship and police, moralize and reconstruct 'suspect' behaviour. Programmes like NDC are designed to be repositories for the operationalizing of the 'responsible' voice and provide a mechanism by which the responsible feel 'empowered' and the 'bad' behaviour of the transgressors be locally reconstructed.

The normative prescription of 'community' is not just viewed as an instrument of moral regeneration, but also as a means for protecting excluded residents. It appears the reification of excluded spaces as 'communities' (alongside increased opportunities in education and welfare to work strategies) containing strong local networks, or 'social capital', is viewed as providing a bulwark against the dislocating and fragmentary forces of social exclusion. Therefore, it is a legitimate goal of policy to assist or construct strong local relationships:

'An influential perspective on these matters is that neighbourhood decline sets in train a cumulative decline in social capital. Networks are disrupted and weakened, population turnover erodes familiarity and trust, and policies and initiatives aimed at reversing the decline are being implemented in a context of community disengagement and disillusionment.' (Forrest and Kearns 2001; 2139)

Increasingly, 'communities' are codified as spaces that 'deserve' security in order that residents can enjoy them. As Flint and Nixon have noted, definitions of civility and ethical conduct have expanded from individualist obligations to those based on a shared sense of space and respect for the 'community'. Therefore, residents are expected to behave appropriately, keep gardens and homes in good order and, ultimately challenge the behaviour of others (2006; 950).

In conclusion, it appears that New Labour believes in both the prior existence of consensual 'communities', which NDC can feed off, alongside a vision of *how* 'communities' should be. That is, consensus and solidarity should be promoted then harnessed to protect and regulate residents, particularly those with dubious conduct.

2.9.2 NDC and agency

Closely related to this model of 'community', is the conception of agency underpinning NDC. Again, there are two dimensions to this model. Firstly, there is a belief that NDC neighbourhoods contain *a priori* individual social agents that are able and willing to fulfil their civic responsibilities (defined by Government) within their 'community' (again, defined by Government) by virtue of their "*strong sense of identity and shared aspirations*" (NRU 2001; 8). All that is required are effective methods of consultation and inclusive avenues of participation to yield active forms of individual agency. In the context of NDC, these responsibilities refer to an engagement with the ongoing practice of the programme (supplying ideas and analyses of local problems / solutions; attending NDC meetings and so on) and, ideally, active participation in local governance and / or devising and managing projects, funded by NDC and designed for local residents.¹⁵ More generally, they refer to an emotional commitment to the 'community' in which civic responsibility and kinship with other residents is felt and practiced, thereby bolstering social capital.

Moreover, there is a normative dimension whereby expected forms of behaviour are promoted and instilled by NDC and a resultant 'active' community. The first step is the construction of that 'active community' by NDC whereby residents are expected that they *should* participate in their 'community'. Part of NDC's remit involves stimulating that participation in specific ways, such as facilitating residents to attend 'community' meetings, stand for election to the NDC board, or organise and 'own' local services. This is consistent with New Labour's acknowledgment that regeneration programmes must prioritise the participation of local residents and derives from *'the theory and practice of community development where participation, empowerment and ownership are seen as necessary conditions for change'* (Dinham 2005; 302). However, it goes further than being a motor of local change because New Labour appears to believe in the positive effect of participation per se. They do consider its importance in achieving sustainable regeneration, but also contend that involvement in one's 'community' is a civic responsibility requiring no further justification. This is in line with their belief that 'community' is also about according opportunities for individuals to

¹⁵ This is akin to what has been termed social entrepreneurship, where residents set up local services or businesses to meet a need of their local 'community'.

develop 'enlightened self interest' (Deacon 1998) which benefits them and their 'communities'.

Another form of participation is stimulated through NDC by encouraging residents to make claims on the behaviour of other residents via NDC's consultation process. This embodies a definite notion of 'community' as a functioning moral framework whereby behaviour is regulated and social order, it is argued, is sustained. NDC can be considered therefore, to be helping 'decent' citizens 'take a stand' against antisocial behaviour and incivility (Home Office 2003).

If we consider the quote below, it is also about appeasing sceptical taxpayers by invoking a principle of conditionality (Dwyer 1998) that makes spending on 'renovating' estates conditional on 'good' behaviour:

'We are not going to put taxpayers money into inner city redevelopment unless as a partnership which involves something for something...we are renovating estates but making clear that we will act when tenants behave unacceptably...we do not tolerate anti-social behaviour or lawlessness. We will put in the police and the laws to stamp it out.' (Blair 2001)

Consequently, NDC becomes a 'deal' in which resources are delivered, but only if 'communities' police themselves. NDC facilitates that policing and becomes the mechanism through which the moralizing, 'active' 'community' voice is heard. Again, we have a dual model, this time of agency. One that presumes a level of consensus about social norms and values amongst residents that can be harnessed to support an intervention like NDC, hence its 'rewarding' with NDC status. However, it is also a model that has a firm belief in how agents should act and behave. That is, it promotes forms of social action deemed necessary and 'responsible', encompassing participation in civic life and the judgement of others. The emphasis placed on public participation straddles both of these dimensions in that it is deemed necessary to provide a platform for the former in addition to encouraging the latter.

2.9.3 NDC and exclusion

The model of social exclusion that NDC seems to propound also contains two important dimensions. Firstly, that people can be excluded through a lack of good local services and opportunities. That is, 'area effects' can have a direct impact on individual quality of life (Atkinson & Kintrea 2001; 2277). Secondly, that 'top-down' decision-making and service delivery can be disempowering and contribute to a sense of lack of control over

one's life (Blears 2003; 22). NDC attempts to remedy both these contributors to exclusion. In terms of the first dimension, NDC appears to conceive of individual exclusion as a largely spatially (materially) determined condition. That is, by virtue of living in an excluded space, residents of that space experience disadvantage in similar ways. The mobilisation of 'community' underpinning NDC could be seen as an attempt to neatly package the needs of individuals in a geographical area. The recognisability of these excluded 'communities' appears to extend beyond shared identity and aspirations, into assumed similarity of needs or problems. This then forms the basis of the solution – identify the gaps in service provision in an area, or where there are poor quality services, and deliver resources to improve them. NDC also seeks to encourage residents to shape spending decisions and come up with innovative solutions to inadequate services, thus democratizing service delivery and engendering a sense of ownership. New Labour's model of exclusion therefore, consists of an analysis of the root causes of exclusion and how it should be addressed – a combination of extra funds and localized decision-making.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to concentrate on an exposition of New Labour's approach to welfare reform and tackling concentrations of poverty since it came to power in 1997. A range of thematic areas were covered, all designed to build a coherent narrative of where NDC comes from and how it is constituted. NDC was located within New Labour's welfare reform agenda and a triumvirate of 'third way' principles- 'community', opportunity and responsibility. More specifically, it was argued that those principles are manifest in a theoretical nexus that comprises NDC's conceptual structure and practical objectives, what has been called New Labour's 'ACE'. That is, three models of 'community', agency and exclusion that shape NDC's practical commitment to 'community' empowerment and how it attempts to address social exclusion and social disorder within 'excluded areas'.

It is this theoretical nexus of New Labour thinking and analyses that provides a basis for further research by allowing one to pose the question 'do these models adequately address the social exclusion of residents and spaces?' This chapter has seen New Labour set out its stall and assert how it believes the welfare state should be reformed and how concentrations of poverty should be addressed. The next chapter will illustrate some initial problems with these agenda and provide a critical platform on which a practical research strategy can be formulated. Chapter three will contrast these models with discordant literature and analysis that appears to contradict and problematize some key aspects of NDC. This encompasses evidence of the contested and diverse nature of 'communities' and some of the tensions this creates, particularly when under the policy microscope.

Chapter Three

Critical reflections on New Labour, the 'third way' and the New Deal for Communities

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is the second of two focusing on the background literature to the thesis. It is designed to compliment chapter two and shares much of the same thematic terrain, but in this chapter explores that terrain through a more critical lens. Stemming from this critical approach, the research problem vis a vis NDC will emerge. The literature referred to here falls into two categories. Firstly, there are a number of authors and commentators who have sought to analyse the New Labour project and critique aspects of its theory and practice. They have digested New Labour and the 'third way' and responded with a range of critical reflections that offer sociological, philosophical or practical objections or challenges. A review of this literature will contribute to the exploratory tone of the thesis and provide a critical context in which a discussion of NDC can take place.

The second category of literature in this chapter is comprised by a body of research and ideas which specifically problematize NDC. As outlined in chapter one, the research problem that underpins this thesis stems from a tension between two bodies of knowledge – New Labour's ideas and assumptions about 'community', agency and exclusion (what was termed 'ACE' and recounted in chapter two), and alternative accounts that challenge New Labour's theorising and application of these concepts. This discordant literature is detailed below and differs from the first category of critical responses in that many of the authors or commentators cited are not concerned directly with New Labour. That is, *I* am responsible for deploying these points and arguments in an active problematizing of New Labour's 'ACE'. They are utilized because they offer insights into understandings of 'community' and so on, which appear useful for my investigation into NDC. It is this stock of discordant material that shapes the contours of the thesis by inspiring the key questions to be asked of New Labour and NDC. A key aim of this chapter is to trace the development and conclude with an account of the research questions thereby linking it to the next chapter, which focuses on the

fieldwork strategy and design. However, this chapter begins with a review of critics of the New Labour project.

3.2 Critics and sceptics of New Labour and the 'third way'

Today, one could argue that the 'New' Labour brand may have all but expired having been bruised by political events and mercilessly satirised for its earnest but occasionally vacuous politicking. Indeed, one gets the impression that we might be on the brink of a post - 'new' Labour era as a post – Blair era looms. Nonetheless, despite this period of political flux, it is still the case that New Labour endures as a governing project, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, probable next party leader and Prime Minister promising to keep the New Labour fire burning, proclaiming, *'there is no way back and there should be no way back'* (<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1798440,00.html>).

The pace and extent of analysis of New Labour also appears to be undiminished by these events. The concept and practice of New Labour has been subject to much intellectual and journalistic scrutiny, with commentators aiming their fire at almost every aspect of the re-branding and repositioning of the party over the last decade or so. For example, some have taken issue with their revisionist approach to recent political history and what is seen as a deliberate attempt to create fresh political territory. That is, in their eagerness to stress the novelty of 'new' Labour, party modernisers tended to combine diverse positions under one label of 'Old Left' or 'New Right' and tended to exaggerate certain features of those labels (Driver and Martell 2002; 71). Furthermore, Fairclough criticizes the deployment of these 'dividing lines' and asks whether 'old left' and 'new right' were *'the only options'* and whether the New Labour 'third way' was *'the only alternative'* (2000; 48).

The modernizing project of New Labour led to suspicions about the authenticity of the 'new' party given its apparent desire to *'please all of the people all the time'* (Benn 2000; 309). New Labour is now synonymous with a balancing act between embracing the market whilst committing itself to social justice and 'community' and has led to its identity as *'slippery'* (Lister 2001; 426), *'Janus-faced'* (Smith 2001, cited in Lister 2001; 426) and an attempt to *'square circles'* (Deacon 2002b; 104). Despite its eagerness to *'reconcile themes'* (Fairclough 2000; 44), this balancing act is at the root of the accusations of vacuity that have been directed at New Labour and its initial intellectual driving force the 'third way' (Driver and Martell 2000). For example, by 2001, *Guardian* journalist and sometime New Labour enthusiast Polly Toynbee was proclaiming that the 'third way' was *'utterly redundant'* and *'an escape from self-definition – a butterfly always on the wing'* because it *'offers the best of all possible worlds'* (The Guardian 2001). That is, in abandoning overtly egalitarian goals to

appease conservative voters, New Labour has left many bemoaning its lack of an ideological framework for its political manoeuvring. Toynbee's criticism of the 'third way' is a familiar one. Even when the 'third way' was at its intellectual zenith on the political centre-left a decade or so ago, many were unconvinced of its ability to be *'...a progressive agenda for the reform of the welfare state'* (Clegg 2005; 247). For example, Stuart Hall, writing in 1998 described the New Labour project as *'the great moving nowhere show'* and argued how 'third way' politics shies away from radicalism, opting for a middle course on everything (Hall cited in Giddens 2000; 12). In response to such criticisms, the doyen of the 'third way' philosophy, Anthony Giddens is unswerving in his defence of an agenda he helped construct. Moreover, he puts such criticism down to *'insularity, memory loss, intellectual laziness and...the groucho marx tendency'* (2002; 3) on the part of the British left wing establishment. That is, its inability or unwillingness to engage with the economic or social realities of the 'real' world where dogma must be compromised. Ruth Lister has considered this debate about New Labour and asserted that whilst *'it would be easier be line up behind...those who feel able to dismiss New Labour as neo-Thatcherite wolves in sheep's clothing'* (2001; 425) her response is to be 'uncertain' about New Labour and its ambiguous nature and commit herself to a *'position of ambivalence'* (2001; 425) about its rhetoric and practice.

As we saw in chapter two, one of the key components of the 'third way' thesis was of a changed world requiring a reconfiguration of social democracy to initiate reform to respond to globalization and the risks and uncertainties that it unleashes. However, Stuart Hall has criticized New Labour for accepting globalization as *an 'irresistible force of nature'* (Cited in Giddens 2000; 12), thereby constructing the economic climate in which it operates as one that has changed irrevocably, but cannot be changed further by any nation state. In that sense, New Labour presents the electorate with an economic 'fait accompli'. Similarly, Fairclough has interrogated the manner in which New Labour represents 'globalization' and 'the new global economy' as *'presupposed...something given and achieved'* (2000; 27). He contrasts these rhetorical, ideological techniques with a reality of globalisation as an *'uneven and partial tendency'* (2000; 27). Furthermore, he suggests that it is a neo-liberal version of globalisation that is constructed as *'inevitable and irreversible'* (2000; 28). In addition, he argues that New Labour favours *'a logic of appearances'* of phenomena such as globalisation, where there is an *'elision of agency, causality and responsibility'* rather than an 'explanatory logic' that would illuminate the processes and social relations driving such developments (2000; 69).

Finlayson has argued from this perspective that New Labour formulates political ideas based on a *'sociological claim about the novel condition of contemporary society; a belief that the*

world has been transformed, while our political ideas have not kept up the pace' (1999; 271). This he contrasts with the 'old' Labour formulation of ideas on a moral basis about the *'nature of society and the distribution of resources'* (1999; 271). Paul Cammack has expanded on this analysis to argue that it amounts to a continuation of neo-liberal ideological hegemony and has specifically questioned the leftist credentials of Giddens' 'third way' programme. For example,

'The Third Way' reads not as an innocent manifesto for a resurgent centre left, but as a systematic appropriation of the vocabulary and values of social democracy to legitimise and consolidate a new politics of the Centre Right' (Cammack 2004; 152).

He continues his polemic by lambasting Giddens' narrative of irreversible changes wrought by globalization with the aid of an Orwellian analogy,

'Casting himself in the role of Blair's Minister of Truth, Giddens offers New Labour a set of slogans tailored to the needs of the age: individualism is solidarity; responsibility is emancipation; risk is security; enterprise is community; opportunity is redistribution; inclusion is equality; self help is welfare' (2004; 165).

Therefore, for Cammack, the entire 'third way' is in fact simulacrum; a looking glass world of 'double speak' in which social democrats and leftist intellectuals are complicit in the maintenance of neo-liberal free market hegemony and in so doing have redefined the egalitarian project out of existence. In a similar vein, journalist Nick Cohen has argued that Tony Blair and New Labour embodies an 'anti-elitist' elite which attempts to appear *'prolier than thou'* through populist rhetoric and punitive measures assumed to please 'the People', but actually proving that *'...the anti-elitist elite was interested in distracting people, not empowering them'* (2003; 36). In other words, any authentic commitment to an egalitarian 'good' society has been displaced by a politics driven by a concern with 'populism' that only succeeds in patronising and neglecting 'the People' it should be helping. According to Cohen, those in control of the progressive agenda have become so obsessed with re-definition and presentation to have lost sight of, or interest in their core electoral support.

Giddens has identified this critical narrative:

'According to (the critics)...the third way takes globalization as a given. Crucially, it fails to contest inequalities of income, wealth and power...Globalization produces

winners and losers. The third way offers nothing to the losers... Redistribution... seems to have been discarded. (2000; 24)

However, whilst Giddens maintains that redistribution 'can and should be' the solution to inequality (2000; 96), the treatment of globalization as an '*immutable economic fact*' (Lister 2001; 431) is much criticized because it reflects an inability to '*challenge the powerful on behalf of the powerless*' (Lister 2001; 431). Further, it is assumed to demonstrate the displacement of a concern for economic inequality by a desire to accommodate the prevailing market forces.

In distilling these arguments, there appear to be two interlinked intellectual criticisms of New Labour that predominate. First, there is an irritation that it has sacrificed its traditional and defining egalitarian rhetoric for a woolly, centrist, more 'electable' agenda. More substantially, there is a sense that in so doing they have jettisoned commitments to equality and redistribution and gone too far in servicing the needs of the market.

3.2.1 New Labour and inequality

For many commentators, the birth of New Labour whilst being electorally fruitful has compromised the pursuit of a radical equality agenda meaning they have retreated from an egalitarian mission which has not been satisfactorily replaced (Driver and Martell 2002; 186). For example, Lister has argued,

"Despite the continued espousal of the rhetoric of social justice, it is, arguably, primarily a social cohesion model of social justice to which New Labour subscribes. While the two are not necessarily incompatible, the promotion of a narrower social cohesion model, which ignores wider inequalities of resources and power, runs the risk of becoming detached from principles of social justice." (2000; 14)

Similarly, Driver has argued, '*New Labour stands accused of embracing a meritocratic, as well as individualistic model of equality that is both spurious and not in itself of the Left.*' (2004; 33)

This is a trend also identified by Fitzpatrick and Jones in their analysis of New Labour's approach to street homelessness. They argue that the rhetorical precept of social justice for homeless people is belied by a policy concern with 'social cohesion' and control which legitimates coercive or punitive measures to 'clean up' the streets, but actually undermines the wellbeing of street homeless people (2005; 389). Therefore, even those goals that New

Labour does believe in such as social justice have been diluted or undermined by a tendency to either leave wider economic drivers of inequality largely intact, or by their intolerant social order agenda or 'new paternalism' (Driver 2004). Thus, there is scant comfort for egalitarians that see their progressive agenda removed from explicit political discourse and undermined by a prioritising of social cohesion and order. Levitas (1998) has theorised this as a shift from a redistributionist discourse (RED) to a social integrationist discourse (SID) (with aspects of a moral underclass discourse (MUD)) in its approach to inequality.¹ Furthermore, she asserts that New Labour's goal of social inclusion has,

'...nothing to do with distributional equality, but means lifting the poor over the boundary of a minimum standard – or to be more accurate inducing those who are sufficiently sound in mind and limb to jump over it – while leaving untouched the overall pattern of inequality, especially the rich... (Peter) Mandelson's concern was with those 'dropping off the end of the ladder of opportunity' – not the length of the ladder or the distance between the rungs.' (1998; 156 brackets added)

In a similar vein, Ruth Lister has asked whether genuine social inclusion is possible without greater equality (1998; 224). That is, has the government's rejection of equality of outcome as an objective been replaced by a woolly commitment to social 'inclusion' and a tacit acceptance of inequality. Clarke has suggested this amounts to New Labour's '*abandonment of the citizen*' and the '*predominance of the market over the state*', the '*subordination of social policy to the economy*' (2005; 452). Ruth Levitas (2001) has supported this suspicion by arguing that 'inclusion' for New Labour is a functional concept meaning inclusion in the paid labour market. She has also stated that a lack of material resources is not given sufficient priority in the social exclusion reports and insists that New Labour are more concerned with moral conformity and social order than they are with reducing inequalities. Although it has to be said that throughout the 2001 Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report *Preventing Social Exclusion*, there are references to social 'improvement' in a more general sense (for example better housing, avoiding homelessness, improved standards of living).

3.2.2 Reflections on welfare reform

As noted in chapter two, New Labour's reform of the welfare system has rested on three key principles: community, opportunity and responsibility. Each of these has attracted attention as commentators have sought to grapple with and offer analyses of their effects and implications. For example, the centrality of paid work to responsible citizenship has been

¹ Although we know since 1997, there has been mild redistribution (see for example Toynbee & Walker 2005; Hills 2005).

severely criticised. Ruth Lister has voiced concerns about New Labour's contentment with social cohesion (and therefore inequality), but has suggested that the focus on paid employment fits with New Labour's ideological rejection of extensive redistribution from the rich to the poor (1998; 217). Ruth Levitas questions the limitations of New Labour's construction of social inclusion and whether unpaid work such as caring and voluntary work is considered a viable route into the 'inclusive society' (1998; 145). Lister (following Williams 2001) has identified the need for a 'care ethic' that will compete with the government's dominant 'paid work' ethic and has stressed the need to introduce a 'gender sensitive' understanding of citizenship, (2006; 323) whilst Jordan has suggested the need for 'non-productivist' social policies that value the '*convivial and co-operative*' aspects of social life such as '*informal care, community and political work, and mutual aid*' (2005; 440).

The rights and responsibilities agenda that underpins the reform of welfare, of which engaging in paid work is a core feature, has also attracted criticism. In particular, the emphasis placed on performing responsibilities and duties, deriving from New Labour's deliberate focus on character and behaviour, have been met with some critical voices. Specifically, such voices raise objections to the attachment of welfare provision to certain behavioural standards or conditions. Objections to what has become known as welfare 'conditionality' tend to fall into two broad groups according to Deacon (2004). The first group argues that to place extra responsibilities on those who are already at the sharp end of social inequality is unjust and unfairly penalises people stricken by poverty or disadvantage. A possible example of this could be offered by the New Deal 'workfare' programmes introduced by New Labour. If one viewed these as being more concerned with providing subsidised, low paid labour, than providing high quality job opportunities for those not in employment, then they could be seen to have merged the low paid and unemployed into a '*new class of persistently underemployed workers*' (Hewitt 2002; 200) compelled to take jobs that entrench their disadvantage.

The second group suggests that the penalties for non-compliance with responsibilities will victimise third parties, such as children, rather than the adult offender. (Deacon 2004; 913) Lister has recently added a third area of concern relating to the gendered nature of responsibility. She notes how it is generally mothers who will be subject to parenting scrutiny by welfare professionals and it is also they who are expected to address the behaviour of their children if they behave antisocially. She argues that the '*gender-neutral language of parenting*' obscures the realities of continuing sexual divisions of labour within the home (2006; 327).

Nonetheless, New Labour's justification for this emphasis on responsibility derives from the belief that the allocation of opportunity by the state (and the taxpayer) necessitates the performance of certain duties:

'...investment in Sure Start, education, welfare to work [means] we are entitled to demand from parents some minimum responsibility back...As a matter of principle I think it is right that with benefits come responsibility.' (Tony Blair on BBC Newsnight 16 May 2002)

However, it has been argued that only a genuinely egalitarian distribution of resources and opportunities can justify demanding concomitant duties and responsibilities, whether that is in a welfare context, or a general focus on the policing of behaviour through instruments such as ASBOs. Some have described this exchange between citizen and state as 'fair reciprocity' (White 2003; 17).² However, some would question whether New Labour is engaging in '*radical action on society's background distribution of assets and opportunities*' (White 1999; 178) to a sufficient extent to consummate the 'fair reciprocity' contract. For example, examining the government's social order agenda, Roy Hattersley, former Labour party deputy leader, refers to Tony Blair's celebrated sound bite 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' and argues that New Labour should focus more on those 'causes' (in his mind structural inequalities), before judging their behaviour. He cites the 'doctrine of self interest' to argue that, '*The young hooligans who live in those conditions will play fair by society only when they feel that society is playing fair by them.*' (Hattersley; 2002)

Similarly, the policy shift, identified above, from tackling deep-seated structural inequalities means for some that New Labour is unable to meet its obligations in tackling disadvantage and delivering genuine opportunity to its citizens (Lister 1998; 2001, Levitas 1998) that would legitimize greater attention on behaviour and judgements on entitlements to welfare support. However, some commentators like Jackie Ashley have backed the government's position on behaviour and low-level criminality, pointing out that it is sensible, and in the progressive Left's tradition, to make demands on behaviour. She also points out that 'anti-social behaviour' is a real problem for those who are victimised by it - usually the poorest in society. (Ashley; 2003) Similarly, in a housing context, Harrison has argued that it is '*tenants themselves who are disempowered by violent, racist or criminal neighbours*' (cited in Deacon 2004; 921), implying that the enforcement of behavioural contracts for tenants reflects the needs shaped by 'grassroots' social divisions rather than oppressive ruling elites.

² The particular model of 'fair reciprocity' as conceived by Stuart White has received criticism and revisions however – see Fitzpatrick 2005a.

Furthermore, the government argue that measures such as ASBOs are not about (unjustly) policing behaviour as much as they are about enhancing the liberty and rights of ‘decent’ citizens. Therefore, they are not enforcing obligations so much as providing opportunities for people and ‘communities’ to thrive and prosper. Again, ‘community’ looms large here by reframing the ‘fair reciprocity’ contract as one between individual and ‘community’ rather than state. This appears to be a bid by government to outmanoeuvre its critics who readily accuse it of authoritarianism by emphasising the importance of enforcing ‘community’ obligations and perhaps downplaying the relationship between citizen and *state* and the concrete rights that this contract bestows.³

Nonetheless, if one accepts the logic of what has been called a ‘contractualist’ justification for welfare conditionality (Deacon 2004; White 2003) and the policing of behaviour, then it follows that the social order agenda discussed above becomes authoritarian and unjust if the obligations of the state – specific distributional conditions - are not met (White 1999; 178). That is, Stuart White has identified a ‘civic minimum’ that is an essential prerequisite for prescribing behavioural codes. He defines it thus:

‘the concrete rights and obligations of economic citizenship, embodied in specific institutions and policies, necessary to make a market economy acceptably (though not absolutely) just. (2003; 2)

If this minimum is absent, then any activity by the state that seeks to enforce contribution to the ‘community’ becomes illiberal and social control measures unjust. In other words, justifications on the basis of liberating fellow ‘community’ members, be it from antisocial behaviour or non-work contribution, are not adequate or strong enough on their own to merit the enforcement of specific behavioural codes. Access to rights and opportunities secured by *the state* are by definition the central feature of this contract.

Indeed, it is clearly the case that many do not believe New Labour to be providing this minimum, therefore rendering its scrutiny of behaviour punitive and unjust, particularly with reference to welfare entitlement. For example, Dwyer (1998) asserts that the increasing ‘conditionality’ of welfare rights (such as New Deal for unemployed, tenant behaviour

³ Recent rhetoric about abandoning or reforming the Human Rights Act could also be seen as an attempt to use ‘community’ to reframe the notion of rights. ‘Human rights’ are increasingly conflated with an undermining or threatening of the decent, commonsense ‘community’, particularly when used to defend asylum seekers or other suspect interlopers.

contracts) amounts to a criteria of 'deservingness' for public welfare. Following Titmuss' (1958) welfare model, he notes that, under New Labour, those in receipt of fiscal or occupational welfare are not subject to behavioural conditions. Consequently, it is '*largely the welfare rights of the poor that are being redefined*' (Dwyer 1998; 513). Therefore, not only have New Labour failed to fulfil its obligation to provide necessary opportunities for its citizens, but it has introduced conditions in uneven (and ultimately unjust) ways, disproportionately focusing on social welfare and the behaviour of the poor. Similarly, Fitzpatrick (2005b) has argued that the enforcement of work obligations '*may be unfair and directed against the least advantaged*' and narrow citizens' sense of '*reciprocal contributions*' where paid employment is prioritised over forms of contribution such as care work (p54).

3.3 Problematizing 'ACE'

In chapter two, there was an attempt to construct an explanatory framework by which to understand the conceptual basis of NDC. This framework was comprised of three models relating to agency, community and exclusion and described as New Labour's 'ACE'. In order to develop the research questions that framed the fieldwork phase of this investigation, the next sections of this chapter will address each model and deploy literature that problematizes 'ACE'. It is through this process that NDC will be critically examined and some key questions about its theory and practice will emerge. The subsequent practical exploration of New Labour's approach to regenerating excluded 'communities' was located in the critical space marked out by these questions.

3.3.1 De-stabilizing 'community'

Whilst chapter two has demonstrated that New Labour believes in the existence and positive effect of belonging to a 'community' (an entity, in terms of NDC, deriving from spatial proximity and shared material conditions), there is a strong body of literature that has questioned its attainability at a spatial level and therefore, its desirability as a policy mechanism. Firstly, many observers have argued that the notion of unified spatial 'communities' is a complex one. For example, '*Community is as much about struggle as it is about unity*' (Brent 1997; 83). Brent implies that we may be able to define a 'community', but argues that such entities have always been defined in response to an excluded 'other' and cites examples of how the creation of 'insider' and 'outsider' groupings is part of '*community construction*' (1997; 82). Similarly, Crow and Allan have identified the need to recognise, '*the social construction of communities and the negotiated nature of their terms of membership*'. They continue by arguing that, '*precisely what it takes to be accepted as 'one of us' varies enormously from place to place and also between different types of social groups*'

(1994; xvii). This trend towards 'social closure' illustrates how 'community' based on spatiality is a constructed and negotiated entity, shaped by dynamics of power residing in length of residence, housing tenure, gender, age, ethnicity and a variety of other social divisions. According to Elias and Scotson, 'community' is the product of the *'universal regularity of any established-outsider figuration'* (1994; xvi). Therefore, it is problematic to attempt to 'read off' unity of values and positive social bonds and the other aspects generally considered comprising a 'community' from a spatial grouping. That terrain will become a *social space* as individual and groups of social agents inscribe it with various rules and codes, in addition to manifesting wider dynamics of power and social division.

Indeed, Day and Murdoch noted insider/outsider divisions in their study of a 'community' in rural Wales. They illustrate the realities of being an incomer to a 'community', and the difficulties 'new' people or families can face (1993; 103). Similarly, Payne cites the 'key issue' creating conflict in his study of a rural village is *'between locals and incomers'* (1992; 19). He describes how being 'born and bred' is a flexible 'rule' mobilised to exclude *'those whom locals wish to define as outsiders'* (1992; 19).

Social closure of this kind is a recurring theme in the 'community' studies literature. For example, Frankenberg notes that,

'In all the studies there is a history of conflict between the new and the old which goes far to determine the social patterns of the new. The old inhabitants did not choose to have a council estate and indeed often fought bitterly against its being built.' (1965; 199)

For example, Warwick and Littlejohn, in their study of coalmining areas found,

'The labour force which was assembled was drawn from a wide range of localities, and the sense of mobility which marked this assembly was sufficient to raise some doubts about how far this could or would become the basis of relatively homogeneous and solidary 'working class communities'. Many internal conflicts based in rivalry between 'locals' and 'incomers', between more militant and more deferential mineworkers, and between more and less religiously oriented men and women, undoubtedly existed...' (1992; 71)

In addition,

'Among these (young people) the differentiation between 'locals' and 'incomers' was possibly more pronounced. The longer you live in a locality, the more likely it is that you become integrated, but you can still carry the stigma of being a 'foreigner'. There are still jokes in Ashby about 'Staffies', that is migrants from Staffordshire...that were meant to raise a laugh about outsiders who were rather slow in 'learning the ropes' or were deviant in some way' (1992; 82).

However, whilst the insider/outsider division may have been recounted in some of these studies, overall the tradition of 'community' studies neglected the uncomfortable or complex realities of their research 'communities'. Crow and Allan have identified these romanticised accounts as conveying,

'...only solidarity and co-operation...ignoring the schism and conflict in local social life, highlighting the positive, celebrated sides of communities and neglecting their oppressive and coercive aspects.' (1994; 2)

Similarly, Fremeaux has recently asserted,

'...the ideological stance taken on community led these traditional studies to offer an interpretation of relationships characterized by harmony, affection, consensus and stability, whilst overlooking the coercion and power relations that occur both externally and internally.' (2005, 268)

Moreover, Crow and Allan argue that the community studies tradition was guilty of neglecting 'issues relating to gender inequalities', using 'malestream language' and focusing 'on the public sphere'. (1994; 16) For Cain and Yuval Davis, these accounts reflected some particular cultural assumptions:

'Social policy conceptions of 'the community' have often ignored marginal sections in the population. The intimate, close and rooted image of 'the community' implied a homogeneity composing family, neighbourhood and parish, all of whom conformed to a hegemonic culture, often English and usually working class.' (cited in Pereira 1997; 15)

Bell and Newby have been similarly critical and quote Ruth Glass who denounced community studies as, 'the poor sociologist's substitute for the novel' (1971; 13), due to their perceived preference for cosy description rather than sociological insight. Geoff Payne has

contributed to the critique of community studies stating that the working class were portrayed as 'heroic' – *'hard working, hard drinking, independent minded, but mutually supportive'* and that the 'downside' of 'community': *'poverty, patriarchy, excessive social control and intolerance of individuality'* was overlooked by researchers (Payne 1992; 17). Robert Roberts, in his personal account of the 'classic slum' in Salford identifies a similar trend,

'...some sociologists have been apt to write fondly about the cosy gregariousness of the old slum dwellers. Their picture, I think, has been overdrawn. Close propinquity, together with cultural poverty, led as much to enmity as it did to friendship. There could be much unhappiness and fear of one neighbour by another...' (1971; 30)

He also asserts his belief that the slum had its own distinctive class structure ranging from elite *'leading families'* - *'shopkeepers, publicans, skilled tradesmen'* (1971; 5) - down to a social base of the 'lowest of the low' – *'bookies runners, idlers, part-time beggars and petty thieves'* (1971; 8) manifesting in pervasive intra-class social divisions.⁴

Part of this lack of analysis may have been down to methodological errors on the part of research teams. For example, Cornwell's 1984 study of health and illness in Bethnal Green observed that there is often a contradiction between respondents' public and private accounts of community life,

'Uncritical acceptance of people's public accounts as literal truths leads inevitably to romanticism of the past...Private accounts...reveal a darker side, including the 'turning of the blind eye' to other people's troubles; as well as the open doors and the familiarity with others, it included the arguments, fights and brawls, particularly over children, and the petty snobberies that kept people apart from each other.'
(Cited in Crow and Allan 1994; 20)

Therefore, we should not be deceived by the sentimental, *gemeinschaft* (Tönnies 1967) visions of 'community' that permeated such texts, although they do provide an insight into the construction of 'community' as a positive and romantic ideal and how academic researchers have been complicit in creating such mythology. They also offer a possible explanation why successive governments have 'fallen' for 'community' – it invokes 'warm associations'

⁴ See also Mann (1992) for an examination of intra-class social divisions.

(Herbert 2005; 851) and is portrayed as the social glue that no policymaker can afford to ignore.

However, as some authors have found, such accounts of ‘community’ life give inadequate space to experiences shaped by gender, ethnicity, disability and other social divisions, which reveal the sometimes-uncomfortable truth of living in certain areas. For example, Fiona Williams has identified how the threat of racial abuse or violence can prevent black men and women from feeling comfortable outside their own ‘communities’. She points out how a combination of racism and sexism, poverty and local housing resources and policies, can imprison black women in their neighbourhoods in very specific ways and cites a quotation from Bryan et al (1985):

“The accumulated effects of twenty-five years of racist housing policies have ensured that growing numbers of black women are imprisoned on the upper floors of dilapidated tower blocks in every inner-city with little hope of escape. If our white neighbours harass us, or if our men abuse us, we often have no choice but to leave, exposing ourselves and our children to the traumas of homelessness.” (cited in Williams 1997; 38)

This is a theme emphasised by Worley (2005) who argues that the use of the term ‘community’ by policymakers obscures the racialized and often gendered way in which ‘communities’ are reproduced.

Therefore, as suggested thus far, it is far more likely that the spatial entities described as ‘communities’ are diverse and complex phenomena. For example,

‘Given the importance of social divisions that are maintained within these communities, in what sense is it sensible to talk of a single community?...what these issues force us to realise is the inappropriateness of conceptualising communities in terms of firm boundaries, fixed membership and rigid patterns of inclusion and exclusion...’ (Crow & Allan 1994; 189)

Hoggett (1997) has stated,

‘...each neighbourhood is a site for a multitude of networks, interests and identities...what comes across, even from the strongly working class neighbourhoods,

is the heterogeneity and complexity of communities. And yet it is this that policymakers and practitioners still seem to be largely unaware of.' (1997; 15)⁵

We can see therefore how New Labour's apparent belief that certain spatial configurations will translate into a sense of kinship with shared norms and values amongst its members could be considered problematic. This could be particularly the case when those spaces are socially excluded, or 'ghettoes' if, as Bauman argues, poverty and 'community' are considered incommensurate,

'Ghetto life does not sediment community. Sharing stigma and public humiliation does not make the sufferers into brothers; it feeds mutual derision, contempt and hatred...ghetto experience dissolves solidarity and destroys mutual trust before they have been given a chance to take roots. A ghetto is not a greenhouse of community feelings. It is on the contrary a laboratory of social disintegration, atomization and anomie...To sum up: ghetto means the impossibility of community.' (2001; 122 bold added)

Brent (1997) expresses this debate succinctly when he notes that, *'Communities are not oases of equality where major issues of power magically stop at the boundary'* (1997; 80).

Researchers have found social divisions rooted in class, employment, gender, age, ethnic differences that make and remake 'community' and often determine the allocation of resources and power within defined spaces. Such divisions play an important part in the quality of life experienced by residents and can prevent certain groups from using local services (e.g David Page's (2000) study of Thames Green). This theme of 'community division' is also a familiar media riff in which newspapers report on infighting between residents or 'problematic' groups within otherwise (apparently) consensual spaces. Recent examples include gypsy versus villager, ('Gypsy meets the villager... The Observer 2004), colonisation of areas by student populations ('Border controls for student Shangri-la', The Guardian 2004), rich and poor living side by side but 'worlds apart' ('What lies beneath?', The Guardian 2005) or dangerous youths in 'problem' areas ('Violence betrays 'reinvention' of Damilola estate', The Observer 2005).

⁵ See also Ginsburg (1999) and Foley and Martin (2000) for similar sentiments about heterogeneous 'communities'.

Linda East in her study of an estate in Nottingham, found that,

'Divisions based on age, gender, class and ethnicity proved to be more important in shaping the lives of local residents than shared geographical space. This brings into question the concept of community-level social capital where 'community' is interpreted to mean the people sharing a particular locality.' (2002; 170)

Her research revealed the heterogeneity of needs within an excluded space (defined in this case according to government deprivation indices) and the variety of experiences of users of services funded by regeneration programmes. In a similar vein, Coffield has noted that community life was characterised by a number of divisions, some of which were peculiar to the 1980s, others which had deep-seated antecedents. Deep divisions

'...between those who supported the (1984-5 miners') strike and those who did not...between the employed and the jobless; between those who 'shop' their neighbours to the DHSS and those who do not...between those who can afford to buy their council houses and those who cannot.' (Coffield 1986 cited in Crow and Allan 1994; 54)

Bea Campbell in her study of 'communities' across the UK experiencing rioting and civil unrest uncovered the heterogeneity of such places and the range of divisions that exist despite apparent consensus:

'What was new in the Eighties and Nineties was that riot became routine. Its persistent resurgence demands that we ask new questions about community, solidarity, law and disorder among men and women living with desperate local economies. Fissured by gender and generation, race and class, the riots of the Nineties are as much against community as they are about it; indeed, they render the very concept of 'community' problematic.' (1993; xi)

Campbell sought to reveal some of the internal dynamics of local 'communities' and more often than not, it was young men who were viewed as destructive agents that undermined the fabric of the public sphere:

'...Cedarwood's Wellbeing women's group bought exercise equipment – a treadmill, a rower and a bike – and kept it in the building's secure room. Once when it was empty a hole was hammered through the wall. Everything went: exercise equipment,

typewriters, kettles, photocopier...it was also in the conquest of space, other people's space, that these boys were constituting themselves as men...What they admired was the criminalised brotherhood; what they harassed and hurt was community politics. It was an entirely and explicitly gendered formation. A voluble woman active in the Credit Union went into the youth project, a reincarnation of the old Book Centre, and was greeted by a cold chorus: "Fucking whoring cunt...fucking twat..." She never went there again.' (1993; 244)

'Community' in such areas then becomes a space in which identities are negotiated, forged and asserted. For Campbell, young men did this by attacking other 'community' members. Crucially, it was a 'gendered formation' – an assertion of dominance or defiance that mobilised entrenched social divisions, a process that occurred despite the alleged unity of poor or excluded spaces. Amin (2002) in his analysis of the 2001 disturbances in Oldham and elsewhere has discussed a similar dynamic between white and non-white ethnic groups who have:

'a strong sense of place...but one based on turf claims, or when shared, defended in exclusionary ways...spaces (that) in reality support multiple publics' (2002; 972).

Therefore, rather than containing a 'unitary sense of place', 'communities' should be viewed as spaces in which identities and needs are negotiated, often producing divisions and contestations as well as solidarity amongst residents. It is these sorts of dimensions of 'community' that leads some to ask, '*...who is it that has the power to define and represent 'community', and at whose expense*' (Day 1996; 152).

3.3.2 Questioning 'community' as a policy device⁶

In spite of the complexity of 'community' spaces and problems with the concept itself, 'community' still permeates several policy arenas ranging from regeneration, social care, policing, development and health (Hoggett 1997; 3). New Labour, as we have seen, is no different. It has explicitly made 'community' both the goal and underpinning framework of policy, particularly urban regeneration, some aspects of law and order (Rose 2000) and race relations (Worley 2005). The use of 'community' in this way has drawn some critical reaction, particularly how it has been recycled by policymakers (Shaw 2004) and used, '*...as if it were an aerosol can,*

⁶ As noted in section 1.2, 'community' has been placed in inverted commas throughout the thesis. The contested and dubious meaning of the term as discussed in this chapter should have made clear why such a decision was taken.

to be sprayed onto any social programme, giving it a more progressive and sympathetic cachet. (Cochrane 2004; 228) In addition, the ‘third way’ formulation of ‘community’ has been criticised thus:

‘The role of community is to mop up the ill-effects of the market and to provide the conditions for its continued operation, while the costs of this are borne by individuals rather than the state.’ (Levitas 2000; 194)

In a similar vein,

‘In the UK and abroad, ‘community’, in all its forms, is seen as ‘the modern elixir’, with ‘ubiquitous’ appeal for tackling the bundle of problems wrapped up in the term ‘social exclusion.’ (Richardson & Mumford 2002; 209)

Here again we can see the recurring motif of ‘third way’ criticism in that government social policy is deemed to be serving the interests of the market, rather than citizens and residents. Strong ‘community’ then becomes a way of absorbing, to some extent, the divisive effects of the market and its innate lack of a social conscience. In this sense, the uncertainties of the ‘post-traditional’ society and its dismantling of tradition that underpins ‘third way’ politics do not seem to have destabilized New Labour’s stoic and empirical faith in ‘community’.

Nevertheless, Hoggett has noted the ‘resilience’ of the idea in policymaking that the poor and underprivileged in particular ‘needs’ ‘community’ (1997; 9). According to Furbey this derives from a concern with the ‘degenerate’ pockets of the social body and the belief that ‘community’ can revitalise poor areas. He describes interventions such as NDC as ‘surgical strikes’ designed to rescue ailing neighbourhoods (1999; 433).

Government Minister Hazel Blears has acknowledged the diversity of working class experience:

‘[the working class movement library]...attests to the extraordinary richness and variety of working class experience since the industrial revolution. Through its trade unions, craft associations, corresponding societies, friendly societies, co-operatives, woman’s organisations, religious organisations, sports and social clubs, campaigns and causes and a million other voluntary organisations, the working class in Salford, as elsewhere, was a highly stratified, varied and complex organism. Meanwhile the ‘community’ portrayed in Salford’s other great cultural contribution, Coronation

Street, where back doors are left unlocked, neighbours know one another and life coalesces around the local pub and corner shop, is a world that belongs today almost entirely in fiction. (2003; 8, brackets added)

However, despite this recognition of the diversity of experience, there is no real attempt to outline the diversity of ‘communities’ and there remains a belief in existence of some ‘communities’ that are unified in their values, morality and aspirations. NDC is predicated on such an assumption and areas allocated NDC funding triumphed over other areas because they were perceived to exhibit these characteristics. That is, despite the data recounted above, New Labour strategically attempted to circumvent these complexities by rewarding areas of consensus and stability. Furthermore, it predicated its commitment to the participation, consultation and empowerment of local residents on this assumed consensus. However, if the material discussed above is correct to emphasise the heterogeneity of even the apparently most unified spaces, then it is problematic to believe that a diverse and fractured collective of people can be ‘empowered’ in a meaningful way. For example, Edwards has suggested:

‘...the idea that a spatial community can be empowered in any significant way assumes the existence of a unitary set of values and interests... [which] is not plausible.’ (1997; 832 brackets added)

However, whilst Robinson and Shaw agree with this analysis they also point out that there are enormous potential benefits from community participation if it was achieved satisfactorily (1992; 71). Nevertheless, Brent, believes policymakers would be foolish to try to aim for, or believe in the notion of cohesive communities, free from conflict. He argues that ‘community’ is too often,

‘Used rhetorically as a positive and unambivalent word to weigh against the negatives of disintegration...without any understanding that any formation of community brings with it a whole range of questions, difficulties and struggles’. (1997; 82)

Furthermore, on top of the practical problems of empowering diverse groups, some have questioned the authenticity of New Labour’s commitment to empowerment (Clarke 2005, Cochrane 2004), whilst others have queried whether ‘community’ empowerment is always conducive to progressive government (Walker 2002, 2005). For example,

'Communities can be selfish and thwart the general interest. They may oppose new social housing or riot when paedophiles try to find shelter in their midst. They may be discriminatory: a white working class community may seek to exclude non-white incomers...' (Walker 2005)

Moreover,

'Communities can be deeply fragmented and many local people support policies which would exacerbate rather than combat social exclusion.' (Foley and Martin 2000; 486)

That is, the decisions that 'communities' make could be authoritarian or punitive in nature and mitigate against the broader social inclusion goals of a programme like NDC. For example, the East Manchester NDC partnership adopted a policy that allows registered social landlords (RSL's) to actively turn away potentially 'troublesome' tenants from social housing (ex-convicts, drug users etc). However, Sean McGonigle, director of the NDC partnership has defended the decision arguing,

'But why should it always be areas with enough stacked against them already? East Manchester is getting a new deal as a community. This is part of the deal'.
(<http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/ndcannualreview.asp?pageid=90>)

Critics such as Hoban, have shown scepticism about terms like 'regeneration' and 'renewal' and questioned whose needs NDC recognises as legitimate within a 'community' of diverse groups and voices (2000; 521). Clarke has echoed this point stating,

'...whose voices get to be heard, and what the consequences of being heard are, remain critical issues around participation. Empowerment is an ambiguous condition.' (2005; 450-451)

Furthermore, Hoban has asked has there been a genuine commitment to 'empowerment' and partnership with residents, or just increased spending on managers, technocrats and planners (2001; 521). Hoban continues by suspecting that NDC's emphasis on 'partnership' is *'old wine in new bottles'* and that New Labour's agenda is simply a continuation of the policies of the 70s and 80s that failed to make a difference to residents (2001; 521). Cochrane has raised another fear about the heavy emphasis placed on local residents to participate, arguing that if partnerships fail to facilitate change and improvement, residents might be blamed for not being 'joined up' enough or not responding responsibly to the opportunities 'offered' to them.

That is, when there is no positive ‘return’ on government investment in NDC areas. Moreover, those areas that fail to ‘improve’ and continue to be shaped by conflict or ‘disorder’ could be,

‘written out of the promotional, marketing and branding discourses...the ‘ghetto’ may simply be defined as being outside the scope of urban regeneration, to be policed, rather than nurtured.’ (Cochrane 2000; 202)

Alcock has raised a similar concern, asking whether the paternalism of policy delivery will be effectively challenged if it is perceived by local people on the ground as a ‘*top-down policy priority*’ (2004; 92).

‘Community’ has also been a key feature of New Labour’s approach to law and order and its efforts to inculcate personal responsibility by locating individual behaviour in a meaningful collective context. Nikolas Rose has analysed this use of ‘community’ thus:

‘Those who refuse to become responsible and govern themselves ethically have also refused the offer to become members of the moral community. Hence, for them, harsh measures are entirely appropriate.’ (2000; 1407)

It was argued in chapter two that New Labour presupposes that some elements of the ‘community’ will choose not to ‘govern themselves ethically’ and will require a strong ‘community’ voice to identify then address the deviant minority, what Elizabeth Burney describes as “*decent people*’ vs *perpetrators*” (2005; 36) and the government expresses as the ‘*values of the majority*’ disrespected by ‘*the selfish minority*’ (Respect Task Force 2006; 3).

Furthermore, what has been called antisocial behaviour, and indeed more serious criminality, has been defined by New Labour as a form of ‘social harm’, whereby the ‘community’ is entitled to seek recompense for any breach of ‘mainstream’ norms and standards of behaviour – a reframing of reciprocal citizenship that emphasises adherence to the ‘community’s’ behavioural standards as well as traditional ‘*contributive obligations*’ such as paid employment and care work (White, S 2003; 97-125). In typically New Labour fashion, a recent example of this appeared when the Prime Minister wrote in The Sun newspaper, urging readers to report examples of antisocial behaviour to an email hotline (neighboursfromhell@thesun.co.uk). Then Home Office Minister Hazel Blears defended the stunt in the House of Commons:

'Encouraging members of the public to report antisocial behaviour is an important part of the government's overall strategy to tackle and not tolerate the problem.'

http://publications.parliament.uk/pn/cm200506/cmhansard/cm060124/text/60124w27.htm#60124w27.html_wqn5

'Tackling the problem' of disorder has also been identified as an important element in perceptions of successful regeneration (Hancock 2001; 114). Therefore, the building of 'community' requires the legitimate targeting of disorder and deviant behaviour. Moreover, it is 'communities' themselves that Government wants to be 'active' and police conduct. Burney notes how New Labour set about trying to 'responsibilize' local agencies and 'communities' through the creation of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to delegate the combating of crime and disorder to the local level (2005; 31). It is in the spirit of this partnership approach – what a Foucauldian would call the dispersal of disciplinary power – that the concept of 'community' punishments has grown. That is, New Labour has asserted that to achieve sustainable, attractive communities requires the building of 'respect' and a clampdown on damaging behaviour within these spaces. However, it has reasoned that this is most effectively achieved by including residents and citizens in the policing and punishment process, thereby building a culture of responsibility for both perpetrators and 'decent people' – who they presume are anxious to assert their values. The management of bad and criminal behaviour has been co-opted as a strategy to build the 'active community'.

However, such an approach has attracted much concern. For example, Squires and Stephen highlight that there is evidence to suggest that 'community enforcement' can unfairly focus attention on some areas deemed to be 'dangerous' or criminogenic by those with '*class and community prejudices*' (2005; 523). They also suggest that so-called 'restorative justice', where 'community' is used to sanction forms of reparation – in this case repairing the 'social harm' done to victims and the wider 'community' by their actions, rather than face incarceration or financial penalties – succeeds only in isolating '*the already excluded, whilst offering little in the way of opportunities for reintegration*' (2005; 523). Rob White, in his discussion of 'restorative justice', has called for greater 'restorative social justice' whereby the duties of the offender are matched by the responsibility of the '*community*' to improve neighbourhood conditions for the most marginalized and excluded (White; 2003). Indeed, this appears to be the concomitant that is so often absent in the government's rush to justify its social control measures and emphasise citizens' obligations to the 'community'.

Furthermore, Prior (2005) notes that rather than contributing to civic renewal, 'community safety' is likely to exacerbate relationships of inclusion and exclusion within 'communities' that are built on dynamics of mistrust and suspicion (Prior 2005; 364).

3.3.3 Questioning New Labour's model of agency

Chapter two stressed the centrality of notions of 'responsibility' and good character to New Labour's reform of welfare and redefinition of the citizen-state relationship. In the context of NDC this was translated into a model of agency which encompassed a set of responsibilities and behaviours expected of and cultivated in NDC residents. There are a number of points to address about this model. Firstly, as touched on in the discussions of welfare reform there is a general ongoing debate about New Labour's attempt to foreground the behaviour and character of citizens, particularly when used to retrench welfare rights (Dwyer 1998) and when subject to increased surveillance and behavioural scrutiny across a range of contexts (Clarke 2005). Much of the debate questions the Giddensian analysis of the need for 'autotelic' citizens who can reflexively respond to the risks and uncertainties of this historical epoch, whether described as late or post modern, post-traditional or post-Fordist (e.g. Mann 2003). Some have also expressed concern about the apparent uneven application of behavioural expectations. That is, to reiterate Dwyer's point, it is *social* welfare (as opposed to fiscal or occupational welfare) recipients who have seen greater scrutiny of their conduct (1998, 514).

Much of the debate around NDC derives from the sort of analysis similar to that around welfare reform in general. For instance, the responsibility placed on residents to be responsive, active agents who drive social change in their 'communities' stems from the same model of responsible agency as propounded by Giddens and the 'third way'. This model throws up some interesting questions about New Labour's 'communities' as inhabited by both consensual *and* reflexive, transformative social agents. Presumably, New Labour thinks residents of NDC zones exercise reflexivity in the *same*, that is, consensual way. Nevertheless, the questions we can ask of the 'responsibilization' of citizens in a regeneration context are twofold (and can broadly be applied to Giddens' view of post-traditional agency). Firstly, why should residents want or have to participate in their own governance. As Marinetto (2003) has recently pondered '*who wants to be an active citizen?*' As we have seen, in NDC areas residents are expected, and assumed to want to engage in the regeneration of that space. To some extent, participation is implicitly demanded by the construction of the area as a 'New Deal' 'community' and the emphasis placed on local involvement as a prerequisite for sustainable renewal. In his article, Marinetto cites a Foucauldian governmental perspective to suggest that such demands of active citizenship and 'community

involvement' could be a strategy of government designed to regulate the population, (2003; 110)

'Encouraging active citizenship promotes a particular type of personal morality and positive forms of life for communities, individuals and families.' (2003; 109)

Similarly, Nikolas Rose, an advocate of a broadly similar Foucauldian approach argues that the use of 'community' to underpin active, participative citizenship is about shaping individual behaviour by inscribing,

'...the norms of self control more deeply into the soul of each citizen than is thought possible through either disciplinary technologies such as mass schooling or social technologies such as those of welfare states.' (Rose 2000; 1409)

However, Marinetto notes that such a perspective, given its contention that governing and disciplinary power is dispersed throughout society, perhaps fails to consider the role of centralized government power in defining meanings of citizenship and its attendant responsibilities (2003; 110). In turn, this allows us to consider the moralism which shapes much of New Labour welfare agenda (Deacon & Mann 1997) and clearly originates, often crudely, from high profile politicians and is made explicit in policy statements. That is, New Labour has been unequivocal about its scrutiny of behaviour from the centre and clearly consider it an electoral boon to appear 'tough', as well as an avenue for reshaping the social.

Nevertheless, it is Giddens' reflexive subject that New Labour seems to support (Greener 2002; 693) and is made manifest by programmes such as NDC. This is a model of agency consistent with a political rationality that Rose argues took shape in pre-war Britain as 'the citizen' became,

'...a social being whose powers and obligations were articulated in the language of social responsibilities and collective solidarities...Citizens should want to regulate their conduct and existence for their own welfare, that of their families and that of society as a whole' (1999; 228).

There are shades here of the 'autotelic' self and the belief that individuals should seek to negotiate challenges and take responsibility for their behaviour. A belief that as Mann notes, is redolent of '*Victorian ideas of self help*' (2003; 230), with increasing responsibilities on

citizens but, crucially, without an analysis of the configuration of risks shaped by social and welfare divisions. As Fitzpatrick puts it,

'Their [Giddens and Beck] vision of the reflexive agent is...a self unconstituted by political conflict, of an environment from which hegemonic struggle has been all but eliminated and where grand questions concerning the justice or injustice of social background conditions are much less relevant than before.' (2005b; 58, brackets added)

If one were to apply this critique to NDC, one would contrast the awareness of self (and 'community') that NDC is meant to both feed off and inculcate, with the structural context in which this formulation of agency is supposed to occur. That is, a context of consistent disadvantage, conditions of social exclusion or poverty in addition to a culture of distrust of the state. This raises a moral question about the propriety of expecting residents to be either willing or able to get involved in local governance and be dynamic agents of social change. Alcock has analysed this trend in social policy towards 'agency based social change' and suggested that it could amount to the 'pathologisation' of the '*social exclusion problem*' and the re-emergence of a 'victim blaming' policy model. He states:

'...the insistence on local solutions to local problems can suggest that all such problems and solutions are locally based... [and] may lead some national (or international) actors to assume that they have no role to play in these.' (2004; 93-94)

The reframing of urban regeneration as being shaped from the 'bottom up' rests on getting local citizens involved and risks underplaying structural determinants. Here we can adopt Hoggett's analysis of Giddens' understanding of agency to question this reframing process. He suggests that Giddens' understanding derives from a '*traditional critique of the so-called 'dependency culture'*' and argues that his analysis lacks, '*any sense of power, domination, oppression, capitalism, imperialism, racism, etc. which might help us understand why poor people are as they are.*' (2000; 5) The outcome of such inadequate analyses is a model of the self that masquerades as the solution to the onset of post-traditional risks, but actually fails to reflect the processes by which social experience is produced. It is possible to see a resemblance here with how NDC constructs its residents.

Furthermore, Mann suggests that Giddens' model is '*an individualistic agenda that blames the poorest for not being more like the middle classes*' (2003; 238). He suggests that not only should the inadequacies of the model be revealed as lacking structural context, but the concepts of reflexivity and the 'autotelic' self are imbued

with an implicit class bias, and Giddens' apparently universal ideas about 'self help' are actually bourgeois conceits. As Mann mischievously notes,

'The suspicion remains though that the discovery of the autotelic self is lower down the agenda of the people of Essex than the restoration of fiscal welfare measures such as MIRAS.' (1998; 93)

Consequently, the Government's reliance on 'community involvement' and active agency to sustain regeneration not only raises concerns about its neglect of structural impediments to engaged and responsive residents, but could reflect a lack of subtlety in its understanding of human agency. For example, as with Giddens, there is an emphasis on emboldened, reflexive, engaged citizens. However,

'...there is something slightly compulsive about a subject which constantly seeks to be stretched and tested...the fact is that we are also natural and corporeal beings, we have bodies which do cause us suffering (and more suffering for some than for others) and which do decay and die. Western culture, and North American culture in particular, often seems to be in flight from an acceptance of the limits that nature provides.' (Hoggett 2001; 43-44)

Hoggett has called for a holistic model of agency, one that recognises the 'fractured self' and the *'impact of fear, envy and other emotions upon our capacities to imagine, challenge, resist or lead.'* (2000; 12) Elsewhere, he has described this as a 'non-unitarist' model of agency that recognises the *'negative emotional capabilities'* of individuals and *'the capacity for self-destructiveness and destructiveness towards others'* (2001; 53). Indeed, in section 3.3.1 we saw how these negative capacities can manifest in destructive relationships with fellow 'community' members and undermine the social fabric that allegedly should exist between fellow residents.

It would appear that Hoggett's analysis of agency offers an alternative, more nuanced understanding of human behaviour and, I would argue, problematizes New Labour's focus on active, responsible, respectable citizens as both a policy output and a necessity for its 'community' project (of which NDC is a part). Perhaps it could be argued that the 'communities' in New Labour's imagination are rather sterile projections that lack a grounding in the realities of excluded spaces where, like other spatial entities, residents can be in conflict and behave in ways, perhaps not accounted for by New Labour, but no less human for that. It could be that dysfunctional, disordered 'communities' are 'naturally' occurring

phenomena, which should not automatically place them outside the scope of NDC and the regeneration arena as they are currently.

3.3.4 Diversity of the welfare subject

Whilst we have already discussed the diversity of ‘community’ and problematized New Labour’s (lack of) understanding thereof, there is another important discussion of diversity that has taken place within recent debates about welfare effectiveness. It seems appropriate to locate the discussion of NDC, a public welfare programme, not just in literature that emphasises ‘community’ fragmentation, but also in broader debates about the division of welfare categories and its ability to respond to that heterogeneity. This allows us to question the sophistication of both NDC’s model of agency and social exclusion.

Current debates have sought to destabilize established or crude understandings of the welfare subject and instead, emphasise the diversity of welfare consumption patterns. There are two points that can be drawn out of this debate. On the one hand, there has been a growth in consumerist approaches to welfare in which users of services become diverse consumers who are empowered to exercise ‘choice’ of welfare packages and providers. A shift that can be framed – if we use Julian LeGrand’s typology – as welfare users being considered empowered ‘queens’ rather than treated as passive ‘pawns’ (2003; 16). This conception of welfare subjects as individual consumers has become a feature of New Labour government and its desire to reform and ‘modernize’ public services (Jordan 2005, Clarke 2005). The centrality of ‘choice’ to New Labour’s welfare agenda reflects their view of citizens as *‘independent agents, rather than dependent subjects’* (Clarke 2005; 449) and is concurrent with a Giddensian view of human agency that is ‘self-actualized’ – one that seeks to reflexively construct a personal biography through an array of ‘lifestyle’ choices, whether it be in selecting interpersonal relationships, ethical shopping or welfare packages.

Unsurprisingly, this agenda has received criticism, mainly for its neglect of the *‘egalitarian and democratic spirit of membership’* (Jordan 2005; 441) that public services such as the state education system and National Health Service are said to symbolise. That is, by stressing individual ‘choice’ as the framework for citizenship, there is a ‘de-collectivising’ of the public realm deemed intrinsic to social democratic governance (Clarke 2005; 449).

On the other hand, recent sociological debate has approached this territory by stressing the need to reform welfare strategies to meet diverse *needs*, rather than consumer wants. This development of welfare responses is predicated on an attempt to develop an account of human agency that recognises,

'...the dynamic between agency and structure needs to acknowledge the welfare subjects as creative agents, acting upon, negotiating and developing their own strategies of welfare management. They are not passive receivers of policy enactment, instead they help reconstitute the outcomes of and for informal policy provision.' (Williams and Popay 1999; 164)

As Deacon and Mann argue, it is vital to have greater recognition of agency within welfare debates, given the fragmentation of traditional categories of 'poor' and 'claimant'. They suggest,

'Work, family and the fixed identities of class, gender and community are more fluid...The diverse constituencies that make up the poor will require more reflexive policies that attempt to support those who try to address their specific needs.' (1999; 431)⁷

This is also the thrust of Williams, Popay and Oakley's call for a 'new paradigm' of welfare research that *'is much more sensitive to the complex and dynamic structuring of people's health and welfare needs, their resources, their networks of support, their opportunities and their social relations.'* (1999; 5)

However, Ruth Lister has suggested that since New Labour came to power there has, *'been only limited engagement with attempts to forge a 'politics of difference' or 'recognition'...issues of diversity and discrimination do not constitute central planks in the 'third way''* (2000; 16).

The point of briefly engaging with this debate is to problematize New Labour's understanding of excluded 'communities' as rather unitary entities inhabited by agents with similar values, needs and aspirations by virtue of their shared 'community'. This implies a lack of awareness of how welfare 'communities' such as NDC areas actually contain a range of voices and experiences and how a collective of 'non-unitarist' selves may function. Therefore, the extent to which policy interventions such as NDC address the complexity of 'communities' and the variety of needs they contain is a legitimate line of enquiry. It posits the question, coming

⁷ Note here the borrowing of the fashionable concept of 'reflexivity'. However, crucially here policy responses should exhibit this trait, not state welfare recipients.

from a welfare perspective, can an area-based programme like NDC adequately address the needs of a fragmented welfare constituency?

3.3.5 Reflections on 'social exclusion'

Despite it being roundly criticised as a *'bland and inoffensive'* concept (Savage cited in Braham & Jones 2002; 60), 'social exclusion' has entered policy discourse and tackling it has been described by Peter Mandelson as, *'...a huge test for our vision of society, and a test we must not fail'* (1997; 9). However, as we have seen, it is the very 'vision of society' that social inclusion represents (a behavioural rather than economic 'mainstream' with an implicit acceptance of some degree of inequality) with which many commentators take issue. The role of NDC in this broader context is to re-attach excluded people and 'communities' to this mainstream by refurbishing the physical and social fabric of these spaces. The re-attachment involves improving external links with wider society through the provision of better opportunities, as well as inculcating an internal dialogue about behaviour and relationships within 'communities'. Obviously, inclusion is not the same as equality as it can ostensibly be achieved within 'communities' and according to a set of moral and behavioural codes. In this sense, 'community' loses its status as a collective endeavour and actually becomes about 'nourishing individualism' (Fremeaux 2005; 268) and securing (including) the individual's position within broader social structures. This has clear echoes of functionalism, in that the priority is not a radical overhaul of the conditions of people's lives, but to ensure inclusion and participation in the social, economic and cultural arrangements that govern those lives. Perhaps the most obvious critique of this approach, in a regeneration context, is that it is said to represent a process of 'gilding the ghetto' (CDP 1977, see chapter one), a sticking plaster over the ravages of the post-industrial landscape, without a radical challenge to wider structures of exclusion that created such 'communities'. NDC becomes about *managing* poor spaces and absorbing residents into unequal structures rather than genuinely regenerating and empowering them. This bears a close resemblance to some of the concerns raised about 'social inclusion' generally, that it symbolises a limited, managerial response to inequality and poverty, rather than an attempt at genuine social change (see for example Lister 2000).

However, whilst there is scope for questioning the entire notion of 'social inclusion' and its egalitarian or leftist credentials, the key question for this discussion with regard to NDC, whether it is a 'sticking plaster' or not, is whether it can meet the needs of its residents and succeed in responding adequately to the *diversity* of the 'community'. The focus is on the internal dynamics of these spaces, rather than their broader 'excluded' status. This is especially pertinent given the insistence on a geographical basis for regeneration programmes. Alcock has expressed concern about what he calls the *'ecological fallacy'* of area-based anti-

exclusion programmes since *'most poor people do not live in poor areas'* (2004; 89) and will slip through the regeneration net. Moreover, Hoban and Beresford have questioned the inclusiveness of the area approach:

'To continue to focus on the notion of a geographical community can also exclude other voices such as disabled people and black and ethnic minority people which can often be marginalized within a neighbourhood.' (2001; 315)

As we have seen, processes of exclusion are as prevalent *within* communities as those emanating from welfare systems or the labour market. However, as illustrated above, for New Labour, processes of exclusion tend to occur at a macro level - lack of jobs, skills, access to services, which perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage (Deacon 2003). Whilst these structural factors should not and cannot be dismissed, it is important that divisions, actively created and reinforced by social agents within excluded spaces be recognised. This entails developing an appropriate model of agency and recognising the micro-level processes that occur between social groups that can exacerbate social exclusion (e.g. Campbell 1993; 244). Fiona Williams has argued there is a need to recognise that social agents negotiate the welfare terrain differently and cites an example that problematizes reifying 'community' without understanding the nuances and complexities of such a process:

'In addition, some black feminists have pointed to the mixed blessings of a strengthening of "community solidarity" for black women where the hierarchy within community organisations is dominated by men with traditionalist or functionalist ideas about women's place in the community (Southall Black Sisters 1990).' (1999; 35)

This exemplifies the potential problems of an area-based approach, underpinned by an ethos of 'community' empowerment, in that it might disguise or, worse still, cement the exclusion or disadvantage of some groups or individuals – the very thing NDC is trying to ameliorate. Failure to recognize the diversity and appreciate the divisions that exist within such spaces may jeopardize the edifice of involvement and empowerment on which NDC rests. It becomes unclear who will be empowered in this context, or who will 'capture' the decision-making process – the 'usual suspects' or a representative sample of the 'community'.

NDC's emphasis on local partnership could fail to be the inclusive strategy it thinks it is if there is a failure to appreciate the complexity of the space it seeks to empower. We can see here how the three models intertwine to problematize the social inclusion goal of NDC. The

inclusion of the 'community' and its residents rests on geographical boundaries, a degree of trust and harmony between residents and in relation to the state. Within that, it rests on a degree of unity of needs between residents as they are subject to the same policy response. The question that will determine its inclusive credentials is whether NDC has the flexibility to respond to the diversity of its welfare 'community'.

3.5 Developing the research questions

It is, of course, presumptuous to question NDC's response to diversity. It presumes that all NDC areas are diverse, complex entities that render NDC problematic or damaging. Before this question can even be addressed, some evidence has to be garnered to justify the enquiry. With this in mind, the next phase of the thesis will describe the practical research project undertaken to generate data in a NDC area. This will legitimize further, grounded reflections on NDC's propriety for responding to the diversity of its designated 'communities'.

In order to begin this process, it is incumbent on me to develop and assert a set of research questions that will shape the fieldwork. As this chapter has illustrated, there are a number of ways that New Labour's approach to socially excluded spaces can be problematized. The 'ACE' models that underpin NDC have been questioned with reference to a range of discordant material, which appears to de-stabilize or undermine the assumptions inherent in NDC's conceptual framework. 'Community' is more contested and fragmented, agency is less active or unified and exclusion is a more elusive condition to locate and tackle. These three interlinking points appear to provide a compelling theoretical case against New Labour's 'ACE' and its NDC programme. However there is, in New Labour argot, 'much more to be done' to flesh out these initial points of critique and be able to apply them to NDC directly. The research was designed to discover how NDC relates to the residents and how those residents relate to each other. Ultimately, fieldwork was essential to provide a practical link to support, reinforce or perhaps re-appraise any prior theoretical reflections made about NDC and New Labour.

The initial research questions reflect the discordant literature that has been explored above. They are:

- To what extent is the NDC 'community' a contested space?
- To what extent is social exclusion experienced heterogeneously?

- What interest and involvement is there in NDC from local residents?

The phrasing of these questions deliberately subverts what were referred to above as NDC's conceptual models, and, influenced by the discordant evidence of conflict, contestation, heterogeneity and diversity, focuses on dimensions of each theme that are dissonant with NDC's view. These initial questions embody my approach by emphasising the discordant, whilst simultaneously allowing scope for the devising of more specific interview questions. By formulating questions in this way, it also sets up the discordant literature to be challenged and tested, with the implied question being: are they accurate analyses of 'community'?

3.6 Conclusion

Having unpacked the analyses and assumptions ('ACE') that underpin the practice of NDC in chapter two, this chapter moved onto another body of knowledge – a diverse literature that problematized New Labour's 'ACE' and NDC's effectiveness. This discordant literature discussed the way in which accounts of 'community' have tended to be romanticised and put forth evidence for a more realist description of 'community' life. That is, one that takes account of divisions and contestations shaped by power relations and constitutive of negotiations of identity within 'public' spaces. Moreover, the foregrounding of agency within recent welfare debates was explored. This literature, it was argued, is useful for examining the 'reflexive' model of agency that New Labour appears to privilege when constructing policy interventions such as NDC, particularly the recognition of the fragmentation of traditional social welfare constituencies and Hoggett's suggestion that we should appreciate the non-unitary nature of human subjectivity.

The next task of the thesis is to expand on the initial research questions and explain and discuss my own fieldwork design. This is a research strategy that leads on from the problematizing of NDC and attempts to generate useful knowledge grounded in the experiences of residents in a particular NDC zone. The next two chapters will be concerned with this process, beginning in the next chapter with a discussion of my research strategy and design, encompassing methodological, epistemological and ontological considerations.

Chapter Four

Methodological considerations

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I problematized some of the ideas and aims of NDC with reference to academic literature that contradicted and undermined aspects of the theoretical nexus driving New Labour's welfare policy agenda. (What I have termed in this context, Agency Community Exclusion: 'ACE') This discussion led to the construction of a framework for investigating NDC empirically and the development of research questions that could steer that investigation. It was my desire from the outset to engage in practical research that would complement any theoretical critique. In particular, I was keen to see for myself the dynamics within an NDC 'community' and generate data that would aid an analysis of NDC and its appropriateness / effectiveness. This chapter will focus on the methodological planning and decisions needed to conduct an empirical enquiry into NDC, its 'community' and residents. It will illustrate the research strategy and design - those considerations, decisions and questions necessary for generating useful data and facilitating a more grounded analysis of NDC to complement the ongoing theoretical project. This chapter is the first of three that deal directly with the fieldwork process, the second and third being expositions of my 'findings': the data generated during this process.

The immediate concern however is to illustrate the research strategy and design. The first task is to illustrate how my research problem was translated into a practical fieldwork agenda and how this manifested in the design of my research questions. As part of this discussion, I will identify and consider both ontological and epistemological implications of my research decisions. Throughout, the link between my conceptual framework, outlined above, and the practical research strategy will be made explicit, thereby connecting theory and practice.

The second goal of these chapters is to engage in further discussion about how my research questions were operationalised in the field, what methodological decisions were taken, why they were taken, what obstacles I encountered and so on. Equally important here is the inclusion of reflections upon the fieldwork experience and the effectiveness of my research

questions and chosen methodological technique - including thinking about any ‘unsuccessful’ aspects of my methodology. However, the first section will address the development of the research questions and associated issues and concerns.

4.2 ‘Big’ research questions

When engaging in qualitative inquiry, Jennifer Mason has discussed the importance of constructing research questions that will shape the research agenda. She suggests thinking about these as layered. Of these, ‘big’ research questions, logically, comprise the first layer of key themes or problems that the research as a whole, is designed to address (1996; 15). Therefore, when one talks about research *questions*, one is not just referring to forms of questioning within interviews and so on, rather, ‘big’ research questions are designed to express the ‘essence’ of one’s inquiry (Mason 1996; 15) and guide subsequent decisions regarding fieldwork and methodology. For example, if the overarching aim of my fieldwork was to generate useful data to enable reflections to be made about NDC’s appropriateness for tackling social exclusion, then it is the design of my ‘big’ research questions that express and guide that aim. That is, they expressed the starting point of the research agenda, or research ‘problem’, produced by the intellectual labour highlighted in the previous chapter. I reached a point where I felt I had problematized NDC in a meaningful way and was ready to translate that labour into a practical research strategy and set of research questions. Mason has described this point as the development of one’s ‘intellectual puzzle’ (2002a; 8).

As we have seen, the ‘intellectual puzzle’ of this thesis was structured around three core themes: ‘community’, agency and exclusion. I decided that the exploration of these concepts should form the basis of my examination of NDC’s ‘appropriateness’. To reiterate, the ‘big’ research questions relevant here were:

- To what extent is the NDC ‘community’ a contested space?
- To what extent is social exclusion experienced heterogeneously?
- What interest and involvement is there in NDC from local residents?

However, although the main thrust of my fieldwork was focused on the residents of the NDC ‘community’, (as it was the documentation of those experiences that underpinned the examination of ‘ACE’) another important dimension, expressed by additional ‘big’ research questions, was NDC itself. That is, I believed that the way NDC operates on the ground and its impact on the residents was a relevant aspect of my examination of NDC as a whole. This informed two further relevant ‘big’ research questions:

- How does NDC operate in practice?
- Has NDC improved the lives of residents?

Consequently, there were two integral spheres of knowledge from which I sought to generate data, both of which are discussed in turn below.

4.3 Ontological and epistemological considerations

'Ontology' has been described as being *'concerned with questions of nature and reality'* (Maykut & Moorehouse 1994; 3). Ontological considerations are a crucial part of research design because they indicate how the researcher is conceptualizing social reality, which has implications for epistemological concerns and therefore, methodological decisions. In this case, bound up with my research questions and my 'intellectual puzzle' is an ontological position which conceptualizes 'reality' as composed of social actors and their meanings and interpretations of the social location they inhabit. In the context of this study, it is the 'community' that is the relevant dimension of that reality and it is actors' negotiation of 'community' (intersecting at points with their negotiation of exclusion and NDC) that receives most methodological attention because it underpins the broader evaluation of NDC. Crucially however, this approach reveals that my ontological position also considers actors' meanings, interpretations and relationships - constituents of agency – to occur within a structured context. That is, actors negotiate their everyday lives, but in conditions that are shaped by wider economic, social and political factors (exclusion, NDC and 'community' to name a few). Therefore, rather than being free-floating individuals who construct and control their life world, residents of NDC areas are in a contingent relationship with the institutions and structures around them. Whilst the focus of this thesis is on how residents understand and respond to these conditions, there is no doubting of the structured nature of their excluded 'community' context.

This ontology is a philosophical position that is consistent with a critical realist understanding of the social world. Critical realism, which draws on the realist philosophy of Roy Bhaskar (1975, 1989) and others, in its attempts to construct a philosophical framework for social science, posits both the existence of a material (what Bhaskar calls 'intransitive') reality independent of human consciousness and knowledge, whilst acknowledging the potential for human action to reproduce and transform that reality. In other words,

'Society is both the ever-present condition (material cause) and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency.' (Bhaskar 1989 cited in Outhwaite 1987; 51)

What we have therefore is an ontology that considers the philosophical positions underpinning alternatives such as positivism and hermeneutics as providing only partial, reductionist accounts of social reality and failing to recognise both the independence *and* interaction of structure and action. There is a rejection of attempts to explicate the totality of the social as a priori determined by either external structures or human consciousness. Rather, critical realism attempts to synthesize both these approaches to enhance potential understandings of the social. It accepts that individual action and meaning is a legitimate and crucial area of study, but rejects attempts to collapse ‘society’ into the negotiations of human interaction. Similarly, it posits the possibility of external, ‘intransitive’ structures that can be observed and researched, but is clear in its belief that these do not necessarily determine or constrain human action. This thesis, therefore, shares similar ontological ground with critical realism in that it conceives of structure and agency as being in a contingent relationship. It conceives of the residents of NDC areas as inhabiting a milieu structured by intransitive processes of poverty and social exclusion, institutionally determined flows of resources and specific policy decisions, but also acknowledges that residents possess agency to adapt, adhere, challenge, be constrained by or resist the conditions in which they live.

To the list of intransitive processes and structures impinging on residents’ lives, I would also include what is interpreted as a ‘community’ or neighbourhood. However, as Outhwaite notes, the belief that social phenomena like ‘community’ or ‘society’ are structures worthy of realist scientific enquiry has been considered problematic precisely due to their interpreted nature and the perceived lack of criteria by which we can assess them (1987; 47). Indeed, he explores this issue by way of testing the robustness of the realist position. He suggests the possibility that in its efforts to posit the existence of social structures, realism allows what are essentially creations of human knowledge – products of agency – to be reified as external structures. He considers Rom Harré’s argument that phenomena such as class – considered by realists as a potential structural entity – should be conceived as a theoretical construct, or what Harré calls a ‘*well known image or icon*’ (Outhwaite 1987; 122), rather than a material fact of life. In response, Outhwaite points to the uniqueness of social science and the inherently social nature of the structures it seeks to research. He admits that it cannot match the ‘explanatory power’ of natural science, which is derived from its intrinsic independence from the phenomena it seeks to reveal and explain – the ‘natural’ world.¹ Nonetheless, he argues that just because social science relies on human constructs and understandings rather

¹ Many would of course question this realist reading of ‘natural’ science and argue that it contains as many human constructs as social science. The logical conclusion of this view is Feyerabend’s (1975) ‘against method’ credo, which reduces all science to the level of social practice.

than ‘natural’ objects of study – be they chemical, biological or physical phenomena - does not then mean that it should be abandoned as having nothing to say about the social world (1987; 113), nor that those structures are any less prominent in organising social life. He also points out that the logical conclusion of Harré’s argument is an ‘anything goes’ social science in which an infinite number of explanations or ‘icons’ can be produced via theoretical construction to explain social patterns and events since there is no material reality to constrain or ‘disprove’ these explanations. However, he offers the riposte that such a reality must exist because social science *is* able to judge and evaluate different explanations and constructs through research and has been able to uncover structural conditions to a whole range of social phenomena.

Outhwaite also asserts that realist analysis must take collective aspects (such as ‘community’) of social life into account or otherwise subscribe to a methodological individualism where the totality of society is viewed as reducible to individual action (1987; 48). Instead, he argues, we should acknowledge the ‘*network of social relations*’ in which most social action takes place (1987; 48). Therefore, this thesis argues that the structured social space which NDC residents inhabit and negotiate is partly constituted by that network of social relations commonly referred to as a ‘community’ (although as we saw in chapter three, this thesis rejects the presumed positive character of ‘community’). Indeed, an ontological subtext of this thesis is that it posits that it is through the concept of ‘community’ that the dialectical relationship between structure and agency is most clearly expressed. If we take the ‘big’ research questions as examples, then we can see how the research was designed to explore (by way of examining NDC) how the ‘community’ (dis)functions. There is a recognition that ‘community’ shapes how certain individuals and groups experience their lives (a conception of ‘community’ as a structure). However, the nature of the first ‘big’ research question is that it is designed to explore how residents ‘do’ ‘community’, that is, in the course of their everyday lives, remake, reinforce or sometimes transform their immediate relational context. Here, ‘community’ becomes the product of individuals and groups interacting – it is an effect of agency.

Ontologically, there is some common ground between realist conceptions of the social and the analysis of the contingent structure / agency relationship found in Anthony Giddens’ theory of ‘structuration’ (see Stones 2005). Whilst structuration has been developed and refined by other scholars, it is a theory that remains synonymous with the pre-New Labour / ‘third way’ Giddens (Stones 2005; 2). It seeks to provide an account of the interdependence and interaction of structure and agency and shares the same objections as realism to objectivist and voluntarist explanations of society that attach primacy to either external structures, or

individual actions and interpretations. At its core lies Giddens' conception of the 'duality of structure'. He uses this phrase to express the continual reproduction of structures through agents' practices. Structures are both the medium of those practices in that they enter *'the constitution of the agent'* and shape the behaviour and capabilities of individuals, and the outcome of those practices as individuals reproduce and reconstitute the social world around them (Stones 2005; 5). Giddens uses the example of how agents use and reinforce the rules of language to express this point:

'When I utter a sentence I draw upon various syntactical rules (sedimented in my practical consciousness of the language) in order to do so. These structural features of the language are the medium whereby I generate the utterance. But in producing a syntactically correct utterance I simultaneously contribute to the reproduction of language as a whole.' (Cited in Stones 2005; 19)

Giddens argues that whilst communication through speech and text is informed by structures of grammar, syntax and so on, those structures are reinforced by their use by actors in any given moment. They are made meaningful by social interaction. Bhaskar offers a similar analogy:

'The conception I am proposing is that people, in their conscious activity, for the most part unconsciously reproduce (and occasionally transform) the structures governing their substantive activities of production. Thus people do not marry to reproduce the nuclear family... Yet it is the unintended consequence (and inexorable result) of, as it is also the necessary condition, of their activity.' (1989; 43)

What this and Giddens' 'duality of structure' analysis provide can be distinguished from conventional, abstracted conceptions of structure (Stones 2005; 5). It shifts our focus onto the dynamic, contingent nature of the relationship between structure and agency, what Stones terms the *'structural hermeneutic nexus of immanent circumstances'* – that fulcrum of social reality most commonly expressed through the paraphrasing of Marx's (1954) maxim that 'people make history' but not under circumstances of their own choosing. This fluid conception of structure and agency resonated with my own research agenda and enabled me to think about how agents (that is, residents) are not simply the bearers of the structures around them (as socially excluded, 'community' members), but were continually breathing life into them. They were both constituted by and constitutive of the particular structures that impinged on their lives.

Adopting this position has *epistemological* as well as ontological significance.

'Epistemology' is defined by Steinar Kvale as *'theories of knowledge'* (1996; 14), that is, in the course of doing research, the researcher will usually be working according to a specific idea of where relevant knowledge lies in the social world. Epistemological questions therefore, are *'concerns with the nature of evidence and knowledge'* (Mason 1996; 13). These questions relate to what phenomena are seen to 'count' as knowledge within any given research project. In my own research, they germinate from the New Labour ideas and concepts I am problematizing. The NDC models of ACE are all concerned explicitly with individual agents and their capabilities, relationships, experiences, actions, values, needs and voices. Therefore, the epistemological basis of my fieldwork is that relevant knowledge lies at this level of 'lay' resident (as the key social agent) experience.² To some extent, this follows qualitative research traditions that tend to consider, ontologically, social actors subjective accounts and interpretations as constitutive of the social world (Blaikie 2000; 115). For example,

'(qualitative research) ...has its roots in theoretical and epistemological traditions, all of which give some privilege to the accounts of social actors, agents, individuals, or subjects, as data sources, and which assume or emphasise the centrality of talk and text in our ways of knowing about the social world.' (Mason 2002b; 225)

I took the epistemological decision that the way I wanted to explore NDC (and its ACE models) depended, largely, (though not exclusively because, as I explained above, I also wanted to examine NDC itself) on generating relevant data by interacting with the inhabitants of the policy terrain – in this case the residents of a 'New Deal' community.³

Bound up with the needs of my research approach is a further important epistemological point however. Given my ontological position outlined above, it should be clear that I consider the experiences of agents to be only one facet of the contingent structure / agency relationship. Therefore, whilst I prioritised agents' experiences as the key source of knowledge in the examination of NDC, I was in fact trying to tap into and understand the way in which residents negotiated the structures around them. Structuration is useful in providing a framework for this approach in that it allows for a prioritising of understandings of agents'

² A connected epistemological position relating to my approach to *interviews* will be explored below. Therefore, I have two levels of epistemological concern – where knowledge lies for the purposes of my study as a whole, and where it lies in terms of actual knowledge generation in interviews.

³ The use of resident voices to examine NDC can also be found in recent studies by Dinham (2005) and Wilmott and Power (2005). However, I am unaware of any study that is explicitly focused on challenging assumptions of unity in NDC areas.

meaning and practice without submerging the existence of structural context. I wanted to construct a research strategy that focused (through interviews) unapologetically on the experiences and voices of agents, but without subscribing to the interpretivist argument that this realm of knowledge was wholly constitutive of the social world. Furthermore, my research approach was focused on generating knowledge centred on dimensions of agents' experience of specific structures like exclusion, 'community' and localised policy programmes including NDC. This approach was an attempt to both transcend the structure / agency dichotomy and recognise the dialectical nature of the relationship. The research questions formulated in section 4.2 were designed to explore how agents experienced and reproduced structures at various points in the conduct of their lives. The research did this by interviewing those residents and exploring how they negotiated the economic, political and social circumstances in which they find themselves. Therefore, the method is crucial in that it expresses the ontological position for the research by focusing on a sample of residents and using qualitative techniques, but working from research questions that acknowledge and explore the structure / agency relationship.

Overall, my approach is philosophically consistent with realism and structuration, even if the research is not an analysis of *how* structures and agents interact and relate at a micro level. That is, it accepts the realist ontology as a starting point and proceeds by its own logic, determined by the goals of the research to understand agents' experiences of both social relationships and structures. This position is sustainable because realism is designed to be a philosophy for science not an epistemology in itself. It offers an account of how the social world is – stratified by structures and agents' meanings, but it does not instruct social scientists how that world or what aspects of it should be researched since its goal is to provide a philosophical framework that posits their existence, not necessarily a blueprint for how they should be researched (Wai-chung Yeung 1997; 53). It does not argue for the abandoning of particular methods, or for a dogmatic pre given belief in 'realism' and the synthesis of structure and agency, but for a critical engagement with it and use of different methods to generate knowledge that explores the realist ontology. It is the task of researchers to decide and construct their own strategies. I believe I have identified the relevant structural context for this research and have posited how I conceive this context impinges on residents. However, given the main task of the research is to examine NDC, it is not the goal of this thesis to provide an account of the entire structure / agency dynamic, only to posit the significance of it for residents. Building on these points, the next section explores my own research strategy and discusses ACE in ontological and epistemological terms and considers how each area was conceived as an object of research.

4.3.1 Community

The NDC model of ‘community’ contains assumptions about what residents are and *should* be like in terms of relationships, actions, needs, experiences. My goal was to generate data that seeks to reflect upon the appropriateness and effectiveness of this model by exploring dimensions of ‘community’ which challenge it – processes of conflict and contestation within the ‘community’. As noted in chapter three, this objective is also driven by a reaction to traditional ‘community studies’ which provided romanticised, partial accounts of ‘community’ life imbued with *‘theoretical and ideological bias’* (Fremeaux 2005; 268). The present study was a conscious attempt to unearth some of the negative, darker sides to local life to provide a counterbalance to the overly positive descriptions inherent in past accounts. It was also a tentative attempt to question policy interventions based on these nostalgic assumptions.

Ontologically, these themes stem from a foregrounding of how agents experience and negotiate their environment (and thereby, interact) as the critical factors in the (dis)functioning of ‘community’. This is also a stance that views meaning and interpretation by social agents as partially constitutive of social reality and of ‘community’ itself.⁴

Epistemologically, this implies that useful knowledge lies primarily in the relationships within and between those social agents who I contend are active in *doing* community.

Methodologically, there are two levels at which knowledge about ‘conflict’ between residents can be generated. One is at an observable, superficial level where data might be produced ‘externally’, that is, by an individual not involved in the dispute, but commenting upon it. An example from my dataset would be:

“My neighbours are always at each others throats.” (male resident, under 21)

Clearly, this tells me nothing about the nature of the conflict because the person relaying it to me was an observer rather than a participant. Nevertheless, it is a useful piece of data that provides me with some ‘evidence’ albeit rather limited, of conflict within my study area. This kind of ‘evidence’ was also found in NDC – commissioned reports which mentioned some form of conflict expressed to NDC (such as between local youths and older people). This

⁴ ‘Community’ being conceived as an axis of the structure / agency relationship. Residents are both constituted by living in a specific area, amidst specific relationships, and constitutive of the social structure of ‘community’ around them. Partially constitutive’ meaning that structural context is also acknowledged – in this case, a socially excluded locality labelled by governing elites and punctuated with policy interventions and subject to wider processes of marginalization and exclusion.

provided me with some pertinent ‘issues’ that I could explore further in my interviews *with* young and older people, as well as a basic indication that these conflicts existed.

The other level concerns data that participants in particular disputes actually generate. This data is more likely to be contextual and offer insights into motivations and meanings on the part of the respondents, although obviously this depends, to an extent, on skilled interviewing and a sympathetic interviewee. So, for example, when a respondent remarked:

“I’d like to take the rubbish and dump it back into their (gypsies) site.” (female resident, over 60)

She was identifying a source of conflict about which she had strong views and it was my responsibility as researcher to probe further about this issue and generate useful data about it. This level is possibly more fruitful because it provides access to the values and norms that motivate conflict, which has more interesting explanatory potential in terms of exploring how and why ‘communities’ are contested.

4.3.2 Agency

NDC ‘s model of agency promotes what residents are and should be like in terms of behaviour and actions towards other residents, the ‘community’ and NDC. Again, the intention was to generate data that seeks to reflect upon the appropriateness and effectiveness of this model by exploring dimensions of individual agency that challenge that model –the extent of community feeling and ‘neighbourliness’ as well as disinterest and apathy. Ontologically, this agenda accepts the view of social reality as constituted by individual agents all *doing* ‘community’ in different and often conflicting ways. Such a position renders any attempt, through policy mechanisms, to ‘promote’ certain forms of behaviour or community as suspicious because it is failing to conceptualize reality properly and neglecting the different forms of experience that constitute that reality. Epistemologically, this again privileges individual accounts and emphasises the importance of understanding how agents negotiate their ‘field’. However, like ‘community’, data can also be generated from observations made by outsiders, or from quantitative data (statistics that indicate community involvement in NDC business for example). Again, where the research revolves around an exploration of themes or concepts, then different methodological approaches can be utilised to generate relevant data.

4.3.3 Exclusion

NDC's model is predicated on the ways New Labour constructs residents as excluded - in terms of their needs, experiences and capabilities. To examine the value of such a model I tried to generate data that explored the various ways social exclusion is experienced within the same geographical space, as well as examining relationships between residents as processes that can shape the way exclusion is experienced. Ontologically, this infers that social exclusion is a condition not only determined by an absence of something such as money or decent housing, but also shaped by social relations. That is, that the structural conditions of 'exclusion' are actively *lived* by agents through interaction with others, which can ease or exacerbate the conditions in which they find themselves. Again, in terms of epistemology, it follows that valid 'knowers' are residents themselves and a suitable research method must strive to interpret the experiences of local residents and their interactions.

4.3.4 NDC in practice

The purpose of engaging with this data, in addition to the sphere of resident's experiences was to explore how NDC worked on the ground, as opposed to government policy rhetoric about how it worked. This was, primarily, an epistemological commitment in that I was asserting that relevant knowledge for my examination of NDC's 'appropriateness' lay, not only with residents accounts, but with the practical workings of NDC itself. I would support this assertion with three points. Firstly, my fieldwork strategy, which was focused on the residents within the 'community', had to be aware of how NDC had affected that 'community'. To put it in ontological terms, it is my hypothesis that no geographical space exists 'uncontaminated' by state and non-statutory agencies and certainly not one that has been identified as a 'New Deal' 'community'. The very presence of NDC, it seems, will alter the relationships and processes between residents and between residents and the state; therefore, it is important to examine NDC's influence and reach on the ground. Consequently, I believed this would inform and improve the interview schedules as I could discuss with respondents, in the course of our interview, recent NDC-related developments that were of relevance to their experience of community. (For example, "how do you feel about the planned demolition of local housing?") Therefore, if my research wanted to explore how people *do* 'community' and negotiate context as part of that, then it had to consider and be informed about NDC.

Secondly, one of my key fieldwork themes was to explore the extent of community involvement in official NDC business (attending meetings, supporting projects and so on). Clearly, this could only be pursued adequately as a theme if I was fully briefed on NDC workings. Finally, and connectedly, I could not assume that what I read in policy

documentation from the Office of Deputy Prime Minister (the government department then in charge of regeneration) about what NDC *would be* would be exactly replicated on the ground in every NDC across England. It became clear from press reports (as well as government reviews) that whilst each NDC had the same remit and contained the same conceptual underpinning and broad objectives, each programme faced a different set of challenges, received different amounts of money and, therefore, interpreted its priorities differently. A useful example is from my own study in which this NDC decided to add another thematic priority to its agenda, thereby, not just focusing on government-defined priorities (education, employment and skills, health, crime, physical environment, children and young people), but introduced ‘building communities’ as an additional priority with a dedicated task group and designated budget. This reflects the potential for individual NDC partnerships to exercise some flexibility about how they pursue the government’s regeneration / anti-exclusion agenda. Of course, this also illustrates the limitations of the research. Having described the potential diversity of NDC’s, it is inevitable that this study reflects one particular NDC at one particular time. It is possible that any critical points raised are only applicable to this NDC zone⁵ and partnership. We shall return to this theme in later chapters.

Nonetheless, my examination of NDC’s conception of ‘community’ was informed, not only by reading government literature, but also by researching the practical work of this NDC partnership. Any judgements I made had to consider this level. Moreover, when examining the extent of resident’s interest and involvement in NDC, I had to bear in mind the context in which I was generating data – one in which this NDC was making concerted efforts to ‘build community’.

In order to generate data about NDC in practice, I intended to deploy two methodological techniques. The first was to organise interviews with key informants within NDC to get a sense of the organisation of the programme and their personal views on its progress and effectiveness. The second technique was to use these interviews as opportunities for access to literature and information about the NDC programme. The informants I would approach would also be gatekeepers to other forms of knowledge as well as useful respondents in their own right. The literature that I hoped to garner from these encounters (reports, reviews, surveys and so on) would then supply me with bedrock of data about the NDC operation in this area.

⁵ For the remainder of the thesis the NDC area will be referred to as a ‘zone’ to illustrate the arbitrary nature of its boundaries and challenge its discursive representation as a ‘community’.

4.4 Entering the field

Upon entering the field, the fieldwork encompassed two intertwined data sources - the operation and practice of NDC, and residents' experiences. Both were to be guided by a different set of research questions, consistent with different methodological requirements reflecting their different purposes. However, before engaging with such decisions and considerations, the first decision for the research strategy was to identify an NDC 'community' with which to conduct my fieldwork. I had a choice of two NDC programmes in Greater Manchester. This choice was determined by the proximity of each area to my research base and therefore, accessibility for meetings and interviews. Moreover, it meant I could follow any local media coverage of the programme to obtain any additional information through the consumption of local newspapers and television news bulletins. Initially, I considered the possibility of a comparative study entailing an examination of both programmes and contrasting the experiences of each set of residents (cf. Hibbitt, Jones and Meegan (2001). for the kind of comparative approach considered) In the end, it was decided that focusing on one area – Salford - would suffice. This was premised on two assertions. Firstly, both areas were relatively similar in terms of socio-economic conditions and ethnic composition. That is not to say that there would not be different forms of experience within each space, but I felt that there would be sufficient diversity and nuance within one or the other that rendered an exploration of both as superfluous for the purposes of this study. Additionally, to conduct fieldwork in both NDC areas would have stretched my PhD budget in terms of energy, time and resources.⁶ The decision of which area to research was not made on any specific basis and I do not believe that its arbitrariness has any particular implications.

Upon making my decision, I made contact via email with the respective NDC team and after a two-month time gap was invited to meet with the deputy co-ordinator of the New Deal partnership, working there on secondment from the local authority, at the NDC headquarters. Therefore, my entry into the field began, intentionally, in the NDC offices, talking to their staff. The team was made fully aware, indeed, they were keen to know, of my status and background, and were informed explicitly of the intentions of the research. These meetings were arranged with two goals in mind. The first relates to the two following 'big' research questions:

⁶ Another strategy would have been to select one group of residents – disabled people say, and compared their experiences of community and exclusion in two different spaces. However, this method seemed to risk positioning 'disability' as determining social exclusion, rather than being lived and shaping experiences of exclusion. I would then be in danger of reinforcing that determinism. I decided to try and generate data about processes within the space as a whole, looking across the board, rather than at one specific group. This meant researching one NDC area.

- How does NDC operate in practice?
- Has NDC improved the lives of resident's?

It was decided that the best way to answer these questions practically was to make the NDC team aware of my presence in the 'community' and engage with them through interviews with key informants. I hoped that they would then assist me in terms of providing me with NDC literature that would inform me about the structure of NDC, the key individuals involved at the local level, the organisation of meetings and so on. This data would then enable me to build a picture of NDC's reach and operation on the ground, as well as provide useful statistical information about the area that they had collated (employment rates, crime rates and so on).⁷

Additionally, it was hoped that the NDC team would provide me with contact details of key stakeholders in the programme (particularly NDC community representatives, of which there were six and who I knew sat on the key overseeing body of NDC). It was felt that if I could approach said stakeholders (all residents in the area) having been 'approved' by NDC, then those key actors would be more receptive to my approaches. In turn, I hoped that these individuals would be useful repositories of 'community' voices and feelings and provide me with a sense of what issues residents were raising with their representatives. Another consideration with regard to access was that these central 'community' actors would, provide me with contact, to some degree, with 'ordinary' non-NDC, non-activist residents. Therefore, having entered the field at the 'official' NDC level, I would be able to navigate my way down to the 'community' level and begin the other dimension of the research – interviewing residents. This approach could be termed 'snowball' sampling (Blaikie 2000; 205), in that I sought the advice and help of others in identifying my next respondents in the chain. However, it was not an entirely 'snowball' approach because I did have a clear agenda in terms of access to certain people / positions within the NDC / 'community' nexus.

4.5 Generating data

Having decided that I would seek access to the field via key NDC informants, it had to be decided what methodological approach I would utilise to generate data from my encounters with those informants and with residents. For the NDC stakeholders, the choice seemed straightforward. The type of knowledge required from these individuals suggested a

⁷ However, one key report (the Participatory Appraisal (PA) team's report on 'community needs' which was hailed (by central government) for its innovative consultative techniques and was the key document which 'won' the NDC funding) was not given to me. I was given this later by a resident to illustrate, how, in his eyes, NDC's priorities had deviated from the community's over time.

face-to face interview complimented by a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix one for a sample of my initial interview schedules used with NDC staff and other initial key respondents). I wanted to probe at their views as ‘insiders’ in the NDC process and get some sense of the strengths and weaknesses of NDC, as they saw them. Moreover, I wanted to get a sense of the ‘community’ I was about to explore from those working with it. Therefore, from an epistemological perspective, these interviews were *not* contributing that much to understanding how residents experienced their ‘community’ (although, two NDC workers did provide some examples of conflicts they were aware of in the area – potentially useful data in my examination of intra-area conflict). However, these initial interviews acted as a form of trial run or pilot study before the main event of interviewing residents. I was able to ‘test’ certain themes and techniques on NDC staff, as well as glean from them information about the NDC programme. The experience and data produced by these encounters helped prepare and hone both the format of questioning, as well as my knowledge of the area and latest developments.⁸ This would prove important in gaining trust and credibility when engaging with some residents who seemed to ‘open up’ better once I had established my credentials as an ‘analyst’ of NDC.⁹

In terms of the main body of fieldwork – interviewing residents, there were a number of considerations. It was decided that once I had completed my NDC interviews, this phase would represent a completely new phase of data generation, designed to produce different kinds of knowledge and with a different set of concerns. Therefore, I had to decide whom to interview (what sample?), how to get access to those people and finally, how to generate knowledge *with* them.

Despite this ‘break’ in the fieldwork, there remained some epistemological continuity across all the interviews conducted in that I embraced the metaphor of researcher as ‘traveller’, as opposed to ‘miner’ (Kvale 1996; 3). This distinction proved to be a useful method of clarifying my approach to data generation. The researcher-as-miner seeks to uncover knowledge or ‘facts’ which are assumed to be contained within the subjects, untainted by the miner and waiting to be unearthed (1996; 3). If this is a very static conception of knowledge formation, the researcher-as-traveller is more fluid in that it analogises the interview process as a journey. During this journey, there is, potentially, a transformative effect on both

⁸ An example of this would be my initial use of the term ‘social exclusion’ in an interview, with one NDC staff member. Using it caused confusion and required explanation. I quickly realized the potentially esoteric nature of some terms and the need to develop more sensitive or accessible ways of asking about this subject.

⁹ However, some residents were initially wary of my presence, suspecting I may be working on behalf NDC. Others viewed me as requiring educating about NDC, one resident telling me how he would give me the ‘community version’ of life in a NDC area.

researcher and researched as they interact, share experiences and have understandings challenged (see Riley, Schouten and Cahill 2003 for further discussion of this relationship). Kvale describes this metaphor as '*...a postmodern constructive understanding that involves a conversational approach to social research*' (1996; 5).

That is, it refutes the positivist notion of external, objective knowledge, preferring to conceptualise knowledge as constructed, situated, contextualised and generated through the practice of conversation or dialogue. Again, whilst not wanting to deny the importance of the material to social experience, this approach allows for an arguably greater recognition of subjectivity and personal voice, as well as recognizes the constructed nature of an interview dialogue as interviewer and participant interact.

Of course, this places the role of the researcher under a great deal of scrutiny, as they cannot be extracted from the data that is being generated from their interviews. In other words, the researcher *is in the text*. Mason (2002b) has applied the 'miner or traveller' dilemma to the practicalities of interviewing. She argues that before a researcher can generate useful data, they must answer the 'location question' – where is the social phenomenon or process, which is being investigated, thought to be located? This is a reformulation of Kvale's distinction in that she asks whether knowledge is located 'out there', waiting to be excavated, or whether the interview is a site of knowledge production where researcher and researched are co-participants (2002b; 227). These questions have to be answered before considering how best to organise the practice of asking and listening to create the conditions for constructing useful knowledge (2002b; 227).

My approach to all my interviews shared this interview – related epistemology that envisages the researcher as an active participant in the knowledge generation process.

4.6 Sampling

To return to my position on the cusp of entering the field, my first concern was deciding whom to interview. From the beginning, there was a decision to eschew the objective of choosing a sample 'representative' of the 'community' as a whole in a vain attempt to be all encompassing. This was neither possible in terms of energy and resources, nor desirable in any theoretical or philosophical sense. One of the core objectives of my thesis was to explore the idea that within any apparently homogeneous social grouping, individuals may face similar social or economic disadvantages, but they experience those in varying and often conflicting ways that may exacerbate the exclusion of others. This also explains the ontological foundation for this research and the primacy given to and the importance of

understanding how social agents – *people* – actively (re)create and experience the world around them, in this case their immediate neighbourhood locality. For example, whereas in the past welfare research tended to be class based and focused on economic or welfare structures, what has been called the ‘new welfare research paradigm’ recognises the role of agents and seeks to explain how they interact with the world around them. Dicks, Waddington and Critcher have commented:

‘It has been argued that the old paradigm of welfare, assuming uniformity in the sources of, and reactions to, stress, and universality of welfare provision, needs to be replaced by a new paradigm, anticipating diversity, and a sensitive differentiation in welfare provision.’ (1998; 87)

Williams, Popay and Oakley have also described this new paradigm of welfare:

‘(It) is much more sensitive to the complex and dynamic structuring of people’s health and welfare needs, their resources, their networks of support, their opportunities and their social relations.’ (1999; 5)

The development of this new paradigm has occurred alongside growing calls within the academic literature, discussed in the previous chapter, to reinvigorate the theoretical focus on agency in a welfare context. This does not entail a return to the ‘victim blaming’ tradition associated with the conservative ‘New Right’, but a call to recognise that agents are ‘*creative and reflexive*’ (Deacon & Mann 1999; 432) inhabitants of the welfare terrain, who negotiate and develop their own strategies of resistance and support. In this vein, ‘lay’ or ‘grass root’ experiences of welfare - in this case NDC - were placed in the foreground.

Therefore, to proceed with my sampling in a ‘tick-box’ manner, in which all social groups were accounted for to some degree, was simply not tenable. It was my contention that to interview one, two or twenty older people for example would not provide me with a ‘representative’ sample of that group, because each social agent *does* ‘community’ and exclusion in their own particular way according to their individual package of values, experiences and capabilities. Of course, this is not to suggest that there are no points of commonality between those living in poverty, as this would mean that the material basis for challenging iniquitous structural conditions would crumble. Rather, the goal of this study was to try and explore how the impinging of a ‘creative and reflexive’ individual consciousness on structural contexts might produce a variety of experiences and outcomes – to shift the focus

onto the operation of agency, but never forgetting the wider picture of economic, social and cultural conditions.

Nevertheless, my sample was to be taken from the residents of the NDC area. Two factors influenced my sampling decisions – firstly, to attempt to target and interview as many different social groups as possible. Not as a way of ensuring adequate representation (as stated above, this appeared not to be possible, short of interviewing every single resident in the area), but to organise my fieldwork in an inclusive way that enabled me to generate data from a variety of social locations and associated experiences. However, as stated, I did not consider this an essential component of my fieldwork. Clearly, genuine efforts had to be made to include, perhaps *more* marginalised people¹⁰ (disabled people, asylum seekers, travellers and so on), but I refuted the idea that to fail to generate data from their positions would damage the research generally. It would be unfortunate, as it might reflect structures of social exclusion, but the stance adopted was that I did not predicate the viability of my research project on being fully inclusive of all ‘community’ voices. The important thing was to produce a substantial amount of knowledge (in terms of interviews conducted) based around my key themes, not to provide an in-depth account of the day-to-day realities of all social groups living in this area. A preoccupation with ‘ticking boxes’, whilst necessary to some extent, would reify the notion of group membership as determining agency and experience, when I would argue that to *be* an asylum seeker, for example, undoubtedly shapes certain aspects of how community is *done*, (especially regarding how you are viewed and treated by others) but it remains my contention that gender, age, ethnicity, capabilities (in terms of skills and cultural capital) and so on, are just as relevant in shaping how an asylum seeker experiences exclusion. To talk of ‘asylum seekers’ without exploring all the dimensions of their experience (not the goal of this research) equals assuming unitary subjects alongside a welfare terrain that I am claiming is fractured, contested and multi-faceted. Therefore, to ensure a sufficient diversity of respondents, the identification of social groupings was important. However, this is not to emphasise the rigidity of group membership as determining experience.

¹⁰ I stress *more* marginalised, because most residents of the area experience some degree of economic marginalisation via unemployment, low pay and so on. Moreover, many residents appear marginalised, for whatever reason, by the NDC process. However, some residents live on the periphery of the community (self-imposed in the case of travellers), such as asylum seekers, some disabled people and ‘problematic’ young people. I thought it important to identify these groups specifically because of their apparent exclusion from the community / inclusion agenda. Their marginalization may also reflect a relational process by which some members of the ‘community’ are pushed to the periphery by other more ‘respectable’ residents. (See Mann 1992 for discussion of processes of marginalization and social closure within the working class).

The second factor that influenced my sampling decisions was that the NDC ‘community’ encompasses two distinct areas – defined as separate electoral wards. I was keen that my sample should take account of this geographical division because, as I learned from a NDC stakeholder, there is a degree of territorialism within the NDC area and process, which I believed might influence residents of each ward and their perception of NDC and each other.

Therefore, my sampling was informed by some relevant considerations, but I would argue, due to the nature of my inquiry, my research would not be invalidated if these were not achieved 100% successfully. Nevertheless, I devised a sample of respondents that encompassed, to some degree, the social groups that comprised the area:

- young people (under 21)
- older people (over 60)
- men (21-60)
- women (21-60)
- minority ethnic people
- asylum seekers
- students
- disabled people
- single parents
- unemployed people

To reiterate, I did not feel it necessary to be too precious about my sampling because these are unitary, as well as arbitrary categories that could not possibly be fully ‘representative’ of the ‘community’. They represented an aspiration that would guide my fieldwork, but not until I entered the field could I see how realistic or otherwise they would be. Furthermore, there turned out to be relevant categories that I had not considered initially, but were useful respondents (community worker, youth workers, a carer and residents of a centre for homeless young people).

Mason (1996; 95) has noted that this kind of theoretical or *purposive* sampling (as opposed to probability sampling which is used ‘to generate statistically representative samples’ (1996; 95)) should, ‘be driven by the analytical and explanatory logic you propose to adopt’ (1996; 94). Therefore, my ontological position, which prioritises the *range of experiences* within the ‘community’ context, drives my sampling strategy, not a desire to ‘represent’ statistically, or analytically, the population of 4000 or so households comprising this NDC area (cf Phillips and Smith (2003) for a similar approach).

4.7 Access and format of research

The next issue in my research design was to decide how I was going to gain access to residents in order to organise interviews, and what format those interviews should take.

Initially, I decided that a focus group method would be most appropriate (see Dwyer 2000, 238-9 for a fuller account of the pros and cons of focus groups). This decision was made for several reasons:

- I could interview several people at once, thus saving time
- Focus groups would provide a productive environment in which participants could engage in discussion. This would provide me with data about the extent of agreement and conflict.
- I could organise them according to my sampling strategy (one group of young people, one group of older people and so on) allowing me to compare discussions and unpick points of conflict and agreement.

(See appendix two for a sample of my initial focus group interview schedule.)

I entered the field in December 2003 with this method in mind, but it quickly became apparent just how difficult focus groups would be to organise. To gain access to potential participants I decided to attend local residents' association meetings. I hoped this would achieve three things:

1. Provide me with data, through observation of the meetings, of any relevant issues and conflicts,
2. Allow me to meet local residents and try to recruit them for focus groups,
3. Possibly provide me with a familiar location to conduct the focus groups.

I acquired, from a NDC worker, a directory of local 'community' groups and services, which I used to contact tenants and residents association chair people via telephone, whereupon I introduced myself and asked to attend their next meetings. Of the five groups running in the area at the time, I attended three of them for meetings. Of the other two, one had recently disbanded with some controversy (see section 5.3) and the other was still going but was not holding regular meetings. Each meeting I observed did provide me with useful data, but there was little interest from residents to participate in my focus groups. At this point, difficulties with recruitment suggested that to limit myself to focus groups could undermine the project, so I aimed for *individual* interviews with residents, unless, as happened with students and older people, I had the specific opportunity to conduct a group interview (see section 5.4).

Access to specific groups was attempted in various ways, including contacting agencies or groups that worked with or provided services for that constituency. For example, I approached the local youth service for contacts with local young people, whereas my interview with local students was arranged informally, through a mutual friend. Other interviews took place by chance when I visited a local 'community' resource centre and others were contacted deliberately and arrangements made by phone or in person.

4.8 Interviewing strategies

Mason (2002a) has noted that there are generally three types of interviews at the disposal of the qualitative interviewer – structured, semi-structured and unstructured. However, she suggests that the notion of an unstructured interview is a misnomer because interviews can never be completely lacking in structure (2002a; 62). In other words, a researcher always comes to the table with some ideological or theoretical baggage that is bound to influence the construction of knowledge. Mason also argues that the idea of a *structured* interview cannot be rightly termed 'qualitative' as its *'logic, rationale and approach...are derived from survey, not qualitative, methodology'* (2002a; 62). Therefore, by process of elimination, a 'genuine' qualitative interview, according to Mason, is necessarily semi-structured. This interview format allows space for both guiding themes and topics, chosen by the interviewer (sometimes in consultation with the interviewee), to be employed, whilst allowing a degree of flexibility for the interviewee to answer the questions and express themselves however they choose (in the confines of the designated thematic parameters). In my own fieldwork, there was an aspiration to use a semi-structured interview format for these very reasons. I wanted to be able to balance the application of the research themes and issues, with space for an active dialogue in which the respondent felt that they were contributing to the discussion rather than simply responding to questions (see also Phillips and Smith 2003; 89).

Despite the semi-structured nature of the interview, this belies a substantial amount of creative work on the part of the researcher. Perhaps most importantly is the need to ensure that the interview is a productive encounter in terms of generating useful knowledge. This means that whilst the space and talk of the interviewee must be respected and privileged, it does not mean allowing them to wax lyrical about subjects that are irrelevant to the research questions. The researcher must steer a steady course, ensuring that the practice of 'asking' is geared towards fruitful knowledge generation. Mason has suggested a way of ensuring research questions are embedded in the interview process. This involves three stages in which the researcher devises their 'big' research questions (as discussed above), which are then broken down into 'mini' research questions - designed to illuminate some aspect of the 'big'

question (2002a; 69). Once these have been systematically developed, the next stage is to convert these questions, using them as a framework, into themes and topics to be directly addressed in the interview (2002a; 70). Therefore, despite the fact that I had to rethink my commitment to focus group interviews, there was continuity throughout the fieldwork process in terms of the aims and content of all my interviews, whatever format they took. Following Mason's typology ensured consistency across formats and interviews.

To illustrate, I will take my first 'big' research question and illustrate how this was translated into a set of 'mini' questions and how these fed into the interview design:

Big research question

"To what extent is the NDC community a contested space?"

Mini questions:

How do residents think their local area can be improved?

What should NDC's priorities be?

Do their needs clash with any other people or groups?

Are there any areas of the community that residents avoid / dislike?

How do residents feel about incomers to their area?

Do residents feel that everyone is equal in their area? Or are there inequalities?

Are residents happy living where they do?

Have they witnessed or been part of a conflict in their area?

Do residents 'get on' with their neighbours?

These 'mini' questions allowed me to take my 'big' question and create a number of more specific points of enquiry, which would enable me to generate data with interviewees.

Therefore, the interview schedule was constructed according to these 'mini' questions and thus, a clear link back to my theoretical research problem was maintained.

To this end, I had to identify some key sub themes around which I could formulate actual interview questions that would be productive as well as clear to the respondents. To continue with this particular example, the main theme of conflict between residents was converted into a variety of points for around which actual questions were constructed:

- Explore concept of 'community needs'; the type of changes people would like to see; their ideas for their local area; how could *their* lives be improved

- Comparison of responses; suggest what other local people have said to stimulate discussion, e.g. “I was talking to x who thought the area needs heavier policing, what do you think of that idea?”
- Discuss allegiances and fears about the community; where do they go, where do they avoid within the community, and why? Any evidence of territorialism?
- Historical perspective; who has come in; how has the area changed; degree of acceptance of incomers; inclusion / exclusion divide?
- Does everyone have the same needs; opinions on ‘need’ and welfare claims; what is the extent of shared morality?
- Positive and negative aspects of living in the area; considerations of what makes a ‘good’ place to live;
- Extent of conflict in the area; what are the lines of conflict? Reasons for conflict. Any evidence of not-in-my-back-yard-ism (NIMBYism)?

Subsequently, the theme of ‘community’ as a contested space was operationalised during the interview via three main techniques or ‘ways in’. It would not have been appropriate or productive to ask explicitly in an interview about ‘contestation’ lest it be met with a blank look and limited data. A more fruitful approach was to aim to discuss this theme in ways that were accessible and interesting to respondents. The first way by which this was achieved was deploying the concept of ‘need’ as a ‘hook’ upon which to generate data about contestation. I devised a list of priorities on a printed A4 sheet (see appendix three) for residents to look at before asking them to rank them in order of importance. This technique provided me with a ‘way in’ to discussing their needs as well as their attitudes towards NDC. This data would enable me to compare what residents thought NDC’s priorities should be for improving their own quality of life. I could then analyse the data for potential conflicts over priorities and get a sense of the issues and needs of people.

A second way of operationalising ‘contestation’, was to include questions that steered residents towards discussing any examples of any clashes over the use of physical space they had encountered, or overt conflict (in the form of arguments and feuds) with other residents. An example that came out of my data was an issue of ‘NIMBYism’ where there were clashes about uses of certain areas and spaces. Thirdly, I asked questions that guided residents to discuss their notion of ‘problematic’ residents. This is contestation in a discursive sense. That is, they might not cross paths with these people or groups, but still consider them a problematic part of ‘the community’ (assuming they consider them ‘part’ of the community). This kind of data is useful because it adds another dimension to the reflections upon NDC’s community involvement rhetoric.

Therefore, we can see how my 'big' research question fed into 'mini' questions, which in turn guided the thematic priorities of the interview schedule and lastly, how those themes were operationalised via 'ways in' to be accessible to respondents and produce useful data.

However, having subtle and succinct research questions, underpinning an insightful thematic framework is futile unless it is reinforced by a sophisticated *way of asking*. Given my contention that knowledge is situated and contextual, it is especially necessary to avoid asking general questions which might provoke a generalized answer that is of little relevance. Mason (2002b) has stated that sometimes these kinds of answers can be '*clichéd and empty of any grounded meaning*' (228). In order that respondents can adequately verbalize their situated experience, it is more productive to ask specific, grounded questions. Another problem inherent in asking general or abstract questions is that such questions misunderstand that morality, identity and the (re)construction of experience are *processes* or *practices*, rather than 'things' (Mason 2002b; 234). When conducting my interviews with residents, I aimed to use specific questions in order to situate the experience of the interviewee. After all, it is *their experience* that is relevant to my project. For example, when asking about the quality of life in area 'x', rather than asking '*Is 'x' a nice place to live?*' A better, more specific question might be, '*What do you feel are the positive aspects of living in 'x'?*' This question is pointing the respondent towards thinking creatively and expressing their opinion, whereas the general question will probably produce an '*In what way?*' type of response and need clarification. My interview schedules were developed with this issue in mind. I endeavoured to start by asking specific questions about personal needs and priorities (using my 'priorities sheet') and gradually move to a more general line of questioning. This would entail asking about their thoughts on the 'community' as a whole (positives and negatives) and other groups in the area (the presence of asylum seekers / students). Always trying to focus on individual opinions and feelings, rather than generalized statements, but moving from discussing themselves and their needs, to discussing NDC and the wider 'community' context in which they live.

Another concern when developing interview schedules is how to ensure consistency in terms of the generation of comparable data. That is, although I set out with a view of knowledge as situated and contextual, I had to ensure that there was some degree of uniformity in the questions I asked. Otherwise, I could not compare accounts where comparison was deemed necessary. There are techniques that can be used to ensure a common thread runs through each interview. Firstly, and fairly obviously, the researcher must deploy a robust set of themes (drawn from the research questions) to be addressed during every interview. There must be a degree of flexibility when operationalising them to allow for the variety of responses to each,

but by setting out the key themes as illustrated above before entering the field, I was able to set the thematic agenda and steer the conversation to address these issues. Indeed, Steinar Kvale has termed good interviewing as '*a conversation that has structure and a purpose*' (1996; 6). This approach ensures that each interview was structured enough to generate comparative responses.

Another technique that I deployed to ensure 'structure and purpose' was a variation on the 'vignette'. Vignettes are hypothetical situations that the interviewer can construct and incorporate into each interview. They allow the interviewer to explore and compare responses to the same question or scenario before analysing reasons for different or similar responses. However, as noted above, my interview schedule began with a hypothetical *question*, that initiated the discussion, set the thematic tone of the interview and ensured that I generated some comparable data across my sample. It accompanied the 'priorities sheet' and read:

'If you were in charge of funding for your community, how would you spend it?'

The logic behind this technique was to try to draw out the extent of agreement or otherwise between residents about how NDC money should be spent. I also hoped it would be a subtle way of discovering how each respondent conceived of their needs and whether regeneration funding could address those.

Furthermore, I planned to ask every interviewee for their thoughts on policing of the 'community': is it good enough? Is it too intensive? Should it be improved? How should it be improved? Who or what should the police focus on? The reason for asking specifically about policing, rather than waiting for residents to mention it, was because it was clear from the NDC reports and surveys that it was perhaps *the* major issue in the area. Moreover, it was an issue that I thought would stimulate a range of interesting (and comparable) responses and illustrate dimensions of conflict between residents, both discursive and real, as well as illustrate how criminality shapes residents experiences of social exclusion and 'community'. Potentially, a range of data could be generated from a relatively simple technique. The use of vignettes is designed to ensure consistency across the dataset and the inclusion of these two themes in every interview provided me with some consistency of response as well as a mosaic of experiences within the 'community' – one that had common threads running throughout whilst illustrating the variability and diversity of experience within a shared context.

4.9 Ethics

It is widely noted that qualitative social research must pay heed to a range of ethical considerations when entering the field (Blaikie 2000, Mason 2002a, Miles and Hubermann 1994). These considerations formed a substantial part of the formulating and implementing of this research strategy. In particular, as Blaikie suggests, the main issue is how the researcher and his or her research treat human respondents (2000; 20). In light of the nature of my investigation, a range of procedures was implemented throughout the fieldwork to protect and respect the people who chose to participate. Primarily, this meant ensuring informed consent wherever possible and strict anonymity for all respondents. In practice, this meant that before each individual or group interview, participants were informed of the nature of the research, thanked for their time and thoughts and told how their contributions would be used. Residents were told of my desire to record 'lay' accounts of living in a NDC-designated area and find out how they related to other residents. They were also informed that I wanted them to verbalize their own personal opinions, rather than what they thought the 'correct' response to a question might be. Finally, participants were told that their interviews were being tape recorded, then later transcribed.

It has to be said that few respondents seemed to have any great problems or concerns with these points and some seemed to resent or feel uncomfortable about the rather formal nature of such introductions. Nonetheless, anonymity was an ethical protocol deemed important by many residents who, perhaps unsurprisingly, did not want to be identified when criticizing other groups or individuals in the area. In particular, one male community representative on the NDC board, was initially sceptical about conducting our interview at all, informing me over the telephone that he had been 'caught out like this before'. Our interview did eventually take place in what appeared to be an explicitly secretive location chosen by him (although he never acknowledged this apparent secrecy), and he was very cautious in revealing anything he thought might jeopardise his position in the NDC process, or what or who had 'caught him out' in the past. Another example of this came from two local youth workers who were also extremely cautious when being interviewed. They clearly felt that to be too critical of NDC could jeopardize their relationship with a major source of funding for youth activities in the area.

Informed consent was not always possible when interviewing young people however. Due to the nature of my encounters with young people – on the streets, whilst with groups of friends – it was difficult to retain their attention for long enough to earnestly declare my credentials. I was always able to ensure I introduced myself and informed them why I wanted to talk to them. Youth workers who I had met several times and to whom I had explained my research

also accompanied me when meeting my respondents. They often acted as mediators between us and offered introductions and explanations of the themes of my research.

Nevertheless, where possible, participants were offered the chance to ask questions, check notes made, and to 'strike' conversations from the record if they so wished. Assurances of confidentiality were also given and only first names requested. All respondents were informed, again where possible, that they would also be given pseudonyms when the research was written up. They were informed that their conversations may be used as part of my PhD thesis as well as possible published papers or a book that stressed the importance of the views of local people in discussions of regeneration.¹¹

However, claims that this research could be seen to be 'empowering' must be tempered by the recognition that it was a small-scale study, with limited contact time with participants. The role of 'lay' people in the research process was prioritised, but not to the extent suggested by 'participatory' research methodologies (see for example Brock and McGee 2002). That is, relationships were not maintained with the large number of participants and, due to time constraints and some ethical concerns, transcripts were not made available for analysis by respondents. The role of respondent was limited to being an interview participant and in a collective sense, as providing 'evidence' of the reality of living with a NDC programme. This may raise issues about the possible exploitative nature of qualitative research, but I was not in a position in terms of time or resources to avoid such alleged pitfalls, nor was I convinced by the argument for the continued participation of socially excluded people in a piece of academic research. Surely, the demand for co-participation throughout the entire research process (including analysis and writing up) is as ethically problematic given the demands involved? Moreover, could such an agenda not be said to obscure the nature of the ownership of the research. I, as an academic researcher, *chose* to conduct this study; therefore can it ever be stripped of that initial, inherent power imbalance, irrespective of how inclusive it becomes? The research was about generating data about the 'community' and its relationship with government policy. I contend there is a validity in this approach resting on the importance of understanding the realities of 'communities' and the repercussions for policy interventions and would refute that the relatively limited role of residents weakens its impact.

¹¹ One respondent asked me if I had influence with the Office of Deputy Prime Minister and could pass on their complaints. I had to admit that no, that my study would not have that sort of influence, but could help publicise the kinds of issues residents face in NDC areas.

4.10 Analysis of data

Having completed the fieldwork and generated a substantial amount of data, the next crucial phase in the research process is handling and analysing this data. The interviews and observations on which this research is based produced a large number of transcriptions, summaries and field notes. In addition, I had a large amount of documentation relating to NDC policy, statistics and news. I began with this latter material, organising it into five categories beginning with data relating to the ‘community’ under study. This data included national and local press cuttings, statistics about the social and economic background of the area and government reports. This category was designed to provide a profile and some back-story to this NDC zone.

Whilst I chose to handle and store the above data in its existing form, it was decided that all interviews and field notes taped and non-taped should be transcribed. The transcription process was conducted alone without any outside help, which was a long-winded exercise, but which enabled me to immerse and familiarise myself with the data to an almost obsessive extent. The interviews were transcribed verbatim to carefully ensure each respondent was recorded accurately in terms of content and speech emphasis. Field notes were either rewritten onto A4 paper or typed up for clarity and accessibility due to the often scribbled and untidy nature of the initial notes. These were transferred faithfully to ensure they replicated the initial data. Where the notes related to an interview, they were clearly labelled with the respondent’s name, location of interview and date. If the respondent had completed the ‘priorities’ sheet, then their choices were transferred and listed in the same way.

4.10.1 Coding

Once I had transferred all my data into new documents, the next task was to decide how to analyse it. This process involves how one codes, indexes or classifies their data, enabling them to compare responses across the dataset and build arguments based on the data. That is, through a process of coding, I would be able to connect with the data, report the views of respondents and engage in a comparison of opinions, values, needs and experiences – the key aspect of this investigation. This occurs through the analysis of each transcript and relevant passages, such as ideas, words, concepts and so on being identified. However, as Blaikie has stressed: *‘Classification is not a neutral process; the researcher will have a purpose in mind that will provide direction and boundaries’* (2000; 240).

Similarly, Miles and Huberman have emphasised the importance of the *‘conceptual lenses’* that one uses in data analysis (1994; 56). These are necessary if one wants to retain some consistency and control when handling data otherwise it may be tempting to code everything.

The researcher needs to be constantly mindful of their research questions and ‘intellectual puzzle’ when analysing data since, as all the methods textbooks inform you, data can be very seductive and tempt you into analytical anarchy if you lose too much sight of the objectives of the research. Therefore, the coding process was conducted in cooperation with the research questions, but also with a grounded element in that some codes derived from the interview text rather than predetermined objectives. That is, there was some flexibility to provide for data that I had not accounted for, but the respondent had mentioned of their own accord.

I decided to use the software package QSR Nvivo to code the taped interviews that I had transcribed into computer documents. I decided to use this software for one main reason – efficiency. With Nvivo one can code data clearly, constructing hierarchies of codes, or nodes as they are called in the programme, if desired. This allows for a subtlety in analysis that may be more difficult when working manually. In addition, Nvivo cross-references coded data (nodes) from each interview to produce a separate document containing similar responses from different respondents. This enables comparative analysis as well as facilitating quick search and retrieval of documents. However, computer packages such as Nvivo are not foolproof and can increase the seduction factor by enabling the researcher to code freely, without the normal constraints imposed when working manually. They can also remove a sense of context and meaning from data by moving it out of the initial interview into a new, blank document. In short, one has to ensure that they remain in control of the software and not the other way round. In this study, I endeavoured to keep the use of Nvivo to a basic level, purely to attach codes to the data. I believe it to have been a useful tool, although it is clear how someone with the skill to fully exploit its capabilities may become absorbed in it rather than their data.¹²

Nonetheless, I formatted each interview in accordance with Nvivo conventions, and then imported them into the programme. Nine transcripts were analysed in this way, including two group interviews. However, given the time taken to analyse these documents, I decided to code the other transcripts manually, but using the codes constructed via Nvivo. That is, after substantial scrutiny and revision, I made a list of the codes I had attached to my Nvivo documents and then applied them to other transcripts and field notes. Analysing these documents also inevitably produced some new codes.

¹² Thankfully, I did not possess enough knowledge to be completely seduced. For further discussions of the pitfalls and benefits of computer software packages in analysing data see Mason 2002b and Miles and Huberman 1994.

Having completed the coding of my data, I printed off the Nvivo files so I now just had paper documents. All relevant sections across the Nvivo and typed sheets were cross-referenced using marker pens and coloured paper. This was very time consuming but necessary given my coded dataset was in two different forms. However, by the end, I had a bank of coded data, with linkages and disparities made explicit across the dataset. At this stage, I was able to begin constructing and revising arguments and building analyses that would be useful for the thesis.

It is believed that through this data analysis method, useful arguments about the experiences and relationships of residents in this ‘community’ could be constructed. Such ‘lay’ accounts are central to this thesis and the analyses of responses in this way enabled me to report individual narratives, as well as compare them with other narratives, including those who work with or for local residents.

4.11 Summary

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, it is the first of two that deals directly with the fieldwork investigation into an NDC area, designed to complement the theoretical exploration begun in the previous chapter. It sought to explain how the research questions, based around a critique of New Labour’s ‘ACE’ models, fed into a practical research strategy encompassing methodological decisions as well as ontological and epistemological standpoints. It began with an exposition of the ‘big’ research questions and how these covered two domains of knowledge – how NDC operates in practice, as well as how residents experience their ‘community’. It then elucidated how fieldwork was organised in terms of gaining access to residents and the issues relating to sampling. Next, it discussed interviewing and how the content and structure of interviews was developed with a view to generating useful data and enhancing the enquiry into NDC. Some ethical dilemmas were also discussed and the procedures implemented to protect respondents were recounted. Finally, the chosen data analysis methods were discussed and explanations given for proceeding in this way. These discussions provide a platform for the recounting of data that will ensue in the next two chapters by illustrating how and why certain methods were chosen and the goals of the fieldwork process. Chapter five turns to a description of my experiences in the field, how the research strategy worked in practice, what interviews were conducted and the sort of data that was generated in relation to NDC.

Chapter Five

Descriptions of fieldwork and data relating to NDC

5.1 Introduction

As previously stated, this chapter is the second of two relating to the formulation of the research strategy and the resulting data generated from fieldwork. Here I will attempt to provide ‘evidence’ from the field to buttress my analysis of NDC, which hitherto has been a theoretical narrative synthesizing data from the pre-existing academic research literature into ‘communities’ and the fragmentation of welfare categories. The previous chapter described and discussed some of the central decisions taken regarding my research strategy, encompassing epistemological, ontological and methodological dimensions, all of which shaped the fieldwork process and the data produced. It is the purpose of this chapter to build on those discussions, engage in a description of my experiences in the field and provide an account of some of that data. Substantive discussions of the implications of this data in light of my research questions will comprise subsequent chapters. The present chapter will begin by presenting some basic information about the fieldwork experience and will move on to describe the data on a thematic basis, that is, eschewing chronology, I will take my research questions (as outlined in chapter four) as starting points, before illustrating the corresponding data or ‘findings’ generated. Clearly, another important element of this is to discuss the data that was not successfully generated, or any methodological problems that had a bearing on the explanatory potential of the fieldwork. This is done with reference to access in section 5.4 and at specific points during the exposition of the data.

5.2 Setting the scene - observing the zone

Having made the choice of NDC zone and completed all preparations, a total of approximately 10 months were spent actually ‘in the field’ as it were, visiting the NDC area, conducting interviews and attending meetings. Initially, before any contact with local people or NDC staff, regular visits were made to the area during which I walked around the neighbourhood (clearly identifiable from the NDC signage) and used local shops and services. This was undertaken to increase familiarity with the surroundings of the study area and to try to get an untainted impression of it through personal observation (untainted that is by possibly biased local commentary). What I encountered was a small outer city urban area, constructed

around the intersection of a river that runs from east to west and a busy north to south main road. This road snakes rightwards from the main thoroughfare out of Manchester, runs down through the Pendleton area towards Charlestown and the basin that encloses the river Irwell before forking through Kersal and disappearing over the hill to the north of the NDC zone. I noticed how the area is comprised of several distinct housing estates, intermingled with some industrial units and a limited number of shops or public spaces. However, in the centre of the zone there are large expanses of greenery that extend out from the riverbank. Here one can find University accommodation surrounded by high walls, a football pitch as well as much unused or disused space. The air of dereliction in some parts seemed to betray the reality of a 'community' shaped by industrialism and the planning decisions of a previous age. It was not hard to see why NDC funding has been allocated here. As well as the health and wealth inequalities residents of the area experience, the area appeared rather stagnant and looked like it was struggling to find a post-industrial identity that could revitalise its infrastructure and sense of self. Reading about the zone and surrounding areas, I learned that Salford as a whole has lost almost a third of the city's traditional employment base over the past thirty years, which is said to have had a marked impact in terms of physical dereliction and social deprivation. (Salford Partnership 2002; 7) In 2003, 15% of residents within the NDC zone were not in employment (compared with 9.1% across England), whilst 26.1% were defined as being on a low income (13.3% nationally) (CRESR 2003). According to central government's index of multiple deprivation, Pendleton was ranked 201st (the top 2.4% nationally) and Kersal 1542nd (top 18.3%) most deprived ward in England (NDC Delivery Plan 2001: 5). Salford as a whole, according to Government figures, is the fourth most deprived local authority area in the North West and the twenty-eighth nationally (Salford Partnership 2002; 7).

Whilst there may have been some rather sporadic and disjointed pockets of investment and the arrival of university students living in the area, the extent of empty or vandalised housing and lack of facilities in some parts illustrated the reality for most residents. That is, a degree of poverty and neglect combining to produce an area described by one resident as 'a forgotten land'. It appeared that NDC had arrived and had set about re-branding the area as a 'community' in an attempt to forge this new identity as a catalyst for investment and regeneration.¹ As we shall see, this new identity would rely substantially on a combination of re-branding and new housing developments following the example of nearby Manchester, which emerged, in the 1990s, from its post-industrial decline as the 'gentrified' renaissance

¹ Branding had become a key tool in stimulating economic investment. As Lovering has commented, '*place marketing is now virtually the core activity in local economic development*'. (1995; 117)

city *par excellence*.² This is in-keeping with a Salford-wide agenda to re-brand certain aspects of the city as stylish and dynamically suitable for the young and ‘upwardly mobile’ and get away from its industrial, proletarian past. For example, at a recent conference, Salford council chief executive John Willis was explicit when he admitted that the archetypal LS Lowry image of a ‘grimy industrial Salford’ ‘...is not the image the council or I want to take into the 21st century.’ He added that there was ‘huge work to do’ to turn Salford into a place where people aspire to live (Ottewell 2003; 4). Part of that agenda has been to concentrate resources on the nearby Salford Quays dockside development, which is only a short drive away from the NDC zone. This is a prestige area of vast investment and redevelopment that includes The Lowry hotel and arts centre. It is an area of ongoing regeneration around the Manchester Ship Canal and has raised the profile of Salford over the last few years (analogous with the Millennium Dome and London Docklands initiatives). The contrast with the NDC area and the Pendleton ward in general could not be more pronounced.

Upon reading about the history of the area, I found that Salford was turned into a key site of industrial production as steam power replaced waterpower during the industrial revolution. It was also at the edge of the Lancashire coalfield, which led to the necessary building of canals and roads then railways. Various industries were built up around the cotton industry and precipitated a population explosion and urban expansion (Frow and Frow 1984; 3). Indeed, Charlestown was one of the earliest working class districts of Victorian Salford, growing around two prominent cotton mills. As the working class of Salford grew, it became an important site for the labour movement as they sought to improve the conditions of the working class. Frederick Engels – an observer of the Salford slums during this time – wrote in 1844:

‘If we cross the River Irwell to Salford, we find on a peninsula formed by the river a town of eighty thousand inhabitants, which properly speaking is one large working men’s quarter...Hence it is that an old and therefore very unwholesome, dirty and ruinous locality is to be found here...All Salford is built in courts or narrow lanes, so narrow, that they remind me of the narrowest I have ever seen, the little lanes of Genoa...if anyone takes the trouble to pass through these lanes, and glance through the open doors and windows into the houses and cellars, he can convince himself

² This area was not subject to gentrification in the strictest sense in that young, upwardly mobile people and families were to be attracted by *new* build developments, as opposed to inhabiting refurbished inner city properties whether that is apartments, or converted mills and warehouses as is popular in central Manchester.

afresh with every step that the workers of Salford live in dwellings in which cleanliness and comfort are impossible. (1969; 95)

It was these conditions that the labour movement sought to improve, through both political and radical means. There were large, influential branches of Owenite reformism and the Chartist movement (which organised the famous demonstration on Kersal Moor in 1839) in Salford, as well vibrant trade union activity. Into the twentieth century, the Labour party began to win local seats in Salford elections. In 1935, they gained control of the city council – which they have retained ever since, except for a blip in 1967-69 when the Conservatives seized control (Frow & Frow 1984; 24). Currently, Labour dominates Salford city council with 16 councillors alongside 3 Liberal Democrats and 3 Conservatives. At the 2006 local elections all four wards that extend into the NDC zone returned Labour majorities. Turnout was approximately 25% across these wards compared with 28% across the city.

(<http://www.salford.gov.uk/council/elections.htm>)

Since the loss of its traditional industries (the foundations of one cotton mill in Charlestown are still visible today), Salford has been subject to a range of urban programmes and regeneration initiatives. Surrounding the central Quays redevelopment, there have been four Single Regeneration Budget schemes, two of which border the NDC area. As well as New Deal for Communities funding, Salford has secured three spending rounds of Sure Start and over £100 million in European and lottery funding. Parts of the city have also received money from the HMRF and been classed as part of a government Health Action Zone (Salford Partnership 2002; 95).

5.3 Interviews and meetings

Having gained some insights into the historical and political context of the area, September 2003 marked the first interviews with NDC staff. After completing these interviews and gathering information about key ‘community’ actors, I was able to proceed into the field proper. This took two forms – observing meetings and conducting interviews. Two different types of meetings were attended. The first related to official NDC / Council business. In November 2003, I attended the local community committee – a City Council mechanism that performs three functions: to inform residents of the latest Council business; as a community forum for the wards covering the NDC area (a structural component of the Council’s own ‘community strategy’), where residents can air problems or suggestions; and the overseeing of the election of community representatives – residents chosen to sit on the

partnership board of NDC.³ These representatives are directly elected for a year by those who attend the committee meeting (there were six residents present at my meeting in addition to Council officers and so on). One community representative I spoke to admitted this process of election was far from ideal:

“So you’ve got a Council committee that becomes a community forum and it means that the people who can vote are members of community committee, they are the only ones who can vote for community reps...So, the reality is that something like 17 people elect the community reps for NDC. Which I’ve argued all along very strongly excludes 99% of the population from that electoral process.” (‘Bill’, resident; 21 - 60 and NDC community representative)

In December 2003, I attended my first NDC meeting - the ‘Building Communities’ task group, one of six NDC task groups that hold monthly meetings and are open to the public. The ‘Building Communities’ programme is responsible for debating and organising the community involvement agenda of NDC. On this occasion, only two residents attended however, both of which were active NDC stakeholders – one community representative and a paid employee in NDC’s community involvement team (CIT). This individual being the only local resident actually employed by NDC at the time, a sore point for some residents I interviewed. For example,

“...that’s the way they are down there at New Deal. It’s them and us and the reason is, we used to have 4 community involvement workers who lived in the area. We’ve got one now. We’ve got one person who works for New Deal who lives in the area, out of a staff of 30. New Deal are meant to employ from within...And where are we? Why aren’t we working there, why aren’t we the outreach workers, why aren’t local people...Lee who lives there (points), he went for the job and got fucked off and they employed someone from out the area who sits on her arse and we don’t even see her.” (‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)

The second type of meeting that I observed was residents and tenants group meetings. I attended three of these from January to May 2004. Another was planned, but the group was ‘officially’ disbanded due to reported harassment from local people meaning I could not

³ The partnership board is the key decision making organ and steering group of NDC, comprising residents, NDC staff and representatives from local ‘partners’ such as the police service, the university and the primary care trust. See appendix 4 for a diagram of the early NDC organizational structure.

attend - although I subsequently found out that the group was still meeting on an 'unofficial' basis.⁴

In addition to the data garnered from these meetings, 38 individual semi-structured interviews were carried out, as well as 4 group interviews (with a minimum of three respondents). Interviews were of varying length (ranging from 1-2 hours to 10 minutes) and depth (some covering a wide range of topics, others covering one), depending upon the circumstances of the encounter. In the previous chapter, it was noted that in keeping with my epistemological stance, the main data source would be the 'lay' accounts of local residents: twenty-seven of the individual respondents and three of the four group interviews met this criteria. However, those who were non-residents were also valuable data sources, given that they were able to offer insights as 'outsiders' coming into the area, or, if they worked with local people, as 'commentators' on the 'community'. Sometimes such commentary could be considered controversial (such as statements about the 'culture' of people, as detailed below)⁵ but always interesting. Other commentary was useful and informative in that it provided important insights into the nature of local social relations - a 'ground level' flavour of some 'community' processes. This was particularly valuable when I interviewed people from support or advocacy agencies, who had direct access to how those individuals or groups experienced their exclusion within the 'community'. For example, a local support worker for informal carers explained how no local carers (performing informal or family care work) attended her support group. This was in spite of the group being widely publicised and the lack of any previous 'community' support. Her experience in talking to carers was that this was due to ill health as well as most refusing to accept the label of carer when 'just' looking after relatives or spouses. This was an interesting piece of data about the experience of exclusion of carers in the area, which did not come from any resident doing actual care work, but from a professional familiar with that constituency.

5.4 Access to target residents

Data generated with all interview respondents was central to answering the research questions. Of the ten groups that 'the residents' were broken down into, data was generated with young people (I accompanied youth workers on three separate occasions as they

⁴ The alleged harassment, I was informed, comprised verbal abuse directed at group members and graffiti daubed on the chairwoman's home due to an allegation she had 'grassed' on a local person to the police.

⁵ The concept of a specific 'culture' in an area is contentious but longstanding, given the documented tendency of some 'professionals' and commentators to try and label or possibly pathologise both the individual *behaviour* of the poor or underprivileged and the *culture* of 'sink' or 'deprived' estates. The implication being that poverty or disadvantage is rooted in behavioural shortcomings, which are then culturally transmitted, rather than structurally produced. (see for example Bagguley and Mann 1992)

undertook ‘detached’ work on the streets), older people (three group interviews were conducted in a local community centre and church hall during lunch clubs) and students (one group interview conducted in a student flat). Seven individual interviews were conducted with women between ages of 21 and 60 (approximately) and six individual interviews conducted with men, ages ranging from 21 to 60. Group interviews with men and women aged between 21 and 60 proved too difficult to organise due to a lack of interest from people and practical difficulties in finding a suitable meeting place and so on. Whereas older people and students were found in a ‘natural’ environment for a group discussion (such as lunch clubs and university halls of residence), my encounters with men and women tended to be random and opportunistic in the course of everyday neighbourhood navigation.

Interviews with disabled people and asylum seekers did not prove possible to organise despite concerted efforts. For disabled people, a local day care centre was contacted with a view to arranging some form of interview. A resource, which I later found out, is used mostly by disabled people from neighbourhoods outside the immediate NDC zone. This narrowed down my potential ‘pool’ of respondents. Moreover, one of the difficulties in arranging interviews was that the gatekeepers with whom I had contact at the centre informed me that of the few NDC-residing people who use it, most were severely disabled and therefore, unable to participate. The legitimacy of this argument is not really the concern of this thesis and has been addressed elsewhere (see for example Beresford 2001), but when asked about the reasons for their perceived non-participation, a care worker I spoke to remarked,

“Well, I will give you an example. We’ve got a young lady in a wheelchair who, erm, is totally dependent on being fed, toileted, she knows exactly what she’s saying to you, but she can’t converse with you. Unless you really experience working with her. And that’s where the experience really comes in because eye movements, certain limb movements and you know, you can get a conversation going.” (‘Jane’, care worker; 21 – 60)

Therefore, several factors prevented me from arranging face-to-face interviews with any disabled people. What I did manage to organise was an interview with ‘Jane’, a care worker who had worked at the centre for several years. She was able to deliver some insight into what the disabled people she worked with felt about the area, the centre and some of the obstacles they face. Obviously, such data must be approached with caution, but there is some validity I think in those insights, providing they be clearly identified as the observations of a professional as opposed to a ‘lay’ respondent.

Similarly, with asylum seekers, there were difficulties with access. Due to the nature of the research in which respondents had to be resident in a specific geographical zone, this ruled out contacting any central city-wide agency. I was in constant touch with a local asylum seeker and refugee support and advocacy team, but again they could not arrange any face-to-face interviews. Eventually, I interviewed a project worker on the team who was familiar with the case history and lived experiences of asylum seekers housed in the NDC area. She was able to describe to me some of the issues facing asylum seekers and recount some of the abuse and conflict they endure. Again, this data needs a health warning, but given the kind of data I wanted (experiences, barriers), I believe this to be a valid, if partial insight into how asylum seekers experience their exclusion and the ‘community’ around them. Furthermore, the data from this interview was supplemented by data from others. Many residents had comments to make about asylum seekers, an interesting indication of the nature of ‘community’ feeling towards this group. Moreover, one of the youth workers interviewed was working closely with young refugees and was able to offer some additional information.

In terms of those from minority ethnic groups, this NDC was almost exclusively white, (93.4% according a 2002 household survey, NDC Delivery Plan 2001-2011; 65) with those non-whites tending to be refugees and asylum seekers or international students housed in the area. I found it impossible to contact anyone of non-white ethnicity. There were no groups in the NDC area that represented non-whites and on my travels through the neighbourhood, (at meetings, in community centres, shops and so on) no opportunities presented themselves. Despite making phone calls to local voluntary groups (outside the NDC zone), there was no one forthcoming.

I did manage to generate some data, albeit limited, from mothers who attend a parent -toddler group in a local church hall. The group organiser was approached to help arrange interviews, either individually or as a group. However, I was refused access to the group on the grounds of ‘child protection’. It was suggested that a questionnaire could be distributed to the mothers, which I duly did. Ten questionnaires were completed, providing me with more data about levels of ‘community’ involvement and some opinion on NDC. Unfortunately, little was generated about how local mothers experience their exclusion within their ‘community’ as I did not have the opportunity to probe their responses and generate more meaningful data.

5.5 Exposition of generated data

Therefore, the data generated is not representative of the ‘community’ as a whole. There are experiences about which I was unable to generate any data given my limited time and resources in addition to the obstacles to access that all researchers can face. Nevertheless,

as explained in the previous chapter, full representation of all social groups in the data was never the objective of this research. That is not to say wider or better data would not have been welcome, but rather that it was decided early in the research process that my ontological commitment to the diversity and heterogeneity of experience negated ever getting *enough* data to be truly representative; unless of course every resident in the NDC zone was interviewed – a clear impossibility.

Having described some of the background to the fieldwork process and the data generated, the following sections will begin to describe my ‘findings’ in a more concrete and thematic fashion. As noted above, there were two spheres of knowledge that my fieldwork sought to address: the functioning and impact of NDC on the local area, in addition to the experiences and behaviour of NDC residents. We begin in this chapter with data relating to NDC, how it operates on the ground and how it has altered the environment or service provision in the area.

5.5.1 Examining NDC

The two ‘big’ research questions that were set out in the previous chapter relating to this sphere of knowledge were:

- How does NDC operate in practice?
- Has NDC improved the lives of resident’s?

These represent two clear objectives in terms of data generation. The relevance of understanding how NDC operates and knowing what changes it has instigated is rooted in considering how effectively it functions in practice, which has an obvious bearing on its ability to achieve its stated objectives. Moreover, whilst the primary concern of this research is to reflect upon NDC’s *conceptualisation* of ‘community’, agency and social exclusion, any discussion of the ‘appropriateness’ of the policy should not neglect what practical and organisational developments have occurred. This is largely because analysis of a complex programme like NDC is not reducible to concepts alone - there are practical dimensions that need to be explored. In addition, if the focus of one’s research is on the lived realities of the recipients of this programme, (as opposed to focusing on how people are constructed in policy discourse) then the nature of the interface between local residents and NDC is crucial. Therefore, there are several ‘mini’ research questions:

- What form does NDC take within the community?

- Who are the influential individuals or agencies within the decision making process and to what extent are residents able to participate in and influence that process?
- What changes has NDC achieved in the area? What positive developments have occurred?

To generate data to answer these questions, it was decided that NDC staff should be interviewed first; to both access their experiences and thoughts on NDC, but also as a method of accessing NDC literature, which, it was hoped, would contain valuable information about the structure and function of the programme. I interviewed three individuals involved in the organisation and delivery of NDC. As noted in the previous chapter, the first meeting was with the deputy co-ordinator of the partnership. The second meeting involved interviewing two individuals simultaneously: one, a programme manager, (of whom there are several within each NDC, each responsible for a different regeneration objective – health, physical environment and so on) and the other, the voluntary sector support worker, a position funded by NDC to improve links with local voluntary groups. As hoped, both of these interviews, that were non-taped and semi-structured in their content, garnered useful data around the attitudes of NDC staff to the area they were ‘serving’ and therefore, some valuable insights into the relationship between residents and NDC partnership. In addition, they supplied me with various documents and reports that contained important information relating to NDC’s agenda and organisation.

5.3.2 Local council influence on NDC

“...they know it’s not right – the remit is New Deal for Communities and it’s New Deal for councils here in a big way.” (‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)

One of the recurring themes when interviewing both NDC staff and some residents was the criticism made of the local Labour-controlled city council. This is a relevant theme because it illustrates the structural realities within which the programme operates and a potential obstacle in its ability to tackle social exclusion – the central question for this thesis.

NDC is an independent partnership with its own funding stream, intended to be additional to mainstream budgets. However, the local authority are the accountable body for NDC finances, there are council staff working for NDC and local councillors sit on the partnership board. Thus, there appeared to be a strained relationship between NDC and the local council, illustrated by the NDC deputy co-ordinator who described the council as *“very paternalistic and difficult”*. A resident and community representative echoed this point:

“I said from the start that it was a culture shock for the council. Because they have never been used to working in partnership. They’re used to being in control and they’re used to exercising power and I recognised that they had a genuine problem. They had to let go of power and nobody wants to do that. Especially when they have gone into to some form of government which is about exercising control and exercising power and all the rest of it.” (‘Bill’, resident; 21-60)

This theme also came up in the other interview with the two NDC staff. The programme manager described a picture of local governance where *“old Labour paternalism”* is *“rife”*⁶ and argued that the local council *“go along with NDC reluctantly”* because they see it as *“another pot of cash to be doled out”*, rather than a ‘partnership’ between state and voluntary agencies and the ‘community’. In their view, it is the ‘culture’ of the local authority that is a key barrier to NDC succeeding because of entrenched opposition to ‘communities’ exercising greater control over resource allocation and decision-making – precisely the core agenda of NDC in the eyes of staff and stakeholders and the necessary prerequisite to sustainable regeneration. This reflects recent research conducted by Aspden and Birch (2005) who found that in some local partnership areas, local councillors exhibited wariness about the involvement of voluntary and community groups in local decision-making. They argue that such levels of involvement challenge councillors’ self-image as *‘legitimate and accountable community leaders and representatives’*. (Cited in Ellison and Ellison 2006; 341)

However, some respondents spoke about a culture *amongst residents* that supported the local council’s paternalism. A partnership board member and local vicar made this point:

*“...one of the things this community is not good at, it is impoverished at participating in the life of the city. People do not join in on the life of their city on all fronts, they don’t feel able to. It’s a real paternal relationship you know, the old style, people do things for us, and the enormous challenge is making people more participatory.”*⁷

⁶ Given the stranglehold the Labour party has on Salford’s levers of power, it is perhaps unsurprising that such a perception exists. See section 5.2.1.

⁷ Whilst this respondent is talking more generally, a useful indicator of this non-participation could be electoral turnout. Indeed, turnout across the city at the recent local elections decreased from 36% in 2004 to 28% in 2006. The reasons for low (and decreased) voter turnout are unclear, but reflect a national decline from 40 to 36%.

(http://en.wikipedia/wiki/United_Kingdom_local_elections_2006#Results_2006)

The deputy co-ordinator was more forthright, talking about a “*dependency culture*” in the area. She described the culture as one that engendered a lack of “*taking responsibility*” amongst residents. This was a theme she returned to several times by way of explaining what she envisaged as NDC’s role and purpose in the community:

“...about trying to get away from paternalism towards community governance and ownership of new facilities.”

Here we have a clear example of what she thinks NDC is *for*. To intervene in traditional models of governance by promoting and activating the local community to, ultimately, achieve sustainable ‘community’ ‘renewal’. That is, that social exclusion is as much about a lack of input and ownership of local services and facilities, as a lack of resources and diminished life chances and the best way to halt the decline is to galvanize local agents in a wider attempt to instigate ‘community’. This reflects the model of social exclusion advocated by New Labour and their proposed solutions as illustrated in chapter two. An apparent degree of congruence between local and central government thinking is evident here.

Therefore, a ‘dependency culture’ is damaging *in its effects*, in that it is a social malaise whereby residents are unwilling or unable to challenge their own conditions of exclusion, they resent the authority upon which they are dependent and any improvements will be superficial and unsustainable. She cited an example of a new health centre in the area, partly financed by NDC to illustrate her point about the importance of ‘ownership’. She argued that there had to be a sense of ownership amongst residents and pointed out the futility of investing in it if it is then “torched and barricaded” by local people. She drew an interesting parallel with the sense of ownership felt about local facilities belonging to an illustrious professional football club, which are “untouched” and apparently free from the threat of serious vandalism.

The idea of a ‘dependency culture’ in the area was a recurrent theme among several respondents, particularly those who worked in the area (such as NDC and community and youth workers).⁸ This led to some discussions about how the culture should be changed with NDC leading that change.

“If, at the end of the partnership, after ten years we actually haven’t strengthened the community so that they have community leaders and more people generally

⁸ The term ‘dependency culture’ was implied rather than spoken by most respondents. It is unclear how the perception of such a culture has grown amongst staff and practitioners.

throughout the community who have the confidence and skills to get on with their own lives and through the organisations and volunteering etc. I think that will be one of the ways we can say New Deal has failed...I am not wanting to make these people middle class, but want to give them the confidence that they can play a...that you know, just because the city council says it is going to happen, doesn't mean you can't change it. Historically they have not had those skills because constantly they have been disabled by process.” (Local vicar and partnership board member; 21-60)

He argues that inadequate systems of participation and a lack of a commitment to boosting community identity have produced a weak sense of entitlement and identification prevalent amongst socially excluded people. He cites NDC as an opportunity to challenge this trend by strengthening ‘community’. It is through this concept of a ‘strong community’ that *individual* confidence and skills can be developed and the malignant ‘dependency culture’ overcome. This resembles the normative aspect of NDC’s model of individual agency (as explored in chapter two, section 2.9.2), which promotes agents’ involvement in their ‘community’. A sentiment rooted in a moralising agenda aimed at improving individual behaviour, but also at ‘responsibilising’ forms of local governance (Hastings 2003; 99). That is, only properly empowered local actors can challenge the dominance of the local council and avoid the perceived neglect of poor neighbourhoods by self-interested or disinterested politicians and officials.

Another respondent argued that NDC was less about changing individual behaviour and more about installing more formal structures to sustain the improvement of the area by bolstering the community infrastructure, thus avoiding a reversion back to relying upon ‘old’ styles of governance:

“So the other thing that I am pushing for and have been pushing for, for about 18 months to 2 years looking to the future, I want a community development trust so we can maintain the partnerships that we’ve developed but we can have a legacy that can give us an income in order to sustain what we’ve got and develop it further. And that for me is how New Deal can become sustainable, otherwise we get to 2010, the money runs out and ‘bye bye’. It just becomes another regeneration initiative and unless you get that continuity, it falls down. So that’s what I’ve been pushing for.” (‘Bill’, resident and community representative; 21-60)

To return to the supposed paternalism of the local authority, there are implications for the reported over weaning council influence – the perception that the council, because of its

inherent paternalism and apparent reluctance to renounce some of its power, tries to influence the NDC process to control the allocation of resources. There was a perception amongst some that the council has too great a presence on the partnership board, a sentiment that seemed to be rooted in a deep sense of distrust and dissatisfaction with local government generally. It is difficult to assess how well founded these perceptions are. Certainly, the partnership board, the body that takes key decisions and oversees the effective delivery and management of the programme, does contain three local councillors, alongside residents and individuals from other agencies. Moreover, it is a fact that the local authority manages NDC finances,

“...it takes months and months and months and months to get anything done because the council’s the accountable body and so you have to follow their processes. So everything has to be agreed by the appropriate member of the council, you have to follow the council’s tender processes and it takes months to get anything done. And it can take months to get cheques issued. We’ve got community chest which is the source of funding for the groups and you could succeed in an application and wait two or three months for the cheque to come through from civic centre. A total nonsense.” (‘Bill’, resident and community representative; 21-60)

For some, this is an influence that not only slows progress, but also illustrates something more sinister at play,

“But that meant that everyone who works for New Deal works for the council. So they can’t represent us and the council. They are all on council contracts of employment. Basically, if they go against New Deal (pauses)...there is things going to happen over the next few months that will blow your head open. I can’t say owt at the moment, but there are staff who work at New Deal who are very very dissatisfied and pissed off with the skulduggery of what is going on.” (‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)⁹

A further dimension to this relationship between NDC and local council is that the apparent political influence distorts the analysis of need within the zone. Local politicians insist on the problematic identification of this zone as a ‘community’ for political ends and in spite of obvious and documented socioeconomic differences between the two wards that comprise the zone:

⁹ He never elaborated on this theory, but his inference was clear – that NDC staff are being compromised into serving the interests of the local authority, rather than the residents.

“...there are different strata of society within the area, there are some parts quite wealthy and some parts certainly not wealthy at all. There is a political divide between the two wards...what one ward gets, the other expects to get and you get a lot of dissent between the two...But there is this political insistence that they are both the same, homogeneous and it should be split down the middle in effect but in reality the need is one sided.” (‘Bill’, resident and community representative; 21-60)

Therefore, the ability of NDC to challenge the exclusion of people in a way that meets needs is compromised by the (possibly electoral) agenda of local politicians. That agenda, it is argued, is rooted in an entrenched and overbearing local authority culture that insists on trying to bend the programme for its own ends, simultaneously undermining its ability to properly address the needs of local people.

5.5.3 NDC and the ‘community’

As mentioned above, NDC’s relationship with and reach into the community is a relevant issue in that the points of overlap between the two entities reveals the extent of resident involvement and, similarly, the extent of NDC consultation. My interviews with the deputy co-ordinator were fruitful in this regard because I received several reports and documents on NDC which gave useful information about this relationship between community and NDC. For example, the *Delivery Plan 2001-2011* outlines how NDC is structured and the points of intersection with the community.

The NDC process was kick-started by a community-wide consultation conducted by a participatory appraisal¹⁰ (PA) team. The team included three ‘community animators’ who were also residents and made use of innovative research techniques to ensure that as many local people were consulted as possible about what they would like from NDC, how the area could be improved and so on. However, the consultation took a while to get off the ground,

“We had to work quite hard at first to explain that we weren’t the DSS in disguise. The words New Deal certainly confused people!” (‘Phil’, resident and community animator; cited in NRU 2001; 15)

¹⁰ Participatory appraisal is a community research technique pioneered in the international development field. This NDC was introduced to it through a local Oxfam connection. Through this method local people can express their views and be directly involved in planning projects and defining policy goals. It involves using basic tools such as flip charts and so on and its emphasis is on going to the community for ideas, rather than expecting people to come forward and participate. (Delivery Plan 2001-2011; 10)

The results of this audit were translated into the 'PA report' and used as a key bidding document for NDC funding (designed to illustrate to central Government the efforts made to engage residents). Indeed the PA methodology was commended by central Government in their first annual review of NDC. (NRU 2001; 14) However, two NDC staff I interviewed were less impressed, arguing that the PA process had been conducted in such a manner that it raised unrealistic hopes on the part of residents that have so far not been met. This has led to widespread disillusion at a relatively early stage in the programme's lifespan. One community representative I spoke to confirmed this feeling within the 'community',

"But what has actually happened since then, there has been so much consultation particularly using sticky dots on flip charts and post it notes and no real results from the consultation, local people are now saying they feel over-consulted and they are not prepared to be consulted any more"¹¹ ...What they are upset about is the fact that there was so much given to PA, and you know, it was sold as we want to hear what you want...So, they basically feel they have been promised the earth and they have not been given anything and they are angry about it and I don't blame them." ('Bill', resident and community representative; 21-60)

Indeed, there has been recent revision of the PA method with one of the lessons learned from the Salford experience being that it *'runs the risk of raising expectations'*. Furthermore, it has been learned that what is required in a regeneration context is *'...ongoing information to the local community, agencies and other stakeholders about the scope, duration and steps required in implementing PA'* (<http://oxfamgb.org>). In Salford, communication with residents about the consultation process does not seem to have taken place thus creating a gap in understandings of the reality of PA and what it can realistically achieve.

Nevertheless, there *has* been substantial consultation of residents from the beginning and the PA team has now become the Community Involvement Team (CIT) with a remit to improve 'community' involvement in and awareness of ongoing NDC projects. This was the first method designed to 'strengthen' the 'community' – to produce a report (the PA report) based on wide consultation, which translated individual needs and values into a *'community'* agenda for change and improvement. The implications of this process will be explored in further detail in the next chapter.

¹¹ 'Bill' was referring to what he saw as the emptying of meaning of consultation, which, if not backed up by visible changes becomes an irritation, rather than an avenue of self-determination.

In addition to this apparent ongoing engagement with the ‘community’, the NDC process is transparent and residents are encouraged to participate by posters, newsletters and through elections for community representatives. The key mechanisms of participation are, most obviously, the task groups that meet every month in the area. These meetings are open to the public and are an avenue by which residents can voice opinions and objections to NDC projects and plans. Furthermore, local people can attend the NDC community forum (doubling as the council’s community committee) and are free to engage with council officers and attending NDC community representatives. Moreover, resident nominations to the partnership board are made through this forum. The partnership board meets in private, but contains six community representatives and is chaired by a resident to ensure adequate representation.

However, it appeared in my experience of meetings and of talking to residents in general, that most feel excluded from the process despite its transparency and apparent accessibility. For example, the Performance Management report (2003-04) found that despite crime being the biggest issue for local people, few residents attended the relevant task group (p15) Moreover, it found a local resident chaired only one out of six task groups. (p31) Meetings appear very poorly attended and those who do attend can be identified as a select few determined community actors who dominate. One community representative and consistent presence at meetings felt under pressure due to this non-participation saying she felt *“like a one man band”*.¹² Another lamented this lack of engagement,

“It’s about it (community inclusion) yeah. But it’s not doing it. It’s not achieving it. We’ve still got, we’ve got 6 focus (task) groups: in Building Communities I am probably the only person who lives in the area who is involved with it. Children and young persons, I don’t think there is anyone in the area involved in it; education employment and skills, you tend to get one person there. Crime you get a few; physical environment you get quite a few; but they’re really the only ones.” (‘Bill’, resident and community representative; 21-60)

The chairperson of the partnership board, also a resident, was clear where she felt the responsibility for poor levels of involvement lay,

¹² A community worker interviewed also identified this phenomenon fearing that those influential local actors who dominate now, will dominate any post-NDC community organisation, thus obscuring the potential empowerment of less influential local people. This is a common problem for local participation. See for example Marilyn Taylor (2000).

“I suppose more could be done, but what do you do more? You’ve got a newsletter that comes out, people are told where meetings are, time of meetings have been changed from afternoon to evenings back to afternoons. We’ve had various events where information is given out. The community committee meets every two months and updates are given on NDC. But, you could never employ enough people to do enough door knocking and go around and meet with people. I mean, like I say information is put out, information is produced. All the meetings are open, anybody can attend. I think it’s just the way of the world unless it affects you, that little bit where you live, you don’t actually get your bum into action do you?” (‘Mary’, resident and chair of NDC partnership board; 21-60)

Her view was that people tend not to be able to see beyond their own immediate interests and therefore find it difficult to engage with long term, perhaps more mundane NDC business. A more circumspect analysis of resident apathy was offered by the NDC voluntary sector support worker who identified a disconnect that is rooted in a sense of distrust of local government (with which NDC was regularly conflated) and general poor community infrastructure on top of which NDC was imposed. Something expressed by this resident:

“...because we had apathy in this area and no one got involved right, they (the council) just took over. I’m sorry to say but it’s the way we are in Salford, we’ve had that many bad dealings with the councils, they ask us why we don’t come to meetings cos we sit there (I do I go to all of them now), you sit there for 2 or 3 hours to talk about base targets blah blah blah. Then someone gets up and says ‘me gas isn’t fucking working’ and they say, ‘oh you can’t come for individual things’, well what the fuck are we coming here for then. You know, we’ve come here because we’re getting no joy down there and you’re the boss so you sort it out...But when the money came in this area, the council knew what to do, started moulding it the way they wanted it because we’ve always suffered this apathy or this non-involvement because we’ve always been the way we have. Any council, any authority because we’ve been shit on for years and years, so you know, they ask why don’t you get involved, what’s the fucking point? You don’t listen to us anyway when we got involved.” (‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)

Moreover, these factors could have been exacerbated by inadequate participatory mechanisms, contrary to what ‘Mary’ argues above. For example, the Performance Management report (2003) concluded that,

“NDC has structural weakness with a lack of strong community involvement... (and) opportunities to engage at a local level (are) not always taken.” (p30, brackets added)

‘Mary’s’ analysis also neglects to consider the nature and content of NDC meetings, which for many may appear *“aloof”* and *“full of suits”* (Female community worker). Indeed, these negative perceptions of NDC meetings are echoed in Dinham’s (2005) study of resident views in a London NDC area. Certainly, the quote above and the community committee meeting I attended are examples of the disconnection between residents and officials. When local people made complaints to council officers, they were largely ignored or they could not respond satisfactorily. The two groups seemed to talk past each other, both with different perceptions about the purpose of the meeting. Another factor is the often fractious atmosphere of such meetings. Arguments can be personality driven and revolve around obscure details about funding arrangements of community groups and so on. Added to this, the structure of elected (although their mandate is negligible)¹³ community representatives was questioned by the voluntary sector support worker who lamented that most community representatives are *“in it for themselves,”* that there is little feedback to and from communities and they use meetings as a chance to *“have a go at council people rather than be productive.”* Considering all these factors it is perhaps unsurprising that residents are reluctant to engage with the rather arcane practices of a regeneration programme and that it only attracts, for the most part, those more determined and motivated community actors. Consequently, I got a definite sense from respondents and meetings, of NDC and the community co-existing in the same space, but on parallel plains, rarely intersecting. It appears difficult to envisage how existing structures of participation and ‘community’ involvement will produce the desired outcomes of a stronger ‘community’ (beyond the elite set of dominant voices). At this stage in the NDC process, it seemed that residents felt both over exposed to participation techniques (too many sticky dots on charts as one respondent wryly noted), but felt excluded from ‘real’ involvement with NDC or did not perceive their sticky dots to be having an impact.

Nonetheless, whilst official channels of engagement have left many disenchanted with the NDC process, one aspect of NDC *has* had a radicalising effect on residents and engendered a greater sense of entitlement in terms of control over decisions affecting their neighbourhood. That is, the ‘empowerment’ rhetoric of NDC has given some residents a sense of legitimate opposition to (what they view as) complacent and self-serving local government. This dynamic could be seen most clearly around the issue of housing demolition and the

¹³ As described by ‘Bill’ in section 5.2.2. He asserts how attendees of the ‘community forum’, which is poorly attended, elect community representatives for the NDC process.

simultaneous development of private riverside apartments in the area. Many residents objected to the plans and took them as a sign of indifference or even active dislike towards them. For example,

“But the thing is, they never consulted us because they were buying this land with this plan anyway in mind cause the council know what they want to do. The council wants to turn this into like a Salford Quays, but they’re not fucking people from round here. New Deal are meant to come here to look after us and alright bring new people into the area, but at the end of the day we [local residents] are the main thing about New Deal. (‘Jim’, resident; 21-60, brackets added)

That is, for some local people, the ‘redevelopment’ process was a personal attack upon the indigenous ‘residents’ and their sense of territoriality and attachment to the estates that comprise the area. Despite NDC being responsible for these unwelcome developments,¹⁴ it is the same programme’s ‘empowering communities’ narrative that was mobilised by some residents in their opposition to what they perceived to be a policy that was imposed on local people from on high.¹⁵

This tension between government - defined ‘active communities’ and those defined ‘from below’ has been explored in detail by Mooney and Fyfe. Using a case study of local resistance to the proposed closure of a swimming pool in Glasgow, they identify how local people formed networks of active social capital that the Scottish Executive ‘*would pay assorted consultants and community experts a small fortune to have achieved.*’ (2004; 18) They go on to argue that New Labour distinguishes between ‘good’ social capital and ‘bad’ social capital and coming back to my own experience, it certainly appears that ‘active community’ is also a heavily circumscribed notion.

¹⁴ However, the city council are suspected of using NDC to deliver the controversial plans to escape blame whilst also being able to brand it as ‘regeneration’. Many are sceptical of the anti-exclusion benefits of such developments. For example, a community worker I interviewed voiced concerns about the redevelopment plans arguing that they amounted to a ‘gentrification’ of a poor, working class neighbourhood, legitimized on the basis that it “*doesn’t pay for itself*”. Another, a youth worker commented, “*New houses...seems to be about regenerating an area rather than a community. The community is seen as an obstacle.*”

¹⁵ This produced an explicit contradiction for government (one replicated across several NDC programmes) with the ‘bottom-up’ ethos of NDC clashing with ‘top-down’ demolition plans (part of the Government’s ‘Decent Homes Standard’ initiative rolled out across areas of depressed housing markets and single tenure neighbourhoods).

The parallel with the nearby Salford Quays development is interesting because the responses of residents have been reportedly similar to both. The NDC voluntary sector support worker, a Salfordian, argued that local people felt alienated by such a huge development as Salford Quays feeling it was not *“for them”* and not *“within their grasp”*. Some residents, illustrated by this exchange between two residents, also expressed this sense of exclusion from this more local development:

Jim: (shouts to another female resident) *“What do you think of New Deal?”*

Female: *“where’s the money gone?”*

Jim: *“Thank you. Loads of fucking posh houses up there.”* (Points)

Female: *“Why can’t we have them?”*

Jim: *“Oh no there not for you! (sarcastic) You can’t afford them, you’re all the scrotes. Fuck off, you’re getting nothing!”*

Jim: (aside) *“That’s how they treat us at the end of the day, it’s why we are the way we are.”*
(‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)

There has been an undoubted emboldening of some local residents, but mainly in response to the threat of demolition. Petitions were organised, campaigns co-ordinated, officials challenged and banners hung around the affected estates. However, in spite of this spirited resistance, for some it was unfortunate that people only got ‘community’ minded when opposing something – *“that people only get motivated when they are angry”* (‘Cath’, resident; over 60). Moreover, the process of ‘emboldening’ is structured along age, gender, ethnic, territorial and housing lines. Some of the complexities of this collective resistance will be discussed below and its usefulness as an exemplar of social capital explored. Nevertheless, as illustrated above NDC’s presence *has* stimulated rather ad hoc examples of social capital and a sense of ownership (though not uniformly). Not that NDC has proactively altered the consciousness of local people, but that the (perceived) contamination of the available ‘community’ rhetoric of NDC by the development plans has created conflict in which a (limited) sense of ‘community’ and networks of social capital have been stimulated and the supposed ‘dependency culture’ has actually been indirectly challenged.¹⁶ It is an example of NDC’s presence influencing the relations and experiences of local people (even if it is just about engendering a mentality of entitlement and attachment), although it is probably the case that NDC’s official intention of strengthening and ‘building’ community by empowering residents was intended to be more prosaic than the example given above. That is, it is

¹⁶ However, it is unclear whether we can translate this resistance into a challenge to paternalistic government per se. Paternalism or over-governing was not the major issue, more the perceived neglect of council estates and withdrawal of social housing.

doubtful that New Labour's 'active communities' are supposed to bite the hand that feeds (as government would probably see it) and challenge or undermine the business of government.

Moreover, it illustrates the inherent tension specific to NDC's goals. By promoting responsibility and the empowerment of local people, there is the possibility of residents legitimately blocking initiatives and developments NDC deems necessary or desirable for that area. For example,

"...inscribed within the process of community participation are opportunities for resistance. Communities are not passive recipients of these initiatives, and although the balance of forces are weighted against them, there are possibilities to contest the ways in which initiatives are actualised at a local level within particular spaces; that is to pervert and bend the technologies of government in ways that the authors of particular programmes did not intend." (Atkinson 2003; 106)

This tension also has implications for the concept of 'community' itself, which will be explored in the next chapter. That is, if a group of residents protest against, say, a drug treatment centre, is this an example of empowered citizens owning their 'community'? Or does it illustrate a complete *lack* of 'community', exemplified by a lack of togetherness and empathy for fellow residents? Moreover, what does this mean for tackling exclusion? Could the empowerment rhetoric of NDC prevent essential services or facilities being built by legitimizing 'NIMBYism,' thus, posing serious questions for NDC's appropriateness for tackling exclusion.

In Salford, NDC's relationship with the 'community' it serves is a strained and often oppositional one. Beyond a few key 'community' voices, there is very little involvement from local people and even that tends to be limited to participating in surveys, polls and questionnaires. NDC does perform an enabling role, with structures in place to facilitate 'community' building through funding and advice for potential groups and network opportunities for existing groups within the NDC zone. However, probably NDC's biggest influence on 'community' involvement and social capital has been a rhetorical one. It is its rhetoric that has sanctioned opposition to redevelopment plans for the area, and made for a situation in which residents and NDC managers are engaged in a struggle over the identity and future of the area. In an ironic twist, this struggle produced a scenario where the chief executive of NDC had to praise a residents group, via the NDC newsletter, who had successfully blocked NDC's own demolition plans.

5.5.4 Key Developments since NDC began

Earlier in this chapter, it was stated that an awareness of what NDC had done in practice was an important additional factor in understanding how it views ‘community’ and agency and tackles social exclusion. A limited amount of space will be given to these developments, but this remains an important dimension because it illustrates how NDC has altered the landscape of the neighbourhood and facilitated changes in service delivery. An awareness of changes is also important because some of these developments will also crop up later in discussions of processes and relations between residents.

According to the chair of the partnership board, the biggest success of NDC so far has been the setting up of a Community Health Action Partnership (CHAP) in cooperation with the local Primary Care Trust (PCT). Now a company limited by guarantee, CHAP was initially a project set up by some local people with varying health needs to manage local health services and try to ensure the health needs of local residents were responded to adequately. Out of CHAP, an ‘expert patient’ programme has been set up in the local health and wellbeing centre (another NDC-related development) as well as a support group for diabetic residents. Two new health centres (incorporating GPs, midwife services, nutritionists, homeopathy to name a few) are planned for the two wards within the NDC zone and will be managed by CHAP. However, one community representative pointed out that whereas CHAP had tried to ensure that they complimented each other, the PCT have intervened to the effect that one of the centres *“does not meet community aspirations”*.

The success of CHAP was defined by local people getting involved in managing services to ensure their effectiveness. Indeed local Member of Parliament and Government Minister Hazel Blears used CHAP as an example of how to place ‘communities in control’ in a recent publication. (2003; 37) NDC helped facilitate this control by supplying the decision making and funding mechanisms through which it could happen. This is in keeping with the deputy co-ordinator’s vision for NDC – to produce *“greater involvement and ownership of services”*.

Therefore, there seems to be two different aspects of social exclusion that the NDC’s practical developments are designed to challenge. Firstly, the idea that genuine inclusion involves people having a stake in their local ‘community’ and the services that they use (illustrated by CHAP). Secondly, and more typically, that it involves delivering or improving basic services and facilities. As one might expect, the second aspect has been more easily identified and achieved than the first, with CHAP being an exception rather than the rule. Most ‘positive’ developments have been tangible new or improved services or facilities. Most significant new developments since 2001 are listed in appendix 5 under their relevant programme. They range

from grants for new ‘community’ and voluntary groups, the construction of a communal garden area and the building of a new secondary school with resource centre attached.

The crucial thing about these projects, schemes and services is the mix of provision and the differing ways in which NDC is involved. Sometimes, NDC provides all or some of the financing and acts as a purchaser of services, other times the organisation and expertise. The overall goal however, is partnership, whereby NDC facilitates the running of services, but leaves the management to residents, voluntary sector agencies or statutory agencies. The primary care trust, Salford University, Prince’s Trust and environmental group Groundwork are all recent examples of NDC partners.

5.6 Conclusion

Several of these developments have produced controversy, in spite of their apparent positive nature. Some of these controversies are examined further in later chapters. NDC-related developments range from mundane improvements (such as extra street cleaning – also controversial) to quite profound changes in the role of residents in controlling their lives. Indeed, some of those who have engaged with the process *have* found it empowering just to feel some sense of involvement in the future of their neighbourhood:

“What has actually happened is that over the past three years, I’ve actually gained a lot of respect from all the councillors...there are 5 councillors I could name... and the local MP, who is a minister of state, who are extremely supportive of me personally and that has actually come about through the New Deal process and through the activity that I undertook within it. I think that part of that is recognising that the commitment that I have given but it is also about me learning more of the political game. Because you do have to play it. You just cant away with it. I hate it but you have to have it. I would say that over the past three years I’ve changed as a person...I know that I’ve grown substantially and I am not being immodest in saying that because I think it needs to be said because I think that it does recognise that the process can empower people.” (‘Bill’, resident and community representative; 21-60)

However, there are another strata of local people - those not involved or disinclined to get involved in the process - those residents who are largely just *recipients* of the NDC process, whose input is limited to voicing their opinions about the problems of their area (as demanded by surveys such as the PA consultation). Have the lives of those people – the majority, not empowered in any meaningful way through involvement in the *process* – been improved by additional services and facilities? It was necessary to identify the changes wrought by NDC,

but the needs of this thesis are such that making a judgement about the impact and effectiveness of those changes requires a consideration of the diverse ways in which residents live and experience their 'community' and their social exclusion. That is, any developments (and apparent improvements) in the area should be examined, not in a vacuum, but in a context of a heterogeneous neighbourhood and often conflicting social agents. This realm of experience, which comprised generating data about experiences of and relations between local residents, will be explored in the next chapter.

The next chapter will build on this and the previous chapters to engage in an exposition of data relating to residents accounts and experiences of NDC and the 'community' generally. This chapter began this process by firstly providing a description of the fieldwork experience and some of the problems encountered in negotiating the 'community'. It then went on to explore some of the data generated pertaining to NDC, its relationship with local people and the developments it has facilitated in the area. This has provided a robust account of NDC that will benefit subsequent discussions of resident's experiences as well as offer some insight into the impact it has had in Salford.

Chapter Six

Exposition of data relating to NDC residents

6.1 Introduction

Whereas the last chapter focused on NDC's practices, developments, and relationship with the 'community', this chapter will illustrate some of the data generated with and about the residents of the NDC area. This is consistent with the key epistemological position of this thesis that prioritises 'lay' or 'grass root' accounts as the key to exploring the NDC programme and New Labour's overarching 'community' agenda. The exposition of these accounts will be done in three main sections corresponding with my 'big' research questions. To recap, these questions were formulated in response to the 'ACE' models that I have posited underpin NDC, with one question relating to each of the ACE components - agency, 'community' and exclusion. In this chapter, the resulting data will be split up into another handy triplet of headings - Interest, 'Community' and Exclusion or 'ICE' and each section will use data to explore various aspects of the relevant model. For example, the chapter begins with data that illustrates the extent of interest and involvement of residents in their 'community' and NDC – a central part of the examination of the model of agency that New Labour supports.

6.2 Interest (agency)

Research question: *What interest and involvement is there in NDC and the community from local residents?*

As discussed above, NDC's model of agency effectively sets out a template of how residents should and do behave in relation to their 'community', other residents and NDC. Every contour of this model cannot be explored with one research question, therefore the dynamics of local social relations - a key contour - will be predominantly addressed in the 'community' section (6.3) and re-emerge in later discussions of social exclusion. Therefore, this question is focused on a specific aspect of the model of agency - generating data about the extent of engagement, amongst residents, with the NDC process as well as non-NDC organisations – those that can loosely be judged to be part of the fabric of the neighbourhood. Moreover, this question allowed for data to be generated around a sense of commitment to the 'community'.

That is, what level of attachment to the Government's definition of 'community' (the NDC zone) could be discerned and what level of attachment to fellow NDC residents? The key concepts of 'interest' and 'involvement' were the basis for data generation, deployed to question directly the assumptions contained within New Labour's model of agency.

6.2.1 Involvement in the 'community'

The previous section has already covered most of the relevant statistics in terms of attendance at meetings and involvement in the NDC process – that is, limited engagement (as I witnessed for myself) with the official mechanisms of NDC such as task groups and the community committee. Indicative, it seems of a culture of disengagement that pervades the relationship between the individual and (local) state. Indeed, the latest annual report for this NDC shows that the number of residents who had even heard of NDC is still only 82% (up from 63% in 2002) (2005; 5), meaning there are around 1800 residents who are not aware of the programme. Moreover, there exists a degree of suspicion around NDC (due to its close ties with the local authority), some disillusionment due to the slow pace of change and consultation fatigue and some outright hostility most often expressed in relation to the redevelopment plans, but also due to the perceived exclusion of local residents from paid employment within the programme.

Beyond these trends however, there are forms of 'community' involvement that could still be considered representative of the kind of civic engagement (and 'positive' agency) New Labour is keen to promote, what Mooney and Fyfe describe as 'good' social capital (2004; 19). Indeed, the NDC 'Oscars' are designed to reward 'community' activity, even though that activity might occur outwith the official NDC channels. Therefore, residents might not be involved with official NDC mechanisms, but there are a variety of 'community' groups, tenant / residents associations and 'community' businesses that indicate a desire on the part of some to form alliances and bonds with other residents. In addition, there are informal support networks between local people, illustrating another brand of civic engagement. For example, the benefits of 'good' neighbours was mentioned several times by residents such as an older man who expressed gratitude for having 'good' neighbours who will do things for him since he lives alone. Likewise, another older woman described her estate as 'very neighbourly', despite her neighbours' lack of interest in NDC specifically. Another example included a local woman:

AW: Ok. Would you say there was a sense of community?

C: *Oh definitely, yeah. Everybody in my little area, we all look out for one another, watch our homes you know.*

AW: *What about beyond your immediate area, would you say? Say in Charlestown as a whole, is everyone on the same side or is there...*

C: *Oh I would say yeah, definitely. Cos we've all had the same problems. So you basically face the same things in your daily life don't you? ('Jane', resident; 21-60)*

In her view, the problems of the area (beyond her street or estate) are coped with via a hardening of 'community' bonds. Another resident proclaimed the strength of 'community' feeling within his estate that had been harnessed to set up a residents association:

"[Names estate] residents association. It would be good for you to come down and see what community support we've got. One thing you can say about this area is we have got good community, we all know each and we've known each other for years so we can fall back on each other." ('Jim', resident; 21-60, brackets added)

Tenants and residents associations are probably the clearest expression of this type of sentiment. At the last count, there were six across the NDC zone, each representing a distinct estate or area. The residents meetings I observed were reasonably well attended (21 at the first, 18 at the second and 13 at the third) although the first group were due to disband because no one would takeover the chair from the woman standing down. There were also comments made at the third meeting about the unusually high turnout that month and the demolition plans seemed to have a radicalising effect across the area generally, possibly distorting the 'normal' levels of 'community' activity during my time in the field. Another group, mentioned in chapter five, was being forced to 'officially' disband due to conflict with neighbours despite one youth worker telling me that this particular estate was, *"...close knit and fairly unrepresentative of other NDC areas"* ('Paul', youth worker; 21-60)

Although these groups were relatively well attended, they tended to be dominated by women highlighting a possible gender imbalance in 'community' involvement.¹ If so, this would reflect findings from other studies. For example,

¹ A community worker confirmed this trend, arguing that community / voluntary groups tend to be dominated by women until they become 'big', then *"men arrive on the scene"*. This may be a similar dynamic to that identified by Bea Campbell's (1993) study of urban unrest. In this case however it is an *engagement* with 'community' politics that is the context for an assertion of masculine power over women rather than the defiant or destructive rejection of local politics that Campbell found.

'Men described the sense of belonging they derived from participating in its various lodges, pubs and clubs, while women talked about the integrative potential and strength to be drawn from community networks. Community thus had a different meaning and was associated with different practices for men and women in coalmining regions...' (Parry 2005; 155)

Parry goes on to suggest that the sort of 'community' work conducted by women may derive from their traditional role as informal care workers and that this relationship between care and 'community' amounts to a '*local social organization of labour*'. (2005; 161) The role of 'labour market positioning' (Parry 2005; 164) in influencing the extent and nature of residents' 'community' involvement was demonstrated in my study by the proportion of retirees involved in official NDC business. Furthermore, one male respondent mentioned how he had been 'laid off' from his manual job and was officially unemployed. He implied his energies were concentrated at that time on organizing 'community' events and challenging NDC. However, he spoke about how his assertive trade union training was not conducive to NDC's desire for 'consensual communities':

'When I used to work, I used to work in an industry that was run by the unions, but I used to work in an environment which worked together with management and basically, my behaviour or me saying 'that's not right' was looked upon as a good thing. I wasn't seen as a maverick.' ('Jim', 21-60)

6.2.2 Impact of territorialism

Despite the NDC zone's clear outer boundaries, it can be divided into five or six sub-territories within those boundaries. These territorial divisions tend to be constructed informally by residents, or by housing tenure, or by 'natural' boundaries such as the main road or river. They are central to understanding the nature of social relations within the zone as a whole and contribute to how inhabitants of each territory experience 'community', exclusion and the regeneration process. It is also a determinant of the nature and extent of 'community' involvement. For example, at one of the residents meetings I attended, there were identifiably different agendas and concerns depending on the 'turf' one was on. One group, predominantly made up of residents who were owner-occupiers expressed anger at fly tipping.² Anger that seemed to be underpinned by an idea of 'deservingness' predicated on

² The illegal dumping of refuse on unused or communal ground.

their status as homeowners. For example, "*We pay good money for nice houses and live in a tip*" (male resident and meeting attendee; 21-60)

Moreover, this home owning status seemed to be used to legitimise claims on NDC and the local council. It also informed discussions about neighbourhood watch schemes ("*you get lower insurance*") – an example of 'community' engagement shaped by defending the 'respectability' of the estate.³

By contrast, another meeting, comprised predominantly of council tenants was dominated by worries about the threatened demolition of council housing. The residents in attendance discussed ways in which this could be avoided such as suggesting alternative housing management arrangements and vetting of potential tenants to root out 'troublesome' people or families who undermine the 'community' fabric. Those who attended (therefore getting involved in the 'community') did so because of a threat to their houses.

It seems that different territories within the same NDC zone contain a different set of experiences and challenges for the inhabitants, which shapes, in turn, the way they do 'community' and how their 'community' should behave - either defensively to protect their interests, or assertively to challenge decisions. This also illustrates the heterogeneous reality of 'community' (as NDC defines it) in which residents do not always share needs and interests and thus, the problem with making assumptions about their willingness to embrace the communal and unite beyond their own defined space or 'community'. The reality is that 'community' involvement is shaped by inhabiting that space. This is a theme we shall return to below.

6.2.3 A spirit of 'community'?

In terms of a 'spirit' of community across the NDC zone as a whole (as opposed to within specific estates), there is some data to suggest that there is very limited interaction between territories and a lack of attachment to that overarching zone. For example, one female resident and community representative I interviewed began by stating how neighbourly and close knit her estate was, but went on to admit there was little contact with other local areas. The youth workers also spoke of this attitude amongst young people, where there was an almost tribal quality to their identification with certain local spaces or 'patch'. Their individual and group identities were partly constructed through the creation and

³ According to the NDC National Evaluation team at CRESR, in Salford homeowners account for 40% of households in the NDC zone compared with 70% across England. 40% live in local authority housing within the zone compared to 20% nationally.

maintenance of territorial boundaries. The spatial component of the construction and maintenance of youth identities may be obvious, but it does question the artificial construction of an NDC 'community' and creates some problems in terms of the regeneration of that space. That is, if NDC imposes spatial boundaries that are incongruent with those already in existence, those constructed by local residents, there could be implications of that for successfully tackling exclusion.

Another interesting perspective on this issue was offered by students of the local university that I interviewed. None were from the area, but lived in halls of residence in the centre of the NDC zone. They identified, as illustrated by this exchange, not only their own sense of exclusion from everyday 'community' life, but a general lack of 'community' spirit amongst locals,

"C: We're not outsiders. I think we're just different aren't we. Two different groups of people – them outside the halls then there's us inside it really. That's what I mean, not having a local pub or owt, you won't get any community spirit between the two anyway."

J: "Rather than wanting to be part of the community, I don't think I would want to be accepted as part of the community generally and being from a long way away. I am not here, you know, to be part of the community; I am here to be educated..."

C: "...From just talking to people I know again it seems like there, I don't think they think there's much community spirit round here. I don't know why really, can't say, because you only talk about specific incidents when you do. It's either something really bad has happened or something really good but I don't know. The Prince of Wales (local pub)...I know people from round here who won't even drink in there. And that's the nearest pub to here... and even locals round here won't go in there so. Our cleaner, she's from Salford all her life and she says she won't go in any of pubs round here. I think that suggests what type of area it is."

Their dubiousness about local 'community' spirit is rooted in a general feeling of unfriendliness, as expressed by the pub example. That is, if locals do not feel able to socialise there, that indicates a vulnerability based on a lack of trust. This point about factors that may illustrate a lack of, not just 'formal' engagement in civic life (such as volunteer work or community activity) but a lack of 'spirit' amongst local people, will be further explored below. Some examples are given of negative processes between people, which undermines

any aspirations or analysis of this space as a ‘community’ inhabited by reflexive social agents with a sense of attachment to their locality and fellow residents - two factors upon which NDC’s model of agency is founded. To re-quote a young male resident: “*Residents are always at each others throats.*” (‘James’, resident; under 21)

There is no question that there is some involvement in local groups, whether it’s tenant associations, parent toddler groups or lunch clubs for older people, within this neighbourhood. Indeed, for many people, their immediate locality is the primary space they inhabit. It is here that their key relationships are forged and where their social exclusion is experienced. Hence, the formation of such local services and networks, (many of which are organised on a voluntary basis) and a corresponding sense of ‘community’ based around these services (a good example being the parent toddler group where users develop a bond around a shared experience of being a parent in this area). However, involvement tends to be limited to specific groups, which have a narrow (possibly gendered, racialized) membership, such as older people’s lunch clubs, or narrow agenda, such as housing issues. In other words, a rather superficial bond and one that is certainly not applicable to the ‘community’ as a whole. Interest in the wider ‘community’ *has* been bolstered by campaigns to block demolition plans, but in uneven ways, as we shall see later. Overall, residents seem to experience different ‘communities’, with interests that occasionally overlap. In addition, there are a range of contestations and conflicts (illustrated by ‘James’) that produce differential experiences of ‘community’ and exclusion. The next section will explore these in more detail.

6.3 Community

The second part of the ‘ICE’ formulation of data is ‘community’ and the extent to which it is heterogeneous and contested. It was explained above that some examples of ‘positive’ ‘community’ in which there are shared values and experiences do exist within the NDC zone, whether that is the existence of ‘good’ neighbours, a local voluntary group or church attendance.⁴ However, not only do these tend to be small pockets that are limited to a certain space or group, they also appear to occur alongside processes of conflict and contestation that combine to undermine New Labour’s belief in the existence and possibility of ‘community’. This model promotes an ideal of ‘community’ as an entity with a collective moral and behavioural code (except for the deviant few), inhabited by active citizens co-operating for the communal good. Moreover, it includes certain presumptions about the extent

⁴ An interesting parallel: the local Catholic church regularly gets 200 people at Sunday mass according to a local woman. The local Anglican service will get 20-30 on a Sunday according to another churchgoing respondent.

of shared needs and values and the potential for unity within the NDC space. The ‘big’ research question designed to explore this further was:

To what extent is the NDC community a contested space?

The concept of contestation is central to this section in that it informs all other discussions about conflict and division. Several authors have emphasised the contested and diverse nature of spatial ‘communities’ (e.g. Brent 1997, Foley and Martin 2000, Dinham 2005) and some have examined the implications for developing local networks of support and trust in heterogeneous localities (e.g. Taylor 2000b). The first point to make is that contestation is a relational process because it involves examples of the comparison of two or more sets of values or perspectives. Additionally, it could be an example of overt contestation, not just of viewpoints, but either everyday conflict between people or groups, or space, whereby groups of residents clash over the use of some communal area, facility or territory. Therefore, there are two separate spheres of knowledge that can be used as data: that which relates to contrasting values (values relating to needs, both of individuals and of the neighbourhood as a whole, about NDC, or about other social groups) and data documenting explicit conflicts between residents.

As described in chapter four, all my interviews were conducted with the aid of a ‘priorities sheet’ that was utilised as a ‘hook’ upon which to generate data about people’s needs. These were then compared and any evidence of contestation noted. Obviously, there was a wide range of needs expressed by respondents. Although one community representative thought the needs of the area as a whole were self-evident,

“I think there are so many different aspirations because there are so many different issues to aspire to, or about. But, in general terms, I think there is an awful lot of consensus about the problems of the area. Because they are the problems of the area, and they can see them!” (‘Bill’, resident and community representative; 21-60)

One of the tasks when interviewing, highlighted by this quote, was to ensure respondents did not talk just about a vague notion of the ‘needs of the area’ as this tended to be around environmental things like cleaning streets or generalised comments about poor shopping amenities. What made such data meaningful was if it was related to their own personal experience. For example, older male residents spoke of a poor bus service in their part of the NDC zone. An issue exacerbated by their age, inability to drive and the cost of alternatives,

such as taxis. This gave a more productive insight into how the lack of a facility affected certain groups and what other factors contributed to their needs.

This exploration of ‘community’ and the extent of its contestation will be split into three parts. Firstly, the use of two examples of conflicting needs will illustrate how individuals and groups within the same space do not necessarily share the same perspective and that the contestation is rooted in different social locations within that space. Secondly, another example will be used to illustrate that contestation is not just about needs or physical space, but also around an idea of territory and associated constructions of ‘deservingness’ and ‘belonging’. Finally, data will be explored that illustrates how contestations of physical space add another dimension to the destabilizing of ‘community’

6.4 Local conflicting needs

6.4.1 Policing

The first example is policing of the area. Each respondent was asked about their feelings on the policing of the NDC zone and about ‘community safety and security’ generally. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the young people interviewed were almost unanimous in their verdict:

“enough of them round ‘ere” (male resident; under 21)

“community safety and security? What the fuck do we want that for? Got loads of them (police) round here” (male resident; under 21)

“all the po po do is moan, ‘nough of them round here” (female resident; under 21)

There was no appetite for a stronger policing presence, although some did recognise the importance of community security generally. This in contrast to the perception of older residents that police were ineffectual, if not invisible: *“Police? Who are they, aliens?”* (male resident; over 60)

The group of older men particularly wanted greater police visibility to prevent youths riding on motorbikes “terrorising the neighbourhood” - an example, not just of conflicting perceptions of policing, but also of conflicting ‘community’ in which a broader struggle over values and behaviour between groups shapes their priorities for the police and other agencies. These kinds of struggles tend not to be realized day to day because young and old, for example, experience little interaction, but can be manifest in contestations of space (see below) or in conflicts over how to regenerate that space, such as policing.

One older female echoed the sentiment of a lack of police presence in the area when she recounted this story: *“I saw a policeman once and asked, ‘can I ask you a question. Are you a mirage?’”*

This different perception was confirmed by the NDC sector sergeant:

“Yeah, because the elderly want to see high profile police for obviously the security feeling. The youths want us to get off their backs. They are, erm, always on the streets and we’re always moving them on because of all the complaints.”

Whereas young people feel that they are over policed, many residents experience a degree of vulnerability, especially in the evening which creates a desire for increased security, whether it is CCTV cameras, curfews on young people or a more visible police presence. Curfews, suggested in the PA report, were a controversial topic for some young people. Two respondents identified their impracticality, one arguing that his mother wanted him out of the house *“when she comes in from work”*, or after dinner.

One young male made the point that they would,

“...cause chaos – everyone would break them and the police would be round arresting everybody and putting them in jail.” (Male resident; under 21)

One adult respondent - a youth worker, was against the idea, arguing that young people were blamed for many of the problems in the area and that curfews were not only unworkable, but do not deal with the problem,

“Young people should be taught responsibility and enabled to improve their own lives, not punished, especially when marginalised...a breach of human rights really. If you said black people or gay people are not allowed out after 9pm then there would be an outcry, but because they are young it seems to be okay.” (‘Paul’, youth worker; 21-60)

The suggestions to the PA team for curfews, a ‘three strikes and you are out’ policy and so on illustrates how it is the ‘problem’ of young people that is part of this desire for more or better policing. This is not a difference of opinion per se, but part of a deeper question about the relationship of young people to the rest of their ‘community’ and the behavioural expectations to be placed upon them. This echoes what Lee has suggested regarding children being

constructed as 'out of place' if they are on the streets and outside adult supervision. He notes how they are blamed for social problems and treated as '*a well-spring of social disorder*' (2001; 69). It also reflects the work done by Phillips and Smith on incivility and how young people's occupation of public space tends to mean they are assumed to be the worst perpetrators requiring the most surveillance (2003; 105). This is in contrast to their findings that illustrate how incivility is common across all ages – including those considered 'respectable' citizens (2003; 104).

To add complexity to this division, the student respondents, despite being young people, were in favour of increased police presence because of their perceived vulnerability as 'outsiders' in a 'rough' area:

C: Probably impossible to police areas like this what are full of scallies. It's known as a rough area so. They could probably do more...Seems strange but the only time I see police walking round Salford is always in the middle of the afternoon.

J: During the day yeah.

C: where if they said if any police walking round on the beat had to go to about say eight nine o'clock on a night. Is that one there? [policeman walks past the window] Middle of afternoon walking about you know what I mean? There is not much goes on. If they were gonna walk about around ten o'clock, eleven o'clock when jobs start, well its not jobs, its young kids, if they were walking about at them times, or even if young kids thought there was a heavier police presence then there'd maybe not be antisocial behaviour.

AW: Do you agree with that?

J: Yeah, I think it goes on later than 10 o'clock into the middle of the night. If you've got to get somewhere – to uni or the computer room, or if you are just coming home from a night out you know you are completely unprotected you haven't anyone who is around who can try and stop anything. There is no police, no cameras to pick up anything to inform other people. You've just got no security whatsoever unless you're on the phone.

Another young male who was resident at a local hostel for homeless young people conveyed an appetite for increased security for the hostel – more security and cameras to protect from

other local young males who have attacked the centre in the past. However, this was tempered by a rejection of more police, *“Don’t want more of them round here!”* Another interesting difference around policing came from within the refugee community in the NDC zone. The local asylum seeker support worker described to me how some African refugees were very wary of the police, whilst refugees from other areas viewed them as essential to their sense of security.

We can see therefore, that depending upon the social location of the groups or individuals concerned within the neighbourhood, there are differing attitudes to the policing issue. However, most (including students) seem united in their perception of a need for protection from local ‘scallies’ or deviant young people. It is apparent from speaking to young people that they feel the effects of that perception, feeling, as they do, over-policed.

6.4.2 Redevelopment

Another conflicting need relates to the redevelopment plans for the NDC zone. The plans include a programme of demolition of council stock, renovation of other housing and development plans for building private apartments on the riverside. As mentioned above, these plans have created a lot of resistance from some residents, specifically those affected by demolition. A poster campaign was launched and made visible around the affected estates once residents were aware of the plans. Slogans on posters and graffiti such as “Not another urban snatch”, “Renovation not relocation” and “No to New Deal” came to dominate some parts of the NDC zone. The local authority removed the posters from the main roadsides, but according to one resident, were too afraid to remove those in the estates. This resistance was successful in some streets in reversing demolition plans by organising petitions and surveying local opinion:

“What happened up here, they wanted to knock down 30 odd old pit houses most of them privately owned, but they were having none of it this community and they turned round and said, ‘fuck off’ you’re not having any of it. They did the same surveys we did and our last survey came back ‘we don’t wanna go’, so they couldn’t get them out cos I find out if you stick together they cant get you out never mind what they say”.

(‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)

In general, opinion was polarized around demolition plans. The older male group agreed that NDC was *“demolishing perfectly good houses”*. Another individual older male respondent

argued new houses were about “yuppifying”⁵ the area and spoke of neighbours opposite whose houses were being demolished, but were against it since they had lived there “for 40 years and brought up families”. Similarly, the Youth Service organized a consultation between NDC and young people to discuss the redevelopment plans. According to one youth worker, the young people began the meeting saying new housing was a bad idea – people have lived there all their lives and so on. NDC staff countered this by offering a positive argument that it was the same ‘community’, just new houses. In response, one youth then asked, “Will we have to buy them”, to which the NDC representative reportedly had no reply. Another youth worker claimed young people were, in general, ‘not happy’ at the plans, although none of the youths I interviewed mentioned the plans specifically, some even argued for better housing: “We need new houses, the place looks like fucking Beirut” (Female resident; under 21)

In the PA report, the initial consultation document upon which NDC was based, it clearly states that there was “no great support for house building”. Moreover, the Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment of the Salford NDC states that there is “no appetite for demolition, just renovation”.

Nevertheless, there were some respondents who were either positive about the plans, or accepted them as a necessary step. For example,

“I think they are fantastic. I’d love to live in a river side house, I’ve got no chance! [laughs] I’d love to live in one. Sit and listen to the river lapping at night? Ooh what! How can people disagree with that?” (‘Jane’, resident; 21-60)

Another older female resident ‘Cath’ said she could see why it is being done and is “not bothered about it”. This may or may not have been because her (bought) house was unaffected by the plans, but she argued that the river was a good resource that should be utilised and the new houses would be ‘nicer’ and bring in more families to the area. She suggested that the area will be, “...nice when it is finished as long as they don’t run out of money.” (‘Cath’, resident; over 60)

She continued by saying that many people are upset which she can understand, but it will be good for the area.

⁵ This respondent was referring to the acronym ‘YUPPY’ meaning young, upwardly mobile person.

The conflicting perspectives over the redevelopment plans are illustrated by the obstacles faced by those trying to organise resistance:

“All these houses here up to there, encompassing the old people home as well. Not here [points to row of 3 houses on the road front]. These people here don’t even wanna live around here. You can’t help that if they don’t want to be helped. So we never took this on because they didn’t want to know... We did ask them and they said fuck off, couldn’t get involved, didn’t want to be involved...” (‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)

The contestation around redevelopment seemed to exacerbate a division between tenants and homeowners in their responses to the plans. For example, at one residents meeting, there was a report from a delegation who had attended a NDC physical environment task group, in hope of expressing resistance to demolition. However, one of the ‘delegates’ reported that the NDC meeting had been dominated by homeowners with few tenants present, therefore there was little support for a ‘non-owner’ view on the plans. Perhaps unsurprisingly therefore and despite the evidence of collective resistance in some estates, it would be wrong to convey an impression of unity and agreement about the plans across the board. For example, an older female resident with close ties to the local Catholic church told me how in a specific estate, many people were angry at the way the plans were handled and were trying to form a new residents group. However, she made the point that many older people on the estate whom she knows, cannot get involved, maybe because of their age, or do not want to get involved. This point illustrates the caution required when considering the apparent ‘community spirit’ of such resistance. There will be a mixture of responses to such plans and differing levels of enthusiasm for ‘fighting back’. Moreover, it is unclear how much of a lasting impact these examples of social capital will have beyond resisting the redevelopment plans. Is it an isolated example led by a small group of militant residents, or will it be a catalyst for a sustained commitment to the locality and ‘ownership’ of their neighbourhood? It seems unlikely given the evident lack of agreement about the plans and the range of differing needs exhibited by residents.

Some of the implications of this contestation for ‘building community’ and ‘tackling exclusion’ will be addressed in the next chapter.

6.5 ‘Space Invaders’⁶

The final example of a form of contestation within the NDC zone is around the presence of ‘outsider’ groups within the neighbourhood. There are three main groups about

⁶ This is a term I am using to express the ‘outsider’ status of these groups. It was not used by any residents during our discussions.

which data was generated – students, asylum seekers and private sector housing tenants. Respondents did discuss some of these issues, but unfortunately, it proved difficult to generate data with the ‘outsiders’ themselves with which to compare and contrast. Therefore, what follows in the main, are the attitudes and values of ‘indigenous’ residents.

In general, the basis for this contestation was around a concept of claims on a territory. Some of these contestations did manifest in actual real-life conflict over physical space (described in the next section), but there is a deeper level in which this phenomenon is rooted. That level is one where local residents feel, *psychologically*, that their space has been invaded, producing feelings of resentment or being threatened and so on, which then get expressed in ways that construct such people or groups as a ‘problem’ or as ‘other’. This process can be termed ‘social closure’ and is a well-documented trend in ‘communities’ where there is mobility amongst residents or the existence of transitory populations. For example,

“Certain groups of a community may affect closure which is directed against other community subgroups. Communities are not necessarily socially or economically homogeneous, but may develop their own internal stratification systems.” (Neuwirth 1969 in Warwick & Littlejohn 1992; 13)

6.5.1 Students

If we consider students first, there is a large student community within the zone most of whom live within the halls of residence complex, safely contained within high walls, fencing and a 24-hour manned security entrance. Although some residents expressed no opinion on their presence and one was even positive about them, there was also a common perception of them as privileged, not contributing to or as a threat to *their* ‘community’. For example, one residents group discussed how a part of their estate had been sold to the university who have built student flats. They argued that this was “*destroying whole communities*”. Similarly, a female resident had this to say,

“See it used to be just student accommodation, but then when the students were on vacation, they let the flats off to different, other students from countries who want visit and you know, they come over and...But you’ve got all these gorgeous flats that have been built, specifically for students, I know they caused a terrible lot of resentment when they first went up.” (‘Jane’, resident; 21-60)

She also talked about the perceived lack of contribution made to the area by these incomers,

J: Salford has become 'student city'. I mean that's what everybody calls it. Erm, am I right in saying they don't pay poll tax?

AW: No they don't.

J: So, there is not a lot of money generated by people who come to university in Salford and when they've done the training, passed their degrees or what, they bugger off to their own places of where they've come from. Whether it be Leeds, Birmingham, Zimbabwe, wherever! So there is quite a lot of resentment towards students in Salford... are they offering anything to the community? I mean you get certain factions of universities who do, they go out of their way to promote good terms between themselves and you know, the people they're involved with. But then most people don't. They just go to they're little bedsits at night, shut the door and that's it. ('Jane', resident; 21-60)

It has already been discussed how the students interviewed did not see themselves as part of the 'community' anyway, nor did they expect to. However, they did talk about the experiences and perceptions of the 'host community':

'Yeah, I've heard stories of couple students going into the Prince of Wales [local pub] and after two pints they've said, 'yeah can you leave we don't want any trouble in here', so obviously landlords must know there was some hostility.' ('Colin', student; under 21)

Later the conversation returned to local pubs - communal spaces where both groups could interact:

M: Haven't met many of them (local people). We got warned by the police not to go into any pubs round here so, probably I'd say no, they don't want us.

AW: Anyone else?

C: Erm, people I talk to in betting shop are always friendly enough

AW: Yeah?

C: They don't have a problem saying 'oh students this, students that', not that I've found. When I lived in Newcastle, it was all talk normally, but when they got to know you individually, they were alright really. I think its just we get labelled as 'we don't like students', but when they do meet you 'oh you're alright'. I think it's just a stigma attached. So when I've met people round here, usually in the betting shop, they're alright. They're like us in a way, they're sick of yobs round here more than owt."

The last comment highlights what could be the psychological or rhetorical process involved in labelling students as 'undeserving' residents whereas, in reality, relations are quite cordial. Nevertheless, there is evidence of explicit conflicts between students and local young people that will be explored further in the next section. Perhaps these conflicts might explain the bond that these students feel with some local (adult) residents, united in their dislike of 'yobs'. In the main however, students are seen as an alien presence, deserving of either exclusion from 'the community', or as targets for local misbehaviour. The PA report identified this insider /outsider division between the two groups, finding that many students do not feel 'part of the community', although the students I spoke to argued that they were not 'part' of the local community in any real sense, nor did they expect to be. This is to be expected, but their presence does induce these feelings in some residents and raises questions about what 'community' NDC is aimed at and whether it can it legitimately exclude students from the regeneration process.

6.5.2 Asylum seekers

The second group of 'space invaders' are asylum seekers. Recent media coverage of asylum and immigration has had many effects, but primarily it has helped politicise the issue to such an extent that it is inescapable when discussing 'community', particularly when a number of asylum seekers have been 'dispersed' to that locale. For example, a recent Daily Express article (headline: "The asylum seekers living in YOUR town") produced a list of the number of asylum seekers resident in each region in Britain. Across Salford as a whole, according to this report, there are 705 and, according to one local source, within the NDC zone itself, there are around 250 asylum seekers - only being 'dispersed' to the area over the last two years. This development has introduced a racialized component to understanding 'community' with a contrast between 'host' and immigrant 'communities'. Within the zone, this group tend to be housed in one of two types of accommodation; privately run hostels, subsidised by the government, or private sector housing.

Some respondents spoke compassionately about asylum seekers living in the area and expressed sorrow for them:

"I think round here, the majority do [accept them] because they don't cause anybody any bother. They keep themselves to themselves. I feel quite sorry for them at times."
(‘Jane’, resident; 21-60, brackets added)

Others acknowledged that there are some criteria for ‘accepting’ asylum seekers and that there *is* a feeling of animosity on the part of some:

K: If they are coming over to work then its ok.

AW: People in this area, do they feel animosity towards asylum seekers?

K: Yeah. They didn't at first when they first came because they felt sorry for them. But if they are just here to take advantage then... (‘Ken’, resident; over 60)

Therefore, notions of deservingness come into play in how the ‘community’ responds to this group of ‘incomers’. A notion also advocated in the student interview:

"M: I just go with work. If they want to come and live in our country, you have to work. You can't just expect to live on benefits for the rest of their life as some of them do, you read the papers that they do, they're the people that wind me up." (‘Matt’, student; under 21)

As with the student example, it appears, to an extent that perceptions of refugees are bound up with popular discourses around work and ‘contributing’ to the ‘community’ (cf Dwyer 2000; 175). It is on this basis that they are ‘othered’, rather than due to direct experience of individual people or actual evidence of their ‘scrounging’. Nevertheless, one resident did discuss actual conflict between the groups. He blamed any ‘problems’ on the local authority and their lack of foresight in how they handled the dispersal of asylum seekers in the area:

"Well, there is a problem with asylum seekers. They just put 'em in and they don't help them. They put 'em in and they expect people to get on...I think what happens is they don't put one in and leave one, its 5 or 6, 7 or 8 and I think people then feel intimidated and not in control of what's going on. So that causes problems." (‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)

Therefore, there is an acknowledgement that there are problems, but in effect, it is not the fault of local people. 'Jim' went on to describe how local youths attacked a hostel that housed some refugees, but that they did so because they felt intimidated by large numbers of asylum seekers in their area:

"What happened is, one month there turned up 40,50 Kosovan lads all 17-21, all in this building here and there was problems on the road with locals, there was conflict and then the next thing you know the local kids got a car, drove it through the doors, set the place on fire, while they were all in their basically. Next thing you know, apparently there was shots fired, all sorts of things. But that's cos, there was no consultation. People felt threatened because there was suddenly gangs of 10-15 Kosovans, Iraqis walking up the road, all single males, yeah? That's us there now [points]. These were all walking up the road causing problems - in gangs and I feel it was just too much at once...that there (the building) has only got planning permission to be used for student accommodation. So what they did with these 40-50 Iraqi / Kosovan males they gave them all student cards for ManCat [local college] for English so that's how they got over it. But they weren't students - they didn't even go to college. But they got a card." ('Jim', resident; 21-60)

It is unclear from this example whether refugees are being caught up in a wider struggle between local people and a supposedly unresponsive local authority, or if this issue of (non) consultation is an attempt by this resident to recast the 'asylum problem' into non-racist terms. What is clear is the gendered nature of this conflict. As 'Jim' states, it was men who were at the forefront of what was a territorial, not just racist dispute.

Some sympathy for the plight of asylum seekers was expressed at one residents meeting, with one person referring to the lack of support that they receive, although the majority of attendees rejected this sentiment claiming they get "teams of social workers". Another respondent confirmed that there had been some conflict produced by the location of refugees in the area:

M: "...it's right in my view and in the view of local government and central government about the housing of asylum seekers and you very quickly get into the 'not in my back yard' scenario of 'yes we will have them, so long as they don't live here' and you've got to struggle with that issue and in some ways, force the issue through. Because they have to be housed somewhere."

AW: "Is that a thing that you have encountered?"

M: "Yeah it certainly is around. Salford as a metropolitan authority, particularly the inner part of Salford is home to increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees and the New Deal area has taken its quota. 250 at the moment are in this area and erm, that is not without problem. Erm, we've had the backlash at times because of that. Because of who I am and the job that I do but also with the New Deal hat on, you feel you want to nip that in the bud and stand up to it straight away and actually say there are due processes through which we can deal with this and not through individuals taking it upon themselves to exclude" (Local vicar; 21-60)

Two NDC staff commented that the 'community' was initially very hostile to the presence of asylum seekers and that the culture of the area *"is very racist and 'old' Salford."* Several stories were recounted to me about incidents that occurred in the area where asylum seekers were victims of abuse and serious violence. This led one exasperated youth worker to wonder:

"Why can't Salford just turn around and say 'we don't want you'? They are welcomed and then abused." ('Jenny', youth worker; 21-60)

Some local residents appeared to be mindful of being 'politically incorrect' when discussing asylum seekers, but the occasional comment did hint at distrust and an 'othering' process. Residents at one meeting conflated antisocial behaviour with *"people from other countries"*. One older female respondent stated pejoratively that 'they' get 'lots' of asylum seekers and it is 'getting worse' because *"they died off, now they're back."*

Despite some obvious resentment and conflict with asylum seekers in the area, it would be unfair to characterise everyone in this light. The refugee support worker I interviewed argued that she believed residents over the age of forty or so try to be friendly and understand the issues facing refugees. This in contrast with a younger age group (teens to mid twenties) that are hostile and more influenced by the tabloid media construction of asylum seekers as 'invaders' and 'freeloaders'. Nevertheless, there is a segment of the local population who consider asylum seekers to be 'space invaders'. This feeling was often expressed – as discussed in the next section - in connection with the perceived pernicious presence of private sector housing in the area, a sector that, for many people, produced many problems for the area and is sustained by the needs of asylum seekers as well as other problematic and transitory tenants.

6.5.3 Transient housing tenants

Within the NDC zone, privately rented housing is relatively common (11% of all residents are private renters according to CRESR 2003). There are patches of such houses scattered amongst the council housing, many of which are earmarked for demolition. The tenants of this housing tended to be constructed by other local residents as an undesirable presence in their 'community' and as the main source of antisocial behaviour. For example:

"They've had a policy if you ask me of putting people on here who are bad tenants. At the top estate where me Dad lives, we don't have that problem because we don't have a high turnover, but down here it's been a high turnover and you find that most of tenants that they shove in here are not right. People with problems, or they've had problems on other estates, they've had 4 or 5 different houses, knock walls down then fuck off and go to another housing estate..." ('Jim', resident; 21-60)

The PA team found that terraced housing residents are 'sick' of 'problem and nuisance people' in private rented houses and blamed them for some people 'here since birth' being forced to move away. Similarly, one resident's meeting discussed these 'bad' residents, blaming the 'riff raff' for the lack of demand for houses in a specific estate and its consequent demolition. There were references elsewhere to a 'bad' sort and 'problem families'. One older woman mentioned a high turnover of *council* tenants in one area, highlighting 'single mums' and 'immigrants', neither of whom stay long. Another resident identified a process whereby problematic council tenants move into the private sector:

"Well this woman had a camera in her house for the police to catch these people at the bottom of the street, they put her windows in. And that's what's gone on. So basically the problem that comes from the council is then pumped into here which is only round the corner from us. So there is ASBO's put on people they get kicked out there and come down here then." ('Jim', resident; 21-60)

This movement from the public to the private sector was blamed, by one resident at a meeting, on unscrupulous property companies, arguing that they know they can rely on tenant welfare benefits to pay the rent. Private landlords came in for criticism generally for not vetting potential tenants and contributing to the perceived deterioration of the area. The same older women claimed that they *"don't care who they let in"*. She acknowledged that people *"have to live somewhere but I wouldn't like living amongst it."* Another resident emphasised this apparent negligible attitude: *'that's a private property company (points to sign), they*

couldn't give a shit about round here. He dumps whatever else shit in this area." ('Jim', resident; 21-60)

This was supported by another respondent who argued that 'speculative landlords' are buying up a lot of properties:

" (they let to)...druggies and uh unruly kids you know with antisocial behaviour problems...not actually on the estate where I live but round where there are these private landlords you see." ('Colin', resident; over 60)

In support of this interview data, the PA team found a popular view amongst residents of private landlords being a major source of housing problems such as 'nuisance neighbours'.

From interviews, it seems clear that private tenants and the landlords that let to them are blamed for a variety of problems in the NDC zone. Such tenants are explicitly characterised not just as 'outsiders', but also as a threat to territory and behavioural norms. This thesis is not about developing an apologist stance in relation to the problems that socially excluded residents face. That is, to ignore the fact that some residents will be a 'nuisance' or cause more problems than other people. However, it is unclear how much of a lawless threat these specific group of tenants are and, furthermore, whether they can be legitimately demonized or even criminalized in a homogeneous way.

Herbert (2005) has explored negative attitudes to renters on the part of homeowners in his study of Seattle, USA and suggests that it is part of a local politics geared towards defending property rights (p858). In my study however, it is a combination of homeowners and council tenants who are on the offensive. This may reflect a hierarchy of housing status where there is an active marginalizing of those lacking the respectability afforded by stability and locality. In any case, the presence of private renters in areas like this will undermine, it would seem, any efforts to 'build community.' (Herbert 2005; 858)

The purpose of giving these examples is to illustrate some of the processes involved in the contestation of 'community'. This can take the form of conflicting needs or values (as with policing and redevelopment) or it can occur around the construction of insider / outsider groups within a geographical space. That is, in the process of *doing* 'community', some residents, deploying notions of 'belonging' and 'deservingness', actively construct divisions between groups, producing a 'community' that is stratified and contains various positions occupied by agents thus shaping their exclusion. Nevertheless, they are not simply passive

victims in this process. It is difficult to argue that students for example, are socially excluded in any profound way, although they are excluded from the 'community' around them. Each 'space invader' group has opportunities to contest this process or will seek to manage it on their own terms. Examples include the young male staying at the homeless accommodation who avoids the local area, or asylum seekers who, with the help of a local voluntary sector group, support each other because "*they are in the same boat*" (refugee support worker). Social agents manage their exclusion in differing ways. The fundamental point is how the perceptions of some local people can have an impact on how incomers (but 'local' people nonetheless) experience that space. It seems some people are 'more local' than others. This relational dimension to social exclusion will be further explored when considering the third 'big' research question on exclusion.

These processes have implications for a programme like NDC that seeks to promote 'community' by changing behaviour - thus achieving shared ('inclusive') moral and behavioural standards - and tackling exclusion through regenerating a space. That is, the regeneration of space becomes very complicated if one argues that contestations of that space are integral to how a 'community' (dis)functions. The next section will explore just that.

6.6 Contestation of space

This final section in the discussion of 'community' will argue that another dimension in its contestation is the struggle over the use of space within that 'community'. There was evidence from the field that illustrated how different groups, with different needs clashed over the use of a space or facility within the NDC zone. This tended to happen either around regeneration plans (a conflict over how best to make use of physical space), or just a general conflict around spaces within the neighbourhood.

6.6.1 Youth shelters

The most explicit example of this was recounted to me by several sources including NDC staff, youth workers and young people. The PA team identified the possibility of a 'quick win'⁷ project of youth shelters and a children's play area for which there appeared to be an appetite amongst residents. Young people in the area were included in the bidding and designing processes but other local residents objected at the planning permission stage. Consequently, they have not been built, despite attempts to manage the conflict and develop a compromise. According to one youth worker, residents in the planned area feared the concentration of youths in one place and the related potential for trouble. The NDC voluntary

⁷ 'quick win' refers to those potential short term, big impact projects that demonstrate to residents early on, that NDC is capable of delivering positive change.

sector support worker expressed it more bluntly: *“NIMBYism pure and simple. No one wanted it near them.”*

As noted in the list of NDC-related developments in chapter five, a resource centre for young people is due to open, but it remains to be seen whether this school-based centre meets the expectations of young people. The ensuing discussion of social exclusion will explore this further.

Some young people mentioned this conflict, but blamed NDC for not delivering on its promises. (*“NDC is shit. Said they’d give us youth shelter but it hasn’t.”*) The implications of this type of contestation for tackling exclusion and promoting community will be explored later, but are indicative of a contradiction at the heart of NDC.

There were other similar examples whereby residents in other areas objected to the principle of play areas:

“We have got £50k per year to build parks, we’ve only built one in 3 years, and the reason they said they’re no building anymore is because people don’t want them. Because people don’t understand what the parks are. This is a park, a nice fucking park... This is the sort of park we want on our estates, but because people thought ‘aw fucking climbing frames, do this do that and whatever else, they all said we don’t want it outside the fucking house – but we’d love one of these...” (‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)

In this example, the assumption about youth nuisance would have not only blocked a children’s play space but also actually prevented one estate getting a ‘nice’ park. The NDC sector sergeant commented on the difficulty this attitude creates:

“Up until recently they were adamant that they didn’t want any facilities in the area for children. So they say ‘we’re not having any facilities here, not in this area.’ And if you say to them ‘what should we do with them’ ‘just move them’. So ideally, a lot of them want all the youths to be in their own home every hour of the day and the night and not come out onto the streets - which would be ideal. But unfortunately that doesn’t happen and they’ve lost sight that when they were young that’s what they did, they hung about the streets.”

6.6.2 Young people and public space

This general conflict between young people and the rest of the community gets manifest in various contestations of space. Another symbolic example was the local bowling green which some young males use as a makeshift football pitch. The reason for which was explained thus,

“Cos this is how fucking mad it is round here. There’s the football pitches for the kids and that’s dogshit alley cos there’s no fence round it, so they play on the bowling green, cos no-one uses the bowling green. So I said, put the fucking goal posts on here, so when these lads come, they play on here, they don’t go over there, because if you notice that’s what happens over there, everyone lets their dog go and they shit all over the football pitch (man lets his dog off leash to let it run). A bit of common sense, take them out there, put them on there, cos they still cut this grass.” (‘Jim’, resident; 21-60)

One young male confirmed this problem when he admitted that they play on the green because dog walkers use the pitch but that they *“get shouted at - we can’t play anywhere”*. It was untrue, therefore, for ‘Jim’ to inform me that ‘no one uses’ the bowling green. A group of older men argued from their perspective, stating that they play bowls everyday, but local schoolchildren use it for football, or as a dumping ground for wheelie bins as well as the occasional burnt out car. They asked NDC for bigger railings (*“to keep kids out”*) but were refused. They told a story of a recent flashpoint whereby one of the older men physically removed a young male from the green and threatened to call the police. The young male responded, saying he would ‘report’ him to the police for manhandling him. The same youths then returned and let the tyres down on his car in retaliation. Other manifestations of this conflict include the police being called for young males playing football in a pub car park and complaints about the riding of motorbikes, not just around the estates, but also on the local playing fields. One residents group discussed the motorbikes issue at length and another resident mentioned them:

AW: Motorbikes are a big thing round here aren’t they?

J: Oh god yeah! I know it’s a terrible thing to say, but I’ve seen them come down and they’re dodging all these cars coming up and the poor drivers that are coming up, it must be a nightmare for them, and I’m thinking, ‘I wish they’d hit the kerb’ (laughs). That’s terrible aint it?

AW: So, do they just drive around the streets?

J: Yeah. The noise is horrendous. Or down the back entries ('Jane', resident' 21-60)

One young male informed me that even when they ride the bikes on the playing fields, residents in the houses opposite phone the police and bikes are confiscated. A motorcycle track was suggested by another young male as a solution and the PA report also contained support for this suggestion, but as yet nothing has been planned.

The playing fields are another focal point for the contestation of space. The PA team found that burnt out cars are often dumped there and is an issue for many local people. I experienced this for myself. One evening in the 'community' with detached youth workers, we came across an incident where two cars had been burnt out and dumped on the playing fields. The police were already present at the scene, whilst another squad car chased another stolen car, this one with a caravan attached. The pursuit ended in the centre of a local estate and caused a sensation amongst local youths.

The playing fields were used by young people as a place to congregate but were sealed off (at the time of writing) for drainage in preparation for redevelopment into a sports village. One young female protested that this deprived young people of somewhere to 'hang about' and will stop them having barbeques. The playing fields were also a site of conflict *between* young people, not just youths and the rest of the community. One young male (aged 14, so younger than most other respondents) mentioned that the playing fields were always full of bikes and cars and that young males from other estates in the NDC zone steal their bikes.

Conflict over space *between* youths was also identified by young males in another area of the NDC zone, which has had a new play area built, including a swing park and a multi-purpose facility for football, basketball and netball. One 17-year-old male said older residents 'tell him off' if he is in the play area whilst the police moved another on. Two younger males (in their early teens) described how they could not use the new sports facility because 'older lads' from another estate drink alcohol on it at nights. It is this kind of data that throws up questions about the actual effectiveness of regeneration (in the sense of improving or introducing facilities) when it is mediated by this level of conflicting social relations.

6.6.3 Some other contestations

Some other examples of a contestation of space in the area include the presence of a pupil referral unit in the NDC zone. An empty school was used for children with behavioural

difficulties and produced some conflict with local young people as well as anger from residents who objected to its existence:

J: Now this school here has been empty for a while then they used it as a pupil referral unit – 35 kids we had in it. Basically it brought the area right down...the police were there in the morning to see them going in, they were there at break time in case they jumped over the fucking fence. They were there in the afternoons when they went for their dinner, they were there at night time, and they used to bus these kids in and out. But there was without a doubt, we'd find cars in the park every night the kids in the area used to get intimidated by them... Now New Deal own that building so I says to New Deal, we own that building (we'd already petitioned them with 680 petitions, we did that in a week, we got 600 names on a petition saying we don't want it using as a sin bin...) We had one already with 30 kids in it, now we've got double...this time believe me they smack the teachers who come out, they don't give a fuck. But, they wont tell us how many assaults on teachers last year in there when we ask them. I wrote a letter to the papers saying to Claremont (another, relatively more affluent, area of Salford) I don't blame you...At the end of the day if you're going to build something like that you've got to take everybody's community into account. And the only way to do it really is put it out the area, bus them all in, bus them all out, because no-one wants it. Simple." ('Jim', resident; 21-60)

'Jim' identifies an interesting process at work here. That is, he notes how students were relocated to another, relatively more affluent area of the city, only for local protests to re-direct them back to the NDC area. He shows an eagerness to replicate the victorious protest of Claremont, but without success so far.⁸

Another incident was isolated to a specific part of the NDC zone, where one estate borders a traveller's caravan site. At the local residents meeting, there was intense discussion about conflict with this group who they claimed were dumping rubbish on the estate rather than the nearby 'official' dumping site. Fly tipping was a problem generally, but travellers were the only ones to be blamed as a group (see Kenrick and Bakewell (1990; 22) for an account of a similar conflict between gypsies and local residents.

⁸ This is also an illustration that it is not just poor areas that experience contestations of space. Struggles over territory and ownership are applicable across the socioeconomic spectrum, even if the nature of the struggle differs.

Overall, the data generated about contested community encompasses a range of aspects including the conflicts over physical space and facilities, conflicts rooted in differing needs and values and an ‘othering’ of ‘outsider’ groups within the neighbourhood. These combine to produce a ‘community’ that is stratified, not just economically, but by differing experiences of ‘community’ and exclusion. The point of this section has been to illustrate that that stratification can be done *by agents*. That is, the way ‘community’ and exclusion is experienced is partly shaped by the relationships residents have with each other. The next section will use data to support the argument that agents, despite sharing the same physical space and ‘label’ of being socially excluded, experience exclusion heterogeneously.

6.7 Exclusion

The final component of the ‘ICE’ formulation of data is exclusion. As with ‘agency’ and ‘community’ the ‘big’ research question was designed to explore the model of exclusion that appears to underpin NDC. That is, one that presumes that the needs of residents of an area like the one under study can be identified and addressed on a geographical basis. This implies that government believes NDC residents have relatively similar needs and experiences of social exclusion. Moreover, the model suggests that the most effective way of addressing those needs is to regenerate (i.e. alter or improve) the context in which people live, whether that is their environment, services that they access or decision making structures. The ‘big’ research question that will examine this model is as follows:

To what extent is social exclusion experienced heterogeneously?

In addition to examining the effectiveness and propriety of New Labour’s model of exclusion, this question was also about developing an understanding of how social exclusion is experienced and lived by NDC residents. The hypothesis being that there are different experiences of social exclusion within a shared spatial context. Moreover, that the shaping or configuring of individual ‘need’ is at the root of these different experiences. In this section, data will be broken down into three parts, reflecting three ways in which needs are configured. Firstly, the differential impact of a lack of service or facility will be illustrated. That is, the fact that various social groups or individuals are affected by social exclusion in different ways depending on their age, disability, ethnicity and so on. Secondly, it will be argued that within a defined geographical space there are a variety of needs that residents exhibit or articulate, some of which may conflict with those of other residents. The final part will be an exploration of how needs are shaped *relationally*, in contact with other residents’ attitudes and behaviour. The key point here being that how excluded people relate to each other - how individuals ‘get on’ is a fundamental aspect of how exclusion is experienced.

Some of the data here overlaps with that used to illustrate how ‘community’ is contested; the difference here is the analytical ends to which it is put. In this case, the purpose is to illustrate some of the effects of these processes of contestation on the quality of lives of residents. Not only is contestation an interesting process in itself for its implications for theorising ‘community’, but it has analytical value in developing understandings of the realities of social exclusion. For example, contestations of space, such as the conflict around children’s play areas become not just illustrations of ‘contested community’, but have a direct impact upon the quality of life for some young people because they are actively deprived of a play area. Moreover, other (older) residents are excluding young residents from a stake in the renewal discourse of NDC by arbitrating (and rejecting) their claims.

Similarly, negative feelings towards asylum seekers can be viewed both as an example of a process indicative of a stratified neighbourhood, as well as having real effects for how asylum seekers experience their exclusion if those ‘negative feelings’ turn nasty. Therefore, this section, is about the translating some of the same data around contestation into a discussion of the diversity of social exclusion.

6.7.1 Differential impact of exclusion

Understanding and tackling exclusion is about understanding the needs within individual lives and how those needs are shaped. This includes understanding the processes that are taking place to make someone socially excluded and configuring their needs. In terms of excluded NDC residents, I want to argue that a key part of the configuration of need is the interaction of local residents with poor local services. The occurrence of a ‘differential’ impact emphasises, as a starting point, the inadequacy of local services as a key driver of social exclusion, then considers how different social groups are affected by that inadequacy. It is not sufficient to simply state, for example, that residents are socially excluded because bus services are poor in this NDC zone. For a better understanding of excluded experience, one must reflect upon the lives of local residents themselves. How does the poor bus service impact upon people’s lives? Uniformly, or in more subtle and varied ways? If so, how does this configure needs and what are the implications of that process?

The scope of local needs (individual responses to contexts of exclusion) was illustrated, in this study, around a few key issues in this neighbourhood. That is, as one would expect in a space containing a range of social groups, a range of needs were exhibited. For example, to return to the public transport example, older people who were interviewed, spoke often about the poor quality of public transport – something which they relied on a great deal for

shopping, visiting friends and family and attending hospital appointments. Public transport was an issue for several residents across the board, including some young people wanting quick, cheap access to shopping districts; however, the isolation engendered by a poor bus service appeared to be made more acute by the lack of physical mobility and financial resources experienced by many older people. For example, one older man noted that there is only one bus per hour in his area since services were cut “due to vandalism”. Another mentioned how he gets a taxi to the local shopping precinct due to poor bus service,

“We pay council tax for decent buses, but don’t get the service. I think they have forgotten we exist down here.” (Male resident; over 60)

This need for better public transport links (meaning buses, since the local train station has been closed and the tram network does not extend into this area), seemed to be exacerbated by the lack of adequate shopping facilities nearby. Within the NDC zone currently, there are few shops offering a limited choice of provisions. These shops are found on the main thoroughfares, a relatively long distance from some of the outer estates of the zone. Again, an issue for all residents, but especially pronounced for those residents without cars or with physical mobility problems. For example, one older female reported that her area within the zone was very isolated with poor bus service and no shops. She prioritised above all else more basic shops such as grocery stores and newsagents to prevent older people having to walk too far – at the moment the only ‘service’ in her immediate area is a local pub.

By contrast, young people interviewed articulated shopping needs in keeping with their own social milieu. Suggestions included fast food restaurants with take away facilities, sportswear and other clothes shops as well as a tanning salon. They were less concerned with any perceived lack of good grocery shops, preferring to prioritise fashion and leisure related outlets. Therefore, the perceived absence of different services or facilities from the local area (helping define an area as excluded) produces varying experiences of that absence and consequently, varying responses / needs, depending upon the circumstances of the resident.⁹

Another example is the lack of adequate leisure facilities in the NDC zone. Most young people identified this as something ‘missing’ from their community. That is, the social exclusion of young residents was less defined by inadequate local shops and more about having “nothing to do” with their leisure time. Again, the absence of regular public transport

⁹ One caveat being that age is only one indicator when discussing need. Of course, some older people will be able to use existing shops or be able to afford cars. Similarly, there will be some young people who ‘need’ more grocery shops.

exacerbated this problem, making it difficult for young people to travel to other facilities.¹⁰ This need was expressed through suggestions for a new skate park, sports centre, gymnasium, motorbike track and youth or recreation centre. Just “somewhere for us to go” was the response of one young male. Another was, “[we need] more things for teenagers to do, because of boredom.” (Female resident, under 21, brackets added)

One teenage male, residing in a local hostel for homeless young people argued that there is “nothing to do...there is fuck all in the area”.

For many young people, the absence of legitimate ‘private’ space (outside the home) provided by such facilities leads them to occupy ‘public’ spaces within the zone. Therefore, certain shops or bus shelters are colonised by relatively large groups of young people. Football is played in a pub car park or on the bowling green whilst the playing fields are used for barbeques and generally “hanging about”. Male youths on motorbikes ride around the estates or on the playing fields, lacking as they do a legitimate place, sanctioned by the ‘community’, to pursue their interest. As shown in the previous section on contested spaces, this occupation of public space can produce conflict with adult residents. The local police sergeant expressed this issue thus:

“Erm, there is a lot of frustration. The kids don’t want to stay in obviously they want to be out and they’re frustrated because they don’t want to be on the streets seen to be intimidating, but they’re bored they’ve nowhere to go, erm, and if anyone has a go at ‘em – they retaliate, causing damage and...so”

Often this is interpreted as ‘antisocial behaviour’ by adult residents. There were also references made in interviews about the ‘unruliness’ of young people and a perceived lack of respect for authority.

A further complexity is the way in which older people responded to this occupation of public space. The PA survey found feelings of intimidation concerning youth gangs around shops. One older female resident supported this finding:

¹⁰ However, there was a definite sense of locality when speaking to residents - an expectation that *this* area should provide leisure services. Instead of attributing this to an instinctive sense of ‘community’, as NDC appears to do, I would suggest it has more to do with residents tacitly complying with the way the area has been isolated, driven by cuts in bus services, closure of the local train station and an allegedly ambivalent local authority.

“Erm, there is a shop down on the other side of Gerald Road, I wouldn’t go in there late at night to save me life...and they’re all in there sat on fridges and all sorts, it’s very very intimidating.” (‘Jane’, resident; 21 - 60)

The local sergeant corroborated this sentiment:

“[Fear]...of the noise on the streets, the intimidating youths gathering. People don’t want to use the shops, they don’t want to come out because of the noise – so it’s a fear, erm, more than anything really which is unfortunate.” (brackets added)

Certainly, on the evenings I was in the area, it was usual to see groups of young people congregating around shops such as ‘Booze Buster’, some clearly trying (often successfully) to purchase alcohol. Therefore, the presence of young people in public can have an affect on how older people experience their ‘community’ and add another dimension to their social exclusion. For example, the PA survey found that ‘elderly’ people adopted strategies to avoid this ‘threat’, not leaving home after a certain time and making sure they did any shopping in the morning. Not only do some older people suffer from the lack of shopping facilities, they can also feel intimidated when using the shops that *do* exist.

However, older people were not the only group ‘threatened’ by the presence of young people on the streets:

“I class myself as someone who isn’t usually bothered by a few yobs down street alley but I think things are getting worse like kids chucking clumps of rock at you. Like I was walking down [names street], it was only a couple of week ago and we were coming back and they were chucking great big blocks of concrete at you. [agreement] If I feel a bit unsure walking home on a night I can only imagine what a lot of other people feel like.” (‘Colin’, student; under 21, brackets added)

Some adult residents recognised the need for more facilities for young people, usually rooted in eradicating the threat and ‘nuisance’ they create, rather than challenging their exclusion.

For example.

“Give them somewhere like say a café type. Where they just sold soft drinks and cups of tea and things like that. Somewhere they could go and sit, with their friends, their mates, whatever, if the weather was bad you know?...It would take them off the street corners. Ok, so they’re all in one congregated area but they’re not causing the

neighbours any problems are they? [if they're in a café] They're not getting up to mischief they get up to now...they're just bored. Nothing else to do. So they'll go and do somebody's car in or pinch somebody's car." ('Jane', resident; 21 – 60, brackets added)

However, as discussed above, the blocking of youth shelters by adult residents suggests this will be difficult to implement successfully. Moreover, the planned and actual recent leisure developments, were criticised by local youth workers who doubted the inclusionary credentials of such projects. For example, on the new football-specialist sports village:

"It's taking the piss. First of all you have to like football, then because it's a centre of excellence, you have to be good at it! How is that inclusionary?" ('Paul' youth worker)

Similarly, the new Astroturf pitch next to the new school is only open to the youth service and the 'community' if they pay a rental fee. (*"How is that inclusion?"*)

Young people suffer disproportionately from inadequate leisure facilities in the area due, mainly, to their need for interaction with peers and 'something to do' with their free time.¹¹ This manifests itself in a reliance on public spaces as a resource for leisure pursuits and often results in conflict with adult residents. Increasing policing of these spaces (CCTV cameras can be found on main roads and around shopping areas) and greater scrutiny of behavioural standards (is it antisocial?) by local police and some residents all combine to produce an experience of exclusion that differs from other members of the 'community' and configure a distinctive 'need' – rooted in being a certain age. Of course, all residents could potentially benefit from a new sports centre for example, but no other groups are so dependent on spaces outside the home for socialising but are so un-catered for whilst being subject to so much scrutiny.

6.7.2 Specific needs

Other configurations of need were identified that were not about differential impacts of 'poor' services, but originating in the specific experiences of certain groups and individuals. An example might be the suggestion, made by a carer for disabled people, to lower kerbs in the area, particularly on the road leading to the local cemetery to make visits

¹¹ Some young people, when discussing curfews, expressed that their parents often want them 'out the house' in the evening, excluding them from their home and making the occupation of public space more likely. (See section 6.4.1)

easier. She made the point that for wheelchair users, having to negotiate high kerbs when going anywhere around the local area made the journey very uncomfortable. It is unlikely that any other group in the area would make this suggestion, but it is a need for this group, rooted in their individual experience. Furthermore, another priority was more jobs suitable for disabled people:

“There are lots of people in here who are capable of carrying out tasks but its finding an outlet where they can perform these tasks.” (‘Jane’, resident and carer; 21- 60)

Indeed, job opportunities were mentioned by several residents, some in relation to NDC (see chapter five, section 5.5.2), and others in a general sense – notably some young male respondents. However, according to the 2004 Delivery Plan, 90% of local businesses rated the NDC area as ‘poor’ in terms of the skills and employability of local people. NDC is trying to remedy this apparent mismatch between opportunities and skills by publicising the local ‘job shop’ and has a programme in development ominously entitled ‘Maximising Local Labour’, designed to *‘assist people into the construction industry’* (NDC Annual Report 2005; 14). Whether such a scheme will meet the employment needs is unclear at this time, but the tagline does raise fears similar to those expressed with regard to the government’s New Deal workfare programme. (See chapter 2, section 3.2.2)

New types of housing were also identified as an important need of some disabled people:

“I think I will have to give that a one [most important on the priorities sheet] because there are an awful lot of people who would love to live independently but can’t because of the housing, because of the structure of certain houses, because there are very very few bungalows in this area.” (‘Jane’, resident and carer; 21- 60, brackets added)

Another example of a specific need is for older people in the area. One interviewee, the NDC partnership chair, made the point that older people require more proactive engagement to ensure their needs are met:

“We’ve got a growing older population, after the baby boom, after the war and I don’t think we’re addressing their needs, because the presumption is that when you get to 60, retirement age for a lady, you’ll want to go and sit in the day centre round the corner. Most people, now the life expectancy has moved on, want more than that.”

This could apply to a range of needs including more leisure opportunities, continued job opportunities in retirement age or more opportunities for involvement in the 'community' and voluntary sector.

Other specific needs identified included more 'community' support for informal carers in the area; more support for those experiencing manageable health problems; alley gating for some houses to block motorbike runs (eventually completed on some estates) and concerns about high asthma rates and chest related problems in a certain housing estate that borders an industrial zone. A support worker who noted that local hostels do not meet the basic standards of cleanliness or heating identified better accommodation for asylum seekers as the key need of that group. This a sentiment echoed in Dwyer and Brown's study of refugee housing in Leeds (2005; 377). The support worker also mentioned that the accommodation of certain groups in unsuitable housing displays a lack of cultural sensitivity.

These were just some of the examples given of specific needs, related to specific groups. They give a flavour of how within a relatively small 'community' space, a range of distinct needs can be found and emphasise the importance of consulting all groups to ascertain the variety of needs. However, difficulties can arise if one need clashes with another or the concerns of another. The youth shelters being a good example of the tension that can sometimes obscure the specific need that was exhibited in the first place.

6.7.3 Social relations and further configuration of need

Individual need as a response to conditions of social exclusion is not just about how lives can be improved through new or better services. The way needs are configured can also be related to experiences of social relations (see chapter three, section 3.3.5). That is, the way 'community' and exclusion are lived is usually through the prism of human relationships. This grass root, relational reality can have a bearing on the needs that agents exhibit and how successful urban regenerative projects are when trying to address apparently 'straightforward' indicators of 'exclusion'. For example, the reality of living in the NDC zone for many young people is one where territorialism provides a sense of identity in addition to spatial boundaries for 'hanging around'. This point was first made by local youth workers who described a situation where youths from either sides of the river that dissect the zone do not mix. This had implications for their work, forcing them to allocate time to several different territories over the course of the week. Some young people interviewed reinforced this territorial pattern. A pattern apparently shaped by fear of certain places and people. For example, one teenage male stated that he avoided specific estates due to "*big gangs of lads*". Two other younger males

also told of how they avoid certain places for fear of having their bikes stolen by local gangs and how they never venture across the river. Even *within* one area of the zone, there were three distinct territories and associated identities: ‘uptowners’, ‘midtowners’ and ‘downtowners’. The informal way in which these identities are constructed was illustrated to me by an encounter with a group of ‘uptowners’. The youth worker whom I was accompanying was eager to convince the group of young males to appear in the local newspaper alongside a (legal) mural they had done on a local wall to publicise what she argued was a positive expression of youth identity. The lads, however, were extremely resistant to the idea, fearing it would make them look ‘gay’ and like ‘goons’. This formalising of their identity in the media would (it appeared) engender an immediate loss of status and undermine the informal, organic nature of that territorial identity.

This data around territorialism could be used to de-stabilize the notion of a ‘recognisable’ spatial community upon which NDC is predicated (a notion that also underpins how ‘need’ is constructed and addressed within that space). That is, what this data shows is that within the zone, young people have formulated their *own* ‘communities’, often based around a very small geographical area. Thus, there is little interaction between these sub-groups of youths and when there is, it appears to manifest in conflict or around transcendent spectacles such as police chases or joy riders such as the incident with the caravan recounted in section 6.6.2. Moreover, in terms of configuring needs, this territorial reality has an impact because it shapes how young people experience their exclusion in this area – in a bounded geographical space. How effective will it be therefore, to build new facilities in one specific area of the NDC zone? According to one youth worker, new projects such as the youth centre that is under construction “*will be great*”. However, he makes the point that whilst in theory all local young people can use it, and potentially compensate for the loss of the shelters, territorialism may prevent some from accessing this resource because it is not on ‘their patch’.

Another example came from the youth service itself. Their base was to the south of the river whereas one set of young females they work with live to the north. They were in the process of trying to coax them across the river and to the centre to conduct some indoor work, but without success. This was constructed as a ‘test’ to force the girls to ‘prove’ their commitment to the youth service in return for more funding applications on their behalf. They were not forthcoming at the time however, because it was “*across the river and not their patch*” (female youth worker). The girls’ access to support and opportunities via the youth workers was diminished by territorialism.

Therefore, the configuration of young people's needs is shaped, to an extent, by social relations 'on the ground', determined largely, by territorial division. This is an illustration of how people themselves organise and stratify the excluded 'community' in informal ways. Consequently, tackling exclusion and addressing need is not as straightforward as identifying something that is missing from the area, remedying the context and thereby improving the lives of that group. That 'remedying' takes place within a relational context that must be recognised and understood for its potential impact.

Another example of this relational dimension to experiencing exclusion came from the data generated around the experiences of asylum seekers in the area. Whereas young people can at least construct their own territorial identity, asylum seekers have much less scope for formulating such modes of resistance. Their status as 'space invaders' meant that at the time I was conducting fieldwork (perhaps over time this will change) they were usually *victims* of 'othering' by 'indigenous' residents sometimes manifesting in overt violence and aggression. Data to illustrate the 'othering' process was recounted in section 6.5.2. There is some evidence to argue that the relational level through which asylum seekers experience exclusion includes incidents of violence and abuse. One resident and chair of the partnership board put it to me that,

'...the vast majority of the community take these people very much as part of their community once they come and live with us. I don't think there is much animosity towards people.'

However, by contrast, several other examples were given to me of violence and abuse towards this group. Whether that was the story of the attack on accommodation centres where asylum seekers were housed as documented above, or the Kurdish family who had their front windows smashed and, according to the refugee support worker I interviewed, had a petrol bomb thrown through the window. Similarly, a local youth worker claimed a Yemeni family had to take refuge in a local mosque after the father was '*battered by local lads*'. Overall, the support worker alleged that there is a '*great deal of violence*' towards asylum seekers and '*verbal abuse is common*' because they are an '*easy target*'. She also claimed four families with whom she is working who have had '*cars stolen, burnt out or windows smashed*'. This reflects a finding of Dwyer and Brown's study of refugees and their experiences of leaving reception centres and moving into 'communities' where they can be subjected to harassment and violence at the hands of neighbours. (2005; 375) In Salford, local media have recently reported the serious assault of a young Kurdish male and a Latvian male in an area bordering the NDC zone (<http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk>).

It could be argued that asylum seekers and refugees experience a disproportionate amount of violence and conflict than other groups within and around the NDC zone, with the exception perhaps of young people. Their social exclusion is one that is compounded by often hostile or intolerant social relations within the 'community', which configures their 'needs' beyond the material to encompass an experiential reality that is shaped by social agents and *fellow residents*. This again poses difficult questions for a regeneration programme based on tackling exclusion – addressing *needs* - that are structurally determined.

The purpose of the 'big' research question was to ascertain the extent to which exclusion was experienced heterogeneously in the NDC zone. The resulting data fell into three categories – the differential impact of poor or absent services; the specific needs of certain individuals or groups and the role of relationships in shaping the experience of living in a socially excluded 'community'. These three aspects combine, I would argue, to produce a stratified policy terrain that is patterned by shifting excluded social and economic positions (with agents active in that process), rather than a unitary, stagnating 'excluded' 'community' awaiting a 'surgical strike' (Furbey 1999; 433) of regeneration.

One of the original intentions of this study was to explore the tendency on the part of policymakers to conceptualise exclusion as a spatially (and thereby materially) determined condition. In addition, whilst not denying the structural / institutional dynamics that produce such excluded spaces, to contrast this with an analysis of *internal* dynamics within such spaces (NDC communities) and how exclusion is experienced in different ways, manifesting in a variety of needs and shaped by internal social relations with other residents. As we have seen, primarily, this *heterogeneity* centres on the way in which the absence of certain services has a differential impact on people according to their different social locations. That is, residents do not experience exclusion uniformly (if exclusion is exemplified by an absence of something within a certain space, such as inadequate public transport provision). The way in which it is *lived* is shaped by age, locality, gender, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status and so on. This, it will be argued, produces a 'community' of welfare recipients who have differing needs and varying responses to their excluded condition. In addition, this may have implications for the effectiveness of regeneration attempts if there is a failure to appreciate this lack of uniformity and recognize both the *quantity* of needs alongside the *qualitative* configuration of those needs. The implication of this data will be more fully explored in the next chapter.

6.8 Conclusion

Having set out my research agenda in chapter four – to explore ‘lay’ accounts that illuminate the dynamics of an NDC zone – this chapter has set about illustrating the relevant data pertaining to resident’s experiences of NDC and their ‘community’.

This was done in three main sections, headed under ‘ICE’. The components of ‘ICE’ comprised data relating to resident interest in NDC and the ‘community’ in general, data relating to contested ‘community’ space, values and membership amongst residents, and finally data relating to the heterogeneity of need and concomitant diverse experiences of exclusion. This data combines, I would argue, to produce a policy terrain that is not only socially excluded, but also contested, fractured and heterogeneous. Whilst the data recounted here is by no means an exhaustive audit of ‘community’ needs and experiences, it would appear that there is enough to raise some important questions about the assumptions contained within New Labour’s ‘ACE’ models. The implications for New Labour and both ethical and practical dimensions of NDC will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Having engaged in an exposition of the fieldwork data in chapters five and six, the goal of this chapter is to reflect upon and analyse the ways in which New Labour's 'ACE' models and the NDC programme impact on its residents and environment. The preceding chapters have provided a platform of data that this chapter will utilize in constructing a discussion of both NDC and New Labour.

The key focus of this discussion is on the models that comprise 'ACE'. With reference to data to support claims and judgements throughout, the intention of this chapter is to examine these models and their appropriateness in underpinning NDC as well as guiding key aspects of New Labour's welfare reforms. Whilst the first part of the chapter will reflect upon NDC itself and seek to address the question that has entitled this exploration, that is, 'to what extent is NDC an appropriate basis for tackling social exclusion?', the second part will seek to relate the thesis to a wider context. This will entail an exploration of two key critical positions on New Labour and its attempt to 'build communities' on the bedrock of socially excluded terrain. The first position constructs this project, exemplified by NDC, as a 'sticking plaster' that is designed to manage, rather than challenge the existence of concentrated poverty neighbourhoods. The second position argues that this project is not simply a management strategy, but is a regulatory or disciplinary strategy in that in the course of managing spaces, government is able to impose a normative vision that constitutes how such 'communities' should behave and what form they should take.

Therefore, the chapter begins by asking whether NDC / 'ACE' understands its 'community' and if it does not, what the implications of that misunderstanding might be. This is the key to the thesis. Secondly, however, I want to introduce broader debates that could be applied to the NDC project to provide some critical context for my study. They offer some alternative ways by which to understand 'ACE' to my approach, which has been to focus on the extent of understanding of social reality inherent in those models. This alternative angle suggests that the goals of 'ACE' - 'community' and 'empowerment' and so on are not only problematic

because they are premised on flawed understandings, but that they are problematic because they are regulatory or diversionary governing techniques that work by disempowering residents. The purpose of discussing these debates is merely to introduce some broader possible understandings of NDC and New Labour that go beyond my research focus. Whether they offer a challenge or compliment my thesis is explored in the final section of the chapter.

However, the main task of what follows is to demonstrate the implications of the thesis for New Labour's theory and practice, arguing that some key analytical and normative flaws inform them both. We begin the chapter by looking again at 'ACE' and how the data recounted in the previous chapter relates to each model.

7.2 Problematizing the 'ACE' Models

The framework used throughout this thesis to understand New Deal for Communities is 'ACE', three organizing principles that derive from New Labour thinking and together embody how it believes poor areas should and can be refurbished. Individually, each model is comprised of analyses and prescriptions about individual behaviour, social relations, partnership and the nature of social exclusion. When merged under the rubric of NDC, 'ACE' constitutes a conceptual basis for the intervention of policy into poor or excluded spaces and a prescription for delivering *renewal* - secure, ordered and socially included neighbourhoods. In chapter six, there was an attempt to illustrate, through the deployment of fieldwork data (largely based on residents' accounts) how each of these models can be problematized. We shall devote some space here to summarising some of the problems for 'ACE' created by this data, beginning with agency.

7.2.1 Agency

A general vision of individual agency favoured by New Labour is one that is 'active' and 'responsible' where individuals internalise a set of moral and behavioural 'norms' that are prerequisites for inclusion in the moral 'community'. As Tony Blair has stated,

'...Successful communities are about what people give as much as what they take, and any attempt to rebuild community for a modern age must assert that political and social responsibility are not optional extras...we owe duty to more than self' (1996; 304).

In terms of being a resident in an NDC area, individuals are expected to both *want* to be and therefore *be* active participants in their own and others governance, reflecting a model of individual agency espoused by Jack Straw and best expressed through the act of volunteering,

'In many ways the most important example of our approach is our commitment greatly to extend the idea and practice of volunteering – of people doing something for each other rather than having the State doing it for them and so diminishing them... We are trying to develop the concept of 'the Active Community' ...' (Straw . 1998)

However, there seems to be data to suggest that the majority of residents in my NDC study area are neither willing nor able to fulfil the role that the government envisages. As we have seen, many residents feel distant from the NDC process and lack the support or inclination to engage with the programme. This can be seen from the lack of attendance at NDC meetings and forums as well as the comments from some respondents, who bemoan a culture of disengagement and distrust in authority. In addition, despite some examples of 'neighbourliness' within specific estates, the NDC zone as a whole appeared etched with divisions around housing tenure, ethnicity, insider/outsider status, territorialism and age that undermined a commitment to and spirit of 'community'. In sum, a stubborn nexus of social relations that will hinder civic engagement of the type the Government demands/expects. We shall return to this discussion in more detail below. For now, it is necessary to examine New Labour's model of 'community' with reference to the data.

7.2.2 Community

The second component of 'ACE' is New Labour's model of 'community', which is predicated on the 'active' and 'responsible' agency of individual members. It is based, as we have seen, on a *'strong sense of identity and shared aspirations'* (NRU 2001; 8), deemed to be rooted in spatial proximity. However, whilst NDC 'communities' were chosen by virtue of their alleged value consensus and socioeconomic composition (that is, 'socially excluded'), New Labour's view of 'community' is one that is also conditional on 'good' behaviour and explicitly involves making claims about conduct and character. This is based on the assumption that there is a behavioural fault line between decent and deviant behaviour that pierces 'communities'. Therefore, there is an acknowledgement that localities are divided, but between the 'responsible' well-behaved majority who represent the 'community' and the deviant minority in its midst who must be policed, moralized and possibly brought into the fold, behaviour permitting.¹ This division permeates the recent Respect Action Plan where it

¹ Another example of an 'active' and 'responsible' community is reflected in the government agenda of encouraging of friends and family members to report fraudulent benefit claims. (e.g. <http://www.targetingbenefitfraud.gov.uk>) Again, an expectation on individuals on which a cohesive 'community' is said to be based. This echoes Tony Blair's hotline stunt, as discussed in chapter three

is recast as a difference in values between the decent majority and the ‘selfish minority’, which manifests in the minority behaving antisocially and corroding the public realm. The government sees its job as:

‘...return[ing] the public streets, parks and shopping centres to the families, pensioners and young people who want to go about their lives free from intimidation.’ (Blears, cited in Respect Task Force 2006; 37, brackets added)

However, there appears to be some evidence from my fieldwork that New Labour’s model of ‘community’ is problematic on a variety of fronts. Firstly, there is the issue of shared identity and aspirations and the degree of consensus that the government seems to presume is present amongst residents of NDC areas. As illustrated in the previous chapter, there is some evidence to suggest that this particular NDC zone is a space that is not only home to a *range* of subjectivities encompassing different values and norms, but that it is also a site of contestation. Groups and individuals contest the presence of certain groups, the use of public space and the use and direction of NDC itself. These processes combine to undermine the consensual basis of New Labour’s model of ‘community’ and de-stabilize their normative prescriptions about how ‘communities’ *should* be. There is also evidence from the data that it is the state, in various guises, over a period of several years, which has shaped to some extent the diverse resident composition of this area in an ad hoc manner. Strategic decisions that have been taken in planning and policy have produced a ‘community’ of disparate groups including sizeable student and refugee populations alongside travellers sites, homeless accommodation and a consistent flow of transient housing tenants. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that there exists a lack of trust in government and some residents respond in the way they do to these groups.² In 2001, the government decided this area was a ‘recognizable community’ and accorded it ‘New Deal for Communities’ status on that basis – this appears to be an ironic and problematic development.

Secondly, there is data to suggest that the behavioural analysis that underpins the belief in a fault line between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ that is a key part of the New Labour ‘community’ is limited at best. Rather, judgements on behaviour are more difficult to discern when there are

(section 3.3.2). A similar process has occurred recently with the advent of hosepipe bans in southern England. A local newspaper in one area is encouraging people to report the illicit use of hosepipes.

² I do not accept that these responses are always legitimate or defensible, particularly the apparent violent way in which territorial conflicts can manifest, but nor does it seem appropriate to dismiss the anger or frustration of ‘indigenous’ residents at the way ‘their’ ‘community’ is used by planners and policymakers as a solution to broader policy dilemmas by ‘dumping’ refugees or excluded schoolchildren for example. Their certainly seems to be an uneven distribution of such decisions onto ‘poor’ areas with extra strain on already scarce resources and services.

ongoing conflicts and contestations within a locality and in conditions of social exclusion. Almost inevitably, the government's attempt to map out a behavioural landscape is rendered rather simplistic when compared to the complexities of 'community' life and the dynamics of local social relations. For example, who is it that adjudicates, at the local level, what forms of behaviour are deviant, given that in the course of forging and asserting identities and staking claims within the 'community' space, norms and values appear to be negotiated and reshaped rather than pre-existing, immanent social facts.

7.2.3 Exclusion

The final component of New Labour's 'ACE' is its model of exclusion. In the context of NDC, exclusion seems to be related to the circumstances of individuals lives in which they (the NDC residents) lack access to adequate and appropriate services by virtue of living in a certain geographical space. It is not a lack of resources such as time or money that is the emphasis of NDC, rather it is geared towards refurbishing the context of resident's lives. In addition to the local environment and local services, part of that context also relates to access to decision making and governance. This model of exclusion holds that individuals are diminished by a lack of control over decisions affecting their life. Inclusion then becomes about not only having sufficient access to good local services and a more pleasurable environment, but about participation in civic society and being able to influence decisions that affect one's life.

In terms of my data, we have seen how, despite a shared spatial environment, residents within this NDC zone have a range of needs and respond differently to the same context of disadvantage. This is because of the diversity of experiences and capabilities that exist within the zone. There is evidence to support the view that age, gender, housing tenure and territory to name a few, structure individual needs in such a way that renders the government's attempt to 'read off' needs from locality as problematic. This places pressure on local NDC partnerships to identify the diverse ways that exclusion is lived and attempt to organise responses that are sensitive and will enhance quality of lives. In Salford, there is some evidence of this if we consider the purchasing of services from Age Concern and sports development workers as examples. However, there is still some distance between the diversity of needs displayed and NDC responses. This, I would suggest is because an area-based programme such as NDC is ill-equipped to adequately respond to the various ways people can be socially excluded.

In addition, an examination of the extent to which 'needs' are relational - constructed through interaction with other 'community' members – appears to illustrate another dimension of

NDC's inadequacy. The improvement of services does not seem like a satisfactory approach if we consider the influence of social relations in shaping the 'community' that surrounds the process of area regeneration. Of course, government could respond by pointing to its 'respect' agenda and arguing that it is committed to instilling social order and eradicating antisocial behaviour and other social pollutants that divide residents and constrain their interaction with the 'community'. However, this attention to relational dynamics of exclusion is not without its problems because, as we shall see below, it tends to be repeatedly skewed towards the same groups. Rather than a genuine attempt to understand how and why social divisions are informally constructed within a 'community', (resulting in barriers for some in using certain services) the instinct is to control and criminalize through ASBOs and dispersal orders, thereby compounding existing disadvantages.

Despite these issues of neglect, few would quibble with NDC's focus on challenging the twin drivers of exclusion mentioned above (new services, greater say in decisions). However, there are some further legitimate questions to be asked about NDC's effectiveness in challenging exclusion in a holistic, long-term manner. For example, there is a question mark over whether 'community' involvement is always commensurate with meeting the needs of certain individuals or groups. Furthermore, it would be valid to locate NDC within broader debates, mentioned in chapter three, section 3.2.1, about the meaning of 'social inclusion' and whether 'ACE', as the recipe for excluded spaces, has any merit in a deeper egalitarian sense.

The intentions of this section has been to summarize some of the data recounted in the previous chapter and apply it directly to the models that comprise New Labour's 'ACE'. This amounts to a gentle problematizing of each model that will provide an introduction into a more specific discussion of the implications of the data for NDC and also New Labour's social welfare agenda. We turn now to examine NDC in more detail in light of the above critique of 'ACE'

7.3 Evaluating NDC

Essentially, this section will seek to examine NDC in light of the data illustrated in chapter six and offer some judgements that take account of my data, but which also recognize the limited scope of this study. That is, whilst it is contended that some key critiques can be formulated vis a vis NDC and its framework of 'ACE', there is a need for realistic reflection on what this thesis can legitimately argue. To echo the point made in my introduction, the judgements of NDC are in fact judgements of one particular NDC programme in Salford. Moreover, whilst one can problematize the 'ACE' models that underpin all NDCs, this is also limited to data generated in one particular 'community'. One may assume that similar

contestations and heterogeneous experiences are present in other NDC zones, or conversely, another area would have been closer to the government's ideals and prescriptions, but that, ultimately, is a question for another investigation.³ What is appropriate for this study is, having identified some problems with 'ACE', to now pose questions and seek to explain *why* NDC has been organised according to these principles and further, given there seems to be a disconnect between 'ACE' and my findings, examine the implications for NDC and the residents on the ground. It is through a combination of these two discussions of both theory and practice that some conclusion can be reached about the 'appropriateness of NDC for tackling social exclusion'.

To an extent, the tone of the thesis up to this point has been implicitly (perhaps explicitly in places) critical. Critical of traditional analyses of 'community' life and critical of New Labour's attempts to understand and address the problems of socially excluded areas. Consequently, one could assume that the general tenor of the discussion of NDC would be critical. Indeed, I do want to argue that there are some flaws that appear to run through the theoretical core of NDC as well as some aspects of its practice, but it is also important to appreciate that some significant changes have taken place through NDC that have benefited residents in a variety of ways⁴. The relationship between 'ACE' and NDC in practice appears to be a complex one (made so by flawed preconceptions at a policymaking level) and my examination will try to make clear that it recognizes such complexity in its attempt to engage in a fair and balanced examination of NDC. In addition, it is important to note that the data being used to support my analysis of NDC is not intended to be representative or an exhaustive depiction of this 'community'. This demands a degree of caution in what one can claim about the residents and NDC. I hope that the following discussion is one that is both circumspect but concise and fruitful.

7.3.1 A 'recognizable community'?

As we have seen there seems to be enough evidence to suggest that this particular 'community' is a contested space that is negotiated and constituted by competing identities. The first question this throws up is why this area was chosen for NDC funding at all. As we have seen, the arbitrary delineation of this space as a 'community' actually encompasses distinct housing estates and a variety of disparate groups. Much like any spatially defined locale (irrespective of how homogeneous it is assumed to be), there are different individuals

³ It is also a question that is not really answerable by referring to academic research literature. Studies of NDC areas tend to focus on the extent of participation and the level of 'community' capacity, (e.g Dinham 2005) rather than the diversity that I am discussing.

⁴ These were discussed in detail in chapter five, section 5.2.4

and groups each with a distinct relationship with the world around them structured by age, ethnicity, housing tenure, gender and territory. Alongside the intersection of these social dynamics is the addition of ‘outsider’ groups (students, asylum seekers, travellers) to the composition of the area. This adds further complexity to the relationships and experiences that comprise the ‘community’. Therefore, given this heterogeneity and lack of consensus amongst residents (as there appears to be around issues such as uses of public space, the presence of police on the streets, the presence of ‘outsider’ groups and plans for redevelopment) why was it identified as having ‘*a strong sense of identity*’ and ‘*shared aspiration*’ as dictated by the Government’s NDC guidelines (NRU 2001; 8)?

For some respondents in my study, the answer is that the selection of this area had little to do with its strong identity or consensual fabric. For example, there was an impression on the part of one NDC staff member in Salford that this area was given the money not because of the ‘community’ spirit of the area, but because it was simply ‘their turn’. That is, that other wards in the city were receiving funding from other regeneration streams (such as Single Regeneration Budget) and this area had fallen behind in the pursuit of available government resources. Consequently, NDC funding was targeted for this area to plug a gap in the Salford-wide neighbourhood renewal strategy.

Furthermore, a resident respondent suggested that the choice of these areas (out of all wards across Salford as a whole) as the ‘bid’ wards for NDC funding within this framework was down to political expediency and the desire to boost the profile and support of local politicians.

Another explanation for its selection could have been the perceived ‘potential’ of the area given the amount of unused land and access to the riverbank. This is certainly the impression of some of the more conspiratorial residents who believe the NDC process has been a Trojan horse for the local authority eager to sell off this dormant land for development purposes and alter the social mix of an area that ‘*doesn’t pay for itself*’ (Karen; community worker).⁵

Overall, understanding why this area was chosen is extremely difficult to discern with any certainty. There appears to be two factors. On the one hand, there was some definite local

⁵ Certainly, the re-branding of Salford as a whole has been related to the redevelopment of the river that runs through it. An article in a local newspaper (Keeling 2005) reported how consultants have identified the riverbank as a resource that if successfully regenerated could attract people to live and work there. Beautification is a key to the re-branding and altering of ‘perceptions’ about the city. The difference such developments will make to existing Salfordians is a complex question given the emphasis placed on attracting newcomers to the city.

shaping in terms of delineating this particular zone in preparation for bidding, possibly under political influence. Added to this is the role of the architects of the initial NDC bid in Salford who would have worked within two strategic planning frameworks. The first would have been the LSP's neighbourhood renewal strategy. The NDC bid would have had to compliment this locally constructed area development framework and the city council's vision for the city as a whole. The second was the central government guidelines as supplied by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. For example,

'Charlestown and Lower Kersal was identified as the preferred area for New Deal for Communities by the Salford Partnership, the strategic partnership for the City...The neighbourhood stands out as an area of Salford which exhibits concentrated problems...These problems accord with the priority issues that 'New Deal for Communities' has been established to tackle'. (Salford NDC Delivery Plan 2001-2011, 2001; 5)

Consequently, the initial NDC bid sought to portray the area as containing potential for development, being relatively homogeneous and crucially, consensual. For example,

'Despite the area's decline, Charlestown/Lower Kersal has a well defined community with strong links across the area in terms of family, services, jobs, education and community perceptions.' (Salford NDC Delivery Plan 2001-2011, 2001; 5)

Therefore, responsibility for the defining of this space as a 'community' and the consequent disconnection between image and reality lies with the architects of the bid in Salford, not civil servants in Whitehall. Despite the lack of 'community', they were able to portray the area as was required by these guidelines whilst meeting their own local strategic social and planning needs. The demands of the government's funding requirements seems to have necessitated a (re)constitution of this space, by local planners, as a consensual 'community', based on a rather partial analysis, simultaneously obfuscating the complex reality of relationships in the area. .

Nonetheless, whilst one can understand the desire on the part of local people and planners to attract NDC funding and so portraying their area in the (selective) manner which is demanded, it is less obvious why the government are so keen to inscribe such a specific model of 'community' in their NDC directives. Why attach itself with such fervour to a model of 'community' that appears so partial, almost to the point of being an abstraction? The essence of this question is, in the course of imposing a construct of 'community' apparently

so detached from reality, are policymakers aware of this detachment? Also, are they aware of the problems this may present for NDC partnerships on the ground who have to manage the tensions and conflicts that their programmes were supposed to avoid (by virtue of only being ‘given’ to ‘recognizable communities’?) In short, is NDC characterised by a deliberate desire to regulate excluded areas according to their ‘ACE’ project (by funding correct expressions of ‘community’) or a calamitous lack of awareness of the reality of such areas? This is a question that informs later discussions

This moves us on from asking *why* the area was chosen. In a sense, it could be seen as facile to denounce NDC for not being applied properly, particularly given the essence of my argument is that it *cannot* be applied properly *anywhere* because the ‘community’ model lacks any grounding in reality.⁶ Rather, the point is that an examination of NDC should question the motivation of central government in using NDC to apply a certain model of ‘community’ (or agency or exclusion for that matter) to socially excluded areas at all (irrespective of whether it is ‘realistic’). Additionally, we need to consider the tension between the model(s) and the realities of the ‘community’ on the ground and reflect on some of the implications of this apparent disconnection. For example, does it hamper the challenging of residents’ exclusion, ostensibly NDC’s *raison d’être*? The identification of the disconnection between model and reality is therefore only the first step towards a proper examination of the NDC conundrum. There is further work to be done in examining its implications.

7.4 Implications of the disconnection

In this section, I want to leave explanations for the disconnection between New Labour’s ‘ACE’ and the data to one side for the moment and focus on trying to examine NDC’s ‘appropriateness’. This entails an exploration of some of the implications of the apparent disparity for those working for NDC and the residents supposed to be benefiting from the programme. In other words, I want to explore how successful it is in meeting the needs and challenging the social exclusion of those people. Moreover, do the conceptual problems with ‘ACE’ have any real repercussions on the ground?

NDC as a programme ‘out there’ in the social world is an embodiment of New Labour’s efforts to construct excluded spaces as ‘communities’. It is the mechanism by which resources

⁶ Although, to reiterate an earlier point, this assertion is based on one piece of fieldwork in one ‘community’. Other areas could be shining examples of consensus and shared aspiration. Although media reports on other NDC areas have consistently referred to ‘infighting’ and conflict amongst residents and Partnerships. See for example, Weaver (2002, 2003) and Humphries (2002).

are allocated to the local level and by which local people and networks are harnessed to 'build community'. In Salford, NDC is an active presence in the area. Its office is located in the centre of the zone and the NDC slogan has been attached to everything from street cleaners to school gates in an attempt to brand the space explicitly as an 'NDC community'.

Furthermore, it is active in galvanising resident participation, which manifests in an expectation on residents to coalesce around and participate in the 'community' that NDC is trying to create. It does this by encouraging residents to conceptualize their immediate locale as a 'community', by consulting them about improvements and problems of that Government-defined zone and through an array of signifiers such as meetings, newsletters and the physical erection of signs that delineate and reify that space.⁷

The reasons for such a zealous 'renewal' of the area are probably rooted in a desire to create a space that is *shared* with the hope, it is argued, of strengthening local social capital and 'building community'⁸ – a way of developing capacity for partnership working with local agencies as well as social order amongst residents. That is, NDC is about shaping the *future* trajectory of designated spaces by locking in forms of individual behaviour and ways of working that refurbish to lay the foundations for 'sustainable' change, change that benefits the residents and is cost effective for government. To achieve this the government, in effect, is *naming* socially excluded terrain such as this as a 'community' and applying NDC to facilitate and bolster the relationships and ingredients considered necessary for socially *including* the area and its residents. The way in which NDC seeks to construct 'community' in practice is imbued with ideas that originate in New Labour's 'ACE' encompassing a set of assumptions about social relations and expectations about how residents should behave. In practice, NDC utilizes certain techniques to shape the 'community' it envisages. In order to reflect on its 'appropriateness' this discussion will pinpoint and examine these methods.

7.4.1 Contesting Behaviour

One component of their effort to construct 'community' is NDC's compliance with constituting excluded spaces as ones of conflict. In line with New Labour's models of 'community' and agency, this means encouraging residents to make claims on each other's behaviour in an ongoing dialogue with NDC, whether through meetings with workers and NDC police officers, or larger scale surveys and consultations. For example, I witnessed one residents meeting during which the local 'nuisance link' police officer addressed the audience

⁷ The eagerness with which this area has been defined as a NDC zone through signage at all major gateways to the area is consistent with recent research done on the importance of 'image management' in regeneration projects. For example, see Dean and Hastings (2000).

⁸ As I have suggested above, this seems also to be designed to forge a post-industrial identity and strengthen identification with the area on the part of its residents.

and informed them of the availability of freepost ‘antisocial behaviour forms’ and urged residents to report such behaviour anonymously if necessary. The forms were also advertised in monthly NDC newsletters and shop windows. This type of policing of fellow residents’ behaviour is constitutive of what New Labour has decreed an ‘active’ and responsible ‘community’ and echoes David Blunkett’s ‘Together Campaign’ designed to *‘provide local people with all they need to launch their own campaigns to galvanise their communities into action.’* (Home Office 2004)

Underwriting this vision of ‘active’ claim-making citizens, as we have seen in chapter two, is an analysis of ‘community’ spaces (reflecting an analysis of society as a whole) as containing a behavioural fault line between the ‘good’, responsible majority and the deviant minority. Deriving from this analysis is a normative judgement that those ‘good’ ‘community’ members should seek to moralize and reconstruct the deviant few, thereby enforcing the key reciprocal obligation of ‘community’ membership – desistance from misbehaviour. This (the government believes) manifests in an assertion of ‘decent’, commonsense values and an upholding of social order by informing local police of ‘bad’ behaviour.⁹ This model of ‘community’ enforcement has also crept into reforms of local governance and implicated a range of service providers in the management of behaviour. For example, in its White Paper *Building Communities, Beating Crime*, the government stated its intention to make public agencies more accountable to the public by giving,

‘local communities a formal way to request and ensure that action is taken by the police, local authorities and others in response to persistent anti-social behaviour or community safety problems. Or if that action is not taken – they will know why not publicly.’ (Respect Task Force 2006; 28)

Changes mooted include ‘face the people’ briefings for the local police and local authority; spreading the ‘neighbourhood management’ programme and ensuring all regeneration programmes contain measures for tackling bad behaviour:

‘Over the next 12 months we will ensure that all government-funded regeneration schemes are accompanied by approaches that promote good and tackle bad behaviour. For example, neighbourhood wardens, neighbourhood managers,

⁹ The construction of the problematic, antisocial minority has been consistently referred to by government ministers, particularly Home Office minister Hazel Blears, MP for Salford. Similarly, the local newspaper – Manchester Evening News - introduced a ‘Stand up for Salford’ campaign during which local people were encouraged to phone an antisocial behaviour hotline and report ‘bad’ behaviour. Such a construction has clearly pervaded cultural as well as political discourse.

assertive housing management and parenting programmes. ' (Respect Task Force 2006; 28)

According to a recent Guardian (19th May 2006) newspaper article, the role of a range of public agencies in scrutinising behaviour will be stepped up under government plans currently being examined. It suggests that the government thinks '*neighbourhood wardens, community support officers, park keepers and other frontline council staff*' could be a key resource in the surveillance of criminal and antisocial behaviour (Wintour and Muir 2006).

There are clear Foucauldian fingerprints on the implicating of public service staff to identify bad behaviour in this manner that Squires has described as a '*blurring of civil and criminal jurisdictions*' (2006; 160). David Garland describes this panoptical dispersal of disciplinary possibilities as a '*responsibilization strategy*' which redistributes the '*...task of crime control, rendering others responsible, multiplying the number of effective authorities, forming alliances...The criminal justice state is, in this area at least, shedding its 'sovereign' style of governing by top-down command...*' (2001; 125)

This approach is consistent with a shift identified by Fitzpatrick (2005b) from a top-down penal welfare state to governance 'at a distance' (p168). That is, in order to manage risks and preserve the security of 'communities', residents are expected to '*become its own police force*' (p169) and participate in the maintenance of social order. To some extent, this is intended to free up police time, but ultimately is about obviating the need for a police presence in the first place by instilling order. However, this trend must be contrasted with apparently increasing public calls for a 'visible police presence' on the streets (echoed by residents in the NDC zone). There is an apparent tension between public and bureaucratic understandings of effective policing.

Nonetheless, New Labour is clearly of the mind that there should be no unexplored avenue in their desire to expose bad behaviour. The good of the 'community' and moral majority is paramount and all arms of the state (and beyond) should be reasonably expected to participate in the unrelenting quest for social order and a culture of 'respect'.

To return to New Labour's analysis of a 'community' fault line, it would seem that, predicated on this topography of social relations and behavioural codes, government believes NDC can confidently enter a 'community', provide means to highlight misbehaviour, and empower the 'good' residents (and local welfare agencies) who will then impose their moral authority on the rest. In fact, in the view of New Labour's 'ACE', there is little or no tension

between facilitating contestation and building 'community'. They are in fact two sides of the same coin.

However, this ideal moral 'community' is undermined in Salford by the relational realities of living in such an area where a pervasive 'no grass' culture exists, or one could argue, is enforced. For example,

'Now as far those people are concerned it is crime and serious crime because they feel seriously intimidated and they are intimidated and you get the word 'grass' painted all over the place.' ('Bill', resident and community representative, 21-60)

'People won't come forward with evidence if they've seen somebody do something, erm, they wont give evidence and they wont give a statement... There is a massive, erm, I've worked in quite a few places and I've never come across it like I have in Salford, there is a massive 'no grass' culture here... You just don't say anything to anyone and that's sort of inbred and its really difficult to overcome...' (NDC police sergeant)

Moreover, a consequence of New Labour's eagerness for facilitating claims on behaviour and encouraging the imposition of one set of norms over the other is that there appears to be one group in the 'community' who consistently suffers. Young people, as we have seen, rely on public space more than any other group and are subject to more scrutiny than any other. New Labour has taken this up as one of its core themes in government, introducing Antisocial Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) and reiterating the need to tackle 'yob' behaviour.¹⁰

According to one youth worker, as a consequence of this New Labour has successfully '*lowered tolerance levels*' and '*widened the parameters of bad behaviour*' with young people suffering as a result. For example, '*Kids have hung around street corners shops since Adam was a lad, but now that is called antisocial behaviour.*' ('Paul', youth worker)

He told me of boys playing football in a local pub car park who were moved because patrons defined it as 'antisocial behaviour' and called the police. It is against this political and rhetorical backdrop that young people are problematized by older residents and have their claims on NDC arbitrated by other members of the 'community'. (Exemplified by the

¹⁰ Lister (2006) notes that nearly half of all ASBOs since their introduction in 1999 have been issued against juveniles. Flint & Nixon (2006) state that whilst young people were not initially perceived to be a target group, under 21s received 74% of ASBOs between 1999 and 2004.

blocking of youth shelters in which adults mobilised a narrative of ‘bad’ behaviour to justify their obstinacy.) ‘Paul’ suggests that,

‘A lot of people seem to forget that young people are part of the community, or don’t want them part of the community. New Deal views young people as a threat rather than an asset’ (‘Paul’, youth worker)

Indeed, the first consultation of residents by the PA team contained ‘youth’ as a subcategory of ‘community’ issues to be addressed alongside transport, housing, environment and so on, immediately constructing this group as a concern for the ‘community’ to consider.

This seems to be an example of where the disconnection has real implications for one section of the ‘community’. The reality of inviting claims on behaviour is that social divisions such as age will inform definitions of behaviour and morality and therefore the nature and extent of claims made. In addition, the process of ‘making’ ‘community’ and deciding who is an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ may play its part in shaping definitions of ‘good’ behaviour and the problematizing of certain groups. That is, making claims on young people may be less to do with conduct and more to do with social difference, underpinned by divisions of age, and which groups residents want to be in the ‘community’ under continual (re)creation.

Nevertheless, the government presumes an agreed behavioural code based on ‘commonsense’ and ‘decency’ – a ‘moral sense’ (Wilson 1993) decoupled from any sense of social context or subjectivity, which should be inculcated within us all. By contrast, I would suggest that there are in fact competing definitions of good conduct shaped by a range of social divisions including class, gender, ethnicity and age.¹¹ Moreover, the government’s feverish commitment to making claims on bad behaviour is subjective and, as Squires has noted, *‘the reaction and perception...of third parties are central to its definition’* (2006; 159). Clearly, this raises concerns about who is able to make ‘stick’ particular definitions of behaving antisocially. Introducing a racial dimension to the debate, Squires argues:

‘...the definitional ambiguities about what, exactly, constitutes ASB (antisocial behaviour) may reinforce racist and discriminatory interpretations of youthful behaviour.’ (2006; 161)

¹¹ Indeed, one could argue that youth behaviour is often intended to subvert adult ‘norms’ creating a dichotomy that is irreconcilable with the notion of ‘shared’ norms and values and ensuring their exclusion from such a framework of social order.

The upshot of all this is that young people, less influential and less vocal in staking their claim for 'good' behaviour become the targets of the definitions of some adult residents who consider consumption of public space, usually in groups, dressing in casual wear and boisterousness as 'bad' behaviour. Young people who indulge in this sort of behaviour are then excluded from the making of 'community' in a positive sense and become subject to further scrutiny and possibly measures of control.¹² That is, there is a danger that certain brands of 'youth' are not considered a 'legitimate identity' (Furbey 1999; 438) when it comes to regeneration and participation.

If young people are to be considered part of the 'community' (which they should) this dynamic calls into question New Labour's assumption that contestations of behaviour are key to building 'community'. In this case, facilitating such contestations, without considering the social differences that inform behaviour and morality and how different groups antagonise each other in their negotiated relationship (and in the 'making' of 'community') can lead to one group being consistently labelled as problematic. In effect, this is to exclude them from the 'community', especially if adult residents are able to contest the building of facilities designed explicitly for the troublesome element. This practical exclusion is reinforced by a rhetorical exclusion from reciprocal citizenship in which politicians have made it plain that incivility entails a breaking of the contract between individuals and their 'community'. Increasingly citizens owe duties to others in a contingent relationship, rather than to the state per se. The possible consequences of this development were discussed in chapter three, section 3.2.2.

Of course, government may defend this process by arguing that young people (indeed everyone) should be subject to scrutiny and stress the importance of protecting the security of well-behaved residents and this is fine to a point. There is no merit in defending criminal or genuinely threatening behaviour, particularly when certain areas experience the accumulation of such behaviours over time, but the point is the tendency to problematize youth per se with little or no recognition that definitions of 'good' conduct and 'respectability' are not fixed but fluid and socially shaped. In addition, some studies have shown that incivility is just as common amongst 'respectable' residents, just not as visible. (Phillips and Smith 2003) Furthermore, there is a hollowness to the concept of 'antisocial' behaviour that reflects a '*victory of behaviourism over social positivism*' (Squires 2006; 157). In other words, behaviour is stripped of context to become about '*motivation and intentions*' (2006; 157)

¹² Curfews were suggested by many people to the PA team as control measures. CCTV on the main roads is designed to survey consumption of particular spaces. Also, some local youths were 'candidates' for ASBO's (NDC programme manager).

rather than possible causes that require support rather than punishment.¹³ (See Squires 2006 for a discussion of some of these causes)

As a result, it has to be said that New Labour's belief that the construction of 'community' includes encouraging residents to make claims on each other risks neglecting existing relations of power and influence and legitimizing the policing of certain groups whose behaviour is perceived (in the eyes of the dominant (adult) beholders) to be deviant. The attempt to create 'community' through behavioural and moral unity fails to recognize the complexity of social groupings and the intersection of power and social division that produce a hierarchy of definitions of 'good conduct' therein. Finally, it risks appearing like a cynical attempt to appease the supposed 'respectable' members of that grouping by 'empowering' them to effect social closure (and possibly exclusion) on others.

7.4.2 Sanctioning conflict?

For this thesis, the active sanctioning of conflict of the type described above places NDC's appropriateness in question. In addition, some other, possibly unforeseen consequences of NDC's presence pose further questions for this examination.

First, New Labour's rather benign conception of NDC's presence and 'community' relations belies a social reality that is far more complex than it appreciates. One offshoot of its attempt to construct 'community' is actually to unwittingly sanction its contestation. NDC and its efforts to instil a 'community' consciousness actually invite competing claims over 'communal' spaces and facilities because it misunderstands the fractured nature of the area. By *naming* the 'community' it immediately constitutes it as a site of struggle and negotiation that goes beyond the imposition of the behavioural norms of the majority – one conflict it was prepared for. Whilst the government believes in this method to instil social order via the process outlined above, there is perhaps a misjudgement about the extent of the conflicts and tensions that it is reifying. This, I would suggest, can be traced back to its lack of awareness of the heterogeneity in excluded spaces and the existence of multiple identities, norms and experiences and has two main consequences.

Firstly, one could argue that although NDC is trying to construct and impose an orderly 'community' on unruly excluded terrain, its presence is inadvertently opening a Pandora's

¹³ It has to be said that the government has belatedly committed itself to a range of measures designed to support people with behavioural issues (see Respect Task Force (2006) for details). The effectiveness and strength of that commitment remains unclear, particularly when compared with the fervour displayed for being 'tough' on behaviour.

box of local conflict by supplying a narrative or consciousness that residents exploit in their negotiation of 'community'. That is, NDC encourages claims to be made on people, public space and on how the area is 'renewed' and in so doing, undermines its own argument that such spaces are consensual. In the act of consultation, for example, it invites a range of opinions and taps into the diversity of values held by residents, some of which will be in conflict with others – two outcomes of the consultation that it appears to underestimate. In addition, by making funding available for projects and groups, there is an implicit contest over the allocation of resources and which ideas are 'rewarded'. This is probably best illustrated by the example of youth shelters where older residents objected to the plans for a designated youth space. This led to local police trying to intervene and manage the conflict and 'sell' the plans to those raising objections. Another example is the redevelopment plans. NDC have been forced to both 'work' with residents who perceive the plans to be trespassing on 'their' 'community' and mediate between those residents and estates who have accepted the plans and those pockets of resistance within the 'community'.

This also hints at a failure to understand how 'communities' are 'made' - informally and shaped by relations of power. We saw in the previous chapter how certain groups in the zone are considered 'outsiders', (a phenomenon that the resident PA team also identified) and we know from other research accounts that the creation of insider / outsider divisions can be intrinsic to 'making' 'community' (see for example Evans 1997). Here is an example from my data of this in operation,

'What we do with smack dealers is we kick 'em out. We don't wait for the council or the police to do it. We go down...throw all the furniture on the streets and they've got to go, cos they cant live there...If they don't listen then, we fucking drag 'em out...We've done it 5 or 6 times over the last 4 or 5 years. The reason why we haven't got a smack problem round here is because we don't let it happen...once they start selling to young kids and once you get 1 or 2 young kids on it, you get 5 or 6 on it. Well, we're not having it, so we don't have it and it's our direct action.' ('Jim', resident; 21-60)

This is an extreme example of social closure where vigilantism is used to police local estates. However, as shown in the previous chapter, 'space invaders' such as asylum seekers, students and private housing tenants¹⁴ have all been subject to varying degrees of social closure in the

¹⁴ Another 'space invader' in the zone were travellers. However, there was as much fear of this particular group as animosity. The widespread view was that they excluded themselves and were not

NDC zone, at times manifesting in overt violence, but always reinforcing their status as ‘outsiders’. The objective, if not the means, of excluding drug users and dealers is perhaps understandable, but what of other ‘outsider’ groups? The arrival of NDC and its *naming* of ‘community’ could be seen to be reinforcing the creation of that divide by giving established or well-connected residents a resource with which to define the terms of ‘community’ membership and construct a barrier between themselves and those they do not consider ‘proper’ residents. As a result, it could exacerbate social divisions within the space rather than building ‘community’ and indirectly legitimise the exclusion of those groups and individuals from networks of affinity and support. Again, because of this disconnection between assumptions of unity and a divided reality, pressure is placed on local NDC partnerships to circumvent local divisions and to reach out to ‘outsider’ groups to try to ensure they are included in both the NDC process and integrated into the ‘community’.

This is the second consequence of ‘naming’ the ‘community’. NDC immediately defines tensions and conflict within the space as ‘problems’ *of the community* that require management strategies. In practice, this has meant that NDC has had to try to reach out to ‘outsider’ groups and try to resolve these various tensions, usually through liaising with advocacy and support groups.¹⁵ It also exposes the disconnection between hazy Government ideas about constructing ‘community’ and the reality facing those agencies on the ground that have to manage conflict between competing groups and the strategies adopted by individuals from those groups to safely negotiate their ‘community’.¹⁶

7.4.3 Animating the ‘community’

If the above were some unforeseen consequences of NDC’s presence, an *intentional* aspect of NDC’s mission to imprint a ‘community’ into malleable socially excluded terrain is to ‘animate’ ‘community’ and instigate a sense of psychological attachment to the locality on the part of residents. As we have seen, this animation occurs firstly in a context of delineation and branding of ‘community’ and manifests in encouraging participation in decision-making, local projects and the policing of behaviour of other residents. Ultimately, it seems that government hopes that these mechanisms will generate harmonious social relations whereby

interested in being part of the ‘community’ or engaging with NDC, although such a perception was not corroborated or contradicted by anyone from the traveller sites.

¹⁵ Two main examples of this in Salford – refugee and asylum seeker organisation and a group concerned with the welfare of travellers. Both had been contacted by NDC to address issues facing both groups and resolve tensions.

¹⁶ For example, student respondents informed me of avoidance tactics that they are told, such as being warned not to enter certain pubs or go into certain estates after dark. According to one respondent, asylum seekers also ‘stick together’ despite national and ethnic differences because they are ‘on the same boat’ in terms of coping with living in a strange and sometimes hostile ‘community’.

everyone is ‘on the same boat’ and rowing in the same direction or those that are not can be compelled or stigmatised until they do. It hopes, I would argue, the outcome will be a stable, unitary social formation characterised by three aspects:

1. Behavioural unity – shared standards of conduct, policed by fellow residents if necessary
2. Unity of values – ‘community’ members all drawing from the same stock of aspirations and ideals
3. Unity of needs – all members on ‘the same boat’ each with closely related perceptions of their needs which are collectively challenged

Each of these facets of the ‘community’ that NDC is designed to create are underpinned by a set of demands on *individual* members as such a system can only operate if its members respond ‘appropriately’ to the expectations placed upon them. Indeed, government conceives of participation in the organisation and practice of NDC as a necessary mechanism for responsabilizing residents and regenerating moral order. In this section, I want to explore some of these expectations and in light of my data, question whether they are appropriate and the effects they might have on residents.

New Labour’s selling point for NDC is that it has ‘communities at its heart’ (NRU 2001; 11).¹⁷ This meant that residents were expected to be active participants and perform a range of functions in the ‘community’, facilitated by the NDC process. As illustrated above, certain individuals are expected to be arbiters of morality and conduct. In addition, residents are expected to respond to the construction of their locale as a ‘community’ and share that ‘community’ with adjacent estates and territories and participate in the governance of that zone. Furthermore, ‘participation’ entails supplying ideas, plans, criticisms and giving time to meetings, reading documents and being available (if a ‘community’ representative) and accountable to other residents, some of whom can be frustrated or angry. A BBC Newsnight report on a NDC zone in Birmingham illustrated this relationship in practice. The NDC board member being filmed and interviewed was stopped in the street mid interview and confronted by an upset female resident demanding that he do something about repairs to her house, to which he could only apologize and admit to the reporter that he could not meet her demand. In the follow up studio discussion to the report, panellist Jonathon Rosenberg, identified as a ‘community development consultant’, argued,

¹⁷ Although, as one resident told me, initially NDC was supposed to be ‘community led’, before a subtle but crucial change in rhetoric.

'Its [NDC] a very well intentioned programme in which the Government comes along and they say well here is a very deprived area, the professional middle classes have failed perhaps to deliver the services that they should have done so what we are going to do is ask this very deprived community to suddenly take on all these responsibilities and not even pay them. If you think about it, it's rather barmy. Suddenly, ordinary folk are responsible for everything, they get stopped in the street and immediately they have to fix things.' (BBC Newsnight 7/8/2003, brackets added)

This quote identifies two key points that we can use to explore NDC further. Firstly, he suggests that a turn 'to the community' in urban policy is informed by a view that welfare systems under the auspices of the 'professional middle classes' have failed to provide for disadvantaged people. This is a view contested by residents of a Liverpool NDC who believe the programme to be nothing more than the latest opportunity for professional dominance, dubbing it 'new deal for consultants'. (Jones 2001, cited in Wilks-Heeg 2003; 211)

Nonetheless, as Alcock (2004) has argued, the emphasis on local citizens participating in NDC and other programmes partly rests on an attempt to balance the structure and agency components of social policies and recognizing that citizens can improve governance by supplying different forms of knowledge and expertise.

Beyond this analysis of the fashion for citizen participation, the quote hints at some problems with this approach, throwing up some questions about how the 'empowerment' advocated by NDC operates in practice. That is, whilst it may be well intentioned in theory, in practice it means placing a burden of responsibility on local people that may not be empowering, but tokenistic and even demoralizing without proper support. Ellison and Ellison (2006) also point out that it may not be compatible with an 'employment first' welfare state (p341). That is, there may be a tension here between New Labour's belief in paid employment as the key obligation of citizenship and its commitment to encouraging civic-mindedness. This is a model of citizenship that could be skewed towards not only the cash, but also the time rich.

In terms of my own study, as we saw in chapter five, some individuals have felt empowered by the NDC process, whilst others have been politicised by opposition to it. However, we also saw how the 'community' participation aspect of NDC is driven by a small group of determined 'community' actors that may have been empowered by the process, but the vast majority of residents have not responded to 'demands' placed on them beyond the initial euphoria that galvanised people when NDC was first set up. This is a key issue in the operation of 'empowerment'. Ruth Lister has recently raised a question mark about the

spasmodic empowerment of disparate individuals. She asserts that it may not always be a 'good thing' without genuine attempts to disperse power and influence amongst residents:

'At local community level, if empowerment is limited to strengthening the self-confidence and capacity for action of some individuals, it might not benefit the community as a whole or might even exacerbate community divisions at the expense of the most marginalized.' (2004; 174)

Concerns about the 'usual suspects' who 'capture' the decision-making process are common in the participation literature (for example, Alcock 2004, Taylor 2002b, Hoban and Beresford 2001) with debates circulating about how to engage beyond this group and the potential disempowering impact for those not involved for in decision making processes. Hoban and Beresford raise a specific point about New Labour's courting of 'social entrepreneurship' and 'dynamic local leaders' (2001; 314) and the idea that regeneration of areas is seen as an opportunity for individuals to prosper:

'But we thought the whole point of the exercise is to seek to arrest the decline of 'poor neighbourhoods'. By 'neighbourhoods' do we not mean all of the people who live within a particular and defined social environment?...To emphasize opportunities for individual residents in poor neighbourhoods may only lead to new possibilities for the few at the expense of the many.' (2001; 316)

There is also, they argue, a danger that to talk about the importance of 'leadership' may imply 'followership' and undermine the potential for residents to *'reflect, analyse and act for themselves'* (2001; 314). This echoes my earlier point about the danger of sanctioning claims on behaviour in that it might cement existing social divisions and operate through structures of power and control, allowing certain people to dominate, rather than the benign claim-making New Labour considers vital to create social order.

However, that is not to automatically say that 'empowerment' is not a valid objective for policy, what matters for some in the community development field is *how* this objective is undertaken. That is, the concerns about pressure placed on NDC residents derives from the way that pressure is applied and the motivation that lies behind it, rather than encouraging participation per se. Potentially, the focus on giving residents opportunities to make decisions and manage services could be a positive one, but only if it is a *'journey of empowerment'* (Warren-Adamson cited in Dinham 2005; 303) that takes account of the biographies of individuals and allows them to have genuine control and influence *on their own terms*. The

key objective here, according to Hoban and Beresford, would be for government to support and enable local people *'to shape their own agenda for regeneration.'* (2001; 318) Hoban and Beresford argue that genuine and sustainable social change in excluded neighbourhoods can *only* occur when people have this opportunity. As long as government tries to control the agenda, even if that agenda is committed to the ostensible empowerment of 'communities' (à la NDC), it is likely to be another *'high profile and costly long-term failure.'* (2001; 318) In addition, a corollary of having control in this manner is that it may secure opportunities for those previously lacking in confidence or the social and economic resources necessary to exercise their voice more coherently. That is, to acknowledge and allow for the skills and capacities needed to be an effective participant. Unless such an approach is adopted, there is the possibility that some citizens who are included and involved will have negative experiences:

'...there is equal scope for disempowerment and alienation as the complexities of power and interest surrounding the decision-making process are revealed to groups, many of which will have little previous experience of the [local] political realm.'

(Ellison and Ellison 2006; 342, brackets added)

At this point, we can examine a tension in the organization and governance of NDC in that it can be characterised by what Furbey calls *'centralist localism'* with a commitment to 'community' participation that occurs within a *'firmly circumscribed regime'* (Furbey 1999; 434) where expected outputs and bidding guidelines are framed by central government. Therefore, despite attempts to strengthen the *'voice from below'*, they remain *'strongly mediated'* (1999; 437). This would appear to reflect a wider tension in New Labour's 'active citizenship' rhetoric which, according to Marinetto, is yet to translate into an *'actual redistribution of political power'* (2003; 118). He argues:

'For all its support of community involvement, the Labour government has a predilection towards retaining strong central control over key policy areas.' (2003; 116)

Ellison and Ellison (2006) note that the central-local tension is a wider feature of the 'new localism' that has yet to be ironed out. They note a contradictory need for greater devolution of control to local authorities, but *'firm central control'* to prevent *'organisational chaos'* given the multitude of agencies and targets in operation at the local level. (p340) This analysis may be applicable to Salford if we consider the perceptions about the local authority discussed in chapter five. Perhaps greater central input is required to separate out local

councils from non-statutory partnerships such as NDC, in order that greater control be delegated to residents.

However, Dinham (2005) has identified a tension in NDC partnerships that manifests in the design and the manner of NDC's implementation. He argues that the aim of 'community' empowerment has not been complimented by the required development strategies to nurture effective and rewarding local engagement. Not only is there a lack of capacity in these areas, but the programme lacks a sufficient community development component to nurture local networks (p310). Therefore, without this component, there is a disconnection between what New Labour thinks NDC's can achieve in terms of animating local people and the obstacles people face in meeting those expectations. This was also a finding of a newspaper investigation into NDC by Alison West:

'The real problem was that the money came first and then the capacity building was supposed to take place. It was the wrong way round – it was trying to make people run before they could walk.' (cited in Alcock 2004; 93)

Consequently, as we have seen in my study, there is a lack of engagement from most residents and a degree of disillusionment or sense of powerlessness about NDC action. That is, most people did not take the necessary steps towards being empowered by the NDC process. However, in this study, disillusionment did not derive from a lack of capacity to engage and influence, it seemed to grow out of a sense that NDC had its own agenda defined by government, which raised suspicion about its consultation rhetoric. Ultimately, people I spoke to did not feel that they had real influence on the process – that any meaningful decisions continued to be taken by politicians and council planners. In Salford, this tension was at its clearest over disputes about housing demolition and the overall development framework. As detailed in section 7.4.2, there was no detectable local appetite for housing demolition, yet certain strategic decisions had been taken by government to redevelop this area, including demolishing some houses leading to some potential difficulties:

'At the same time you have got the aspirations from New Deal being developed, say around the physical work in the area and so you've got this initiative coming through the ODPM about it being 'bottom up', you get the HMRF looking at housing issues... and HMRF is very much about getting rid of terraced housing and it's top down. So we've got a contradiction coming out of the one office. So where that is going to go I don't know. What...I didn't want is the HMRF work being imposed in a New Deal area and New Deal being blamed for it. You know it had come out of New Deal and

we don't know where that is going to go. ('Bill', resident and community representative, 21-60)

'Bill' notes that on the one hand there is

'New Deal being community led and developing a physical strategy including the housing strategy according to the aspirations of the people of the area, [but] instead we've got a team coming in which doesn't just represent Salford, it represents Manchester as well that are making decisions that are then imposed.' ('Bill', resident and community representative, 21-60, brackets added)

Attempts were made to garner support for these plans with a mixed response (and substantial resistance in some cases) from residents. It seems from the feelings expressed by some that this may have damaged the credibility of NDC's commitment to local participation, serving to remind residents how circumscribed their voices were. If we follow this line of argument, then the disconnection is not about a lack of support for 'communities', which can be rectified, at least theoretically, through better techniques of consultation and engagement, it is a harsher reality in which government seeks to retain control over important decisions and assert that 'it knows best'. Consequently, calls for programmes like NDC to offer a more sensitive route to 'empowerment' and the concomitant delegation of control and influence seems incommensurate with its desire to design the trajectory of excluded spaces. Calls, from those such as Dinham, for a return to '*community development principles*' (2005; 310) may be in danger of somewhat missing the point.

However, that is not to say that non-state (and sympathetic state) actors at the local level do not have opportunities to enhance local networks of support and participation. It may not be part of central government's agenda, but given NDC's diversity on the ground – its different '*intervention mixes*' (NRU 2005; 11) – there may be scope to offer opportunities to excluded 'communities' which perhaps require a subversion of the initial assumptions of central government. The challenge seems to be to separate itself from the local authority, perhaps through centrally defined parameters of partnership, but shift the emphasis away from centrally defined outputs, towards understanding and addressing the realities of local 'communities' and those who work with them. This would appear to be a mammoth task, particularly given the diversity of such spaces, but development strategies that can exploit available resources could offer opportunities to people should they wish them. Perhaps, given the limited time available until NDC funding ends there is a need here to circumvent NDC

and its participatory mechanisms, rather than hoping they can be quickly reformed with better development techniques.

At this point, I would like to re-assert the empirical disconnection between what NDC aspires to be and the reality of continued non-participation and a sense of disillusionment on the part of residents in Salford. Across NDC areas as a whole, there are conflicting accounts of the extent of resident engagement. The 2002 report on NDC elections found the picture of participation rather mixed with some partnerships reporting higher levels of participation in NDC elections and others lower than expected. (NRU 2002: 6)¹⁸ Nevertheless, the latest national evaluation of the programme proclaims that *'probably no ABI has ever achieved as much engagement.'* (NRU 2005; 281) However, this is probably not the best barometer of success given, as we have seen already, NDC does represent a step-change in commitment to participation and cannot be fairly compared with past initiatives. Moreover, as Dinham argues, the level of involvement does not tell us very much, since it is the character and depth of the involvement that matters (2005; 302). He goes on to identify a range of issues that have shaped the character and depth of participation, many of which I also found in my study as discussed in chapter five. These included residents feeling dissatisfied with methods of consultation, a lack of job or training opportunities and feeling 'put off' by the format and style of NDC meetings (2005; 306).

There are a further set of questions requiring discussion about non-engagement (that go beyond procedural problems associated with the process) and an associated danger that blame is placed on residents for being passive or lazy and being portrayed as not responding to the opportunities given to them. To begin, I would suggest that NDC, or rather New Labour via 'ACE' is so driven by notions of reflexivity and 'responsibility' that it neglects to fully understand the context in which it places these demands on residents and holds a mistaken belief that socially excluded people automatically can or want to be agents of social transformation. This is in addition to the fact that its commitment to participation is circumscribed by central and local government priorities. Consequently, the level of participation and engagement that it assumes or expects, in reality, does not really exist. Given this disconnection, there are some important further considerations of why the government seems to get it wrong. Firstly, it could be the case that it has failed to theorise fully the impact of its tensions on the ground - that there is a lack of awareness of how a

¹⁸ At the time of writing no statistics were available for NDC elections in Salford. Unlike other NDC partnerships, this NDC does not hold open, balloted elections however. As stated in chapter five, section 5.2.2, community representatives are elected through the community forum, which attended by a handful of residents.

centralising tendency in decision-making may undermine its desire for active and engaged citizens. This is a tendency that residents seemed to have detected in a manner characteristically swift for those with most reason to be suspicious and distrusting of government.

Secondly, it appears government fails to understand that it is a context that many residents in this NDC do not recognize or respect as their 'community', given the arbitrary delineation of the zone. As Suttles (1972) argues, it is unlikely that administrative areas, such as the NDC zone, will reflect the 'cognitive maps' by which local people understand their locality (cited in Fremeaux 2005; 271). For example, most respondents I spoke to related to one of two distinct areas, or a sub-division (by housing estate) of each area. The attempt by Government to impose NDC on this zone and shoehorn in various estates and call it a 'community' goes against the grain of the instinct of local people and undermines efforts to build attachment to 'community' and stimulate participation.

Thirdly, and of greater significance, it is a context of disadvantage, distrust and neglect that many residents have experienced over time. Several residents expressed this distrust, one local health worker stating, *'Residents are very distrustful. They are used to projects lasting 12 months then disappearing.'*

The chair of the NDC partnership board admitted:

'There is distrust with whoever is seen to come in and be doing something. You know whether it's the council, NDC or anybody, the distrust is there... Things that have happened previously probably, but then again we cant be accountable for the stuff that has happened previously can we?'

NDC (shaped by 'ACE') demands that residents be reflexive and 'community' minded and are capable of being or desire to be responsible agents of social change; but just how realistic or morally appropriate is it to expect people who perceive to have been consistently disadvantaged to 'trust' government agencies and play a transformative role in the process of social change? Ultimately, I would argue, this burdening reflects a vacuous conception of agency that is ethically and practically suspect. It fails to appreciate the embedded realities of living in an excluded neighbourhood and the contribution of mistrust and neglect to that everyday experience and how that impinges on one's ability to *participate*. In other words, NDC spaces are some of the most unlikely areas to have the 'community' capacity that NDC expects and needs. In fact in Salford, NDC was imposed on an area of people with *'no*

grassroots infrastructure’ (‘Carol’, community worker) exacerbated by a sense of neglect by the local authority:

‘...lots of the problems we’ve got in this area is the council we’ve got. We’ve had no development, no works, we’ve got fences that are thirty years old...that £55 million was given to this area because head government knows that for years and years, consecutive years we have been deprived of funds.’ (Jim, resident; 21-60)

One older female, resident in the area for a long time, expressed the impact of such a backdrop and the consequent difficulty in performing this transformative role: *“We have had nothing for so long that we don’t know what to ask for”* (‘Anne’, resident; 21-60)

A telling comment that refers not only to blunted ambition and an inability to conceive of the possibilities that regeneration may offer, but hints at a low sense of self worth, an emotion that NDC does not seem to consider when demanding resident commitment and participation. Moreover, it perhaps illustrates NDC’s inability to conceive of the *psychological* impact of living in such conditions and the difficulty for residents in responding to competing perceptions of one’s role and place in society. To reiterate Paul Hoggett’s argument, perhaps there is a failure to appreciate, *‘[the] impact of fear, envy and other emotions upon our capacities to imagine, challenge, resist or lead.’* (Hoggett 2000: 12, brackets added)

Nonetheless, NDC expects residents to become people with a positive contribution to make to ‘their community’ and in so doing challenging welfare structures and negative stereotyping of ‘dump’ estates populated by dependent and passive individuals. What this amounts to is the social inclusion of disadvantaged residents under this government being predicated on *their* ability to reflexively challenge barriers that others have strewn in their path. This, I would suggest, stretches the legitimacy of Giddens’ ‘autotelic citizen’ to breaking point because of a failure to appreciate fully the obstacles to the reflexive self-help that Giddens, New Labour and the Third Way fetishize so much. It also risks being seen as a ‘victim-blaming’ tendency in the government’s urban policy framework as local people are expected to challenge their own exclusion in the name of a social policy that is in ‘partnership’ with ‘empowered’ and ‘dynamic’ local citizens. Finally, it means neglecting the backdrop of disadvantage that frames the lack of engagement that is in evidence in areas like Salford.

The picture painted by these arguments (and the data) about New Labour and its demands for participation illustrates how, for one reason or another, it fails to embed NDC in the realities of residents’ lives, thereby placing demands that are unrealistic and to some degree unfair. As

a consequence of this disconnection, it raises the possibility that residents are portrayed as somehow complicit in their own disadvantage. This has both practical and ethical implications. Primarily, is it ethically just for pressure to be shifted from the state onto residents to manage the behaviour of their neighbours and to supply the impetus for local regeneration and governance? That is, to participate in the fashionable policy technique of the day – citizen empowerment. According to Herbert (2005) the blame for this shift should be laid at the door of neo-liberalism and the off-loading of the state's responsibilities onto 'communities'. He suggests however, that 'community' is a 'trapdoor' that will *'collapse when laden with excessive political expectations'*. (p853)

Beyond that, a 'failure' of residents could have implications for future intervention programmes and increase reliance by policymakers, not on better development strategies, but on housing demolition and redevelopment to alter the social mix as the appropriate response to the problem of concentrations of poverty. Indeed, one must question the impact of redevelopment on socially excluded people given that such an agenda seems to contain a subtext that says poor people are 'failing' an area, with the solution being to attract middle income, respectable taxpayers to 'improve' the area.¹⁹

Furthermore, the disconnection reveals a practical issue for NDC. It leads us to ask why, in spite of the rhetoric, do residents remain disengaged on the whole. If we reject the argument that it is because of cultures of laziness and passivity, then we can begin to explore the extent and nature of NDC's model of empowerment. For example, we can question whether people can ever be empowered in a top-down fashion by government. In addition, we can cast doubt on the effects of that imposition on a divided geographical 'community' and explore issues relating to who 'captures' decision-making and how that may affect perceptions amongst other residents of opportunities to influence. Finally, the disconnection can lead us to question the level of understanding in New Labour's 'ACE'. As illustrated throughout this thesis, 'ACE' contains a set of expectations applied to individual residents of NDC areas. What seems clear is that these expectations are – overall - rather misplaced, evidenced I have argued, by their lack of understanding of the challenges that hinder participation (and perhaps evidenced by the lack of development work done to overcome some of these issues). This may or may not be because, in reality, whilst New Labour are committed to some degree of reform of local governance, its commitment to changing behaviour of residents is shaped by a larger vision of ordered 'communities', where residents have a stake in the game, but the rules

¹⁹ One community worker expressed to me how she thought government had introduced NDC with this agenda in mind because 'the area doesn't pay for itself', hence the need for (responsible) council tax payers.

are centrally fixed. Therefore, there is limited interest in enabling ‘journeys of empowerment’ that are genuinely self-enhancing.

7.5 Challenging exclusion?

My discussion of NDC’s appropriateness in tackling exclusion has focused on the disconnection between its attempts to ‘build community’ and ‘responsibilize’ residents and the realities uncovered by my fieldwork data. This, I have argued, has raised several significant points, which here, following on from discussions of ‘community’ and agency, I want to suggest combine to destabilize NDC’s ability to challenge exclusion.

Firstly, in sanctioning the policing of conduct in the name of ‘community’, there is a risk that social divisions become entrenched and operationalized in the creation of insider/outsider groups. This excludes certain groups or individuals from the ‘community’ and either renders them to be controlled, subjected to abuse or violence or lacking a presence and voice in decision-making and resource allocation. Secondly, in the contestation of resources and uses of public space that NDC inevitably if not consciously invites, some groups will lose out as they do not have a stake in the process, their voice is drowned out by other louder, established voices, or their claims are de-legitimized by other groups with the power to define them as such. As a result, this jeopardises the challenging of their disadvantage or exclusion as the meeting of their needs is policed by others or refracted through structures of power and influence that NDC inadvertently sanctions. Whereas this first point is a deliberate tactic in line with New Labour’s communitarian objective of allowing the many to remoralize the few (as discussed in section 7.2.2), the second would appear to be an unforeseen consequence rooted in a failure to recognize the complexities of ‘communities’. This creates difficulties for local partnerships in being mediators in competing claims on NDC, particularly when in a fractured ‘community’. For example, ‘community’ development consultant Jonathon Rosenberg told BBC’s Newsnight programme:

‘If you just turn up to a community, pick a bunch of people and dump £50 million on them and then expect them to mediate their disputes, to work out how they are going to spend the money between themselves when they have absolutely no experience of political organisation at all, it simply wont work and they will end up being riven by faction, which is in fact what has happened to a lot of NDC programmes.’ (BBC Newsnight, 7/8/2003)

Furthermore, whilst no one can be in any doubt that in Salford, NDC has helped deliver some new and improved services for the residents of that zone (and indeed its surrounding areas),

when the delivery of resources is refracted through the contestation of 'community', there are definite questions to be raised about the extent to which the 'community' is a barrier to meeting the needs of all residents in an holistic and substantial way. For example, it would be a courageous partnership that rode roughshod over the dominant 'community' voices to build fully accessible youth facilities in each estate, or funded good quality accommodation for asylum seeker families.

A third point that possibly de-stabilizes NDC's challenging of exclusion is the pressure placed on local people to drive the NDC process. If democratizing local governance through the delegation of control to residents is a key to social *inclusion*, how appropriate is that and how effective is NDC in achieving it? Firstly, we know that in my study 'community' there is apathy and non-participation. Therefore, the majority are not being *included* in that sense. Moreover, although there are some individuals who are closely involved with NDC and do feel a sense of empowerment, this could have the perverse effect of exacerbating the divisions highlighted above by placing power and control in a group of dominant 'community' actors, which does not trickle down to empower the rest. (See section 7.4.3) Both these points raise questions about NDC's appropriateness in tackling exclusion.

A further question about its inclusionary credentials is provoked by suspicions about the ethics of 'empowering' people. Is it genuine power (to set agendas, allocate resources etc), or the mere incorporation and acquiescence of residents into established methods of governance and decision-making? If it is the latter, then even if it was successful in 'empowering' the majority on these terms, logic follows that this would have little bearing on one's socially excluded status. It would simply mean a legitimizing of the status quo. NDC's eagerness to 'animate' local residents and put 'communities at its heart' raises suspicions about the role of participation and empowerment as part of an overall strategy to 'socially include'.

Furthermore, this raises the spectre of NDC amounting to little more than a *managerial* response complete with governance practices that are actually just *coping* strategies. This is as opposed to concentrating on reforming the wider inequalities that create excluded spaces. In so doing, government absolves itself from responsibility for tackling inequality and poverty by pointing to its local regeneration programmes and their commitment to local involvement. In this sense, NDC becomes analogous with Giddens' 'autotelic self' in that it is seen to be a pragmatic measure that accepts the context in which it finds itself and concentrates on 'renewal' through re-branding and building 'capital'. NDC is designed to create 'autotelic' 'communities' of residents that can cope with post-traditional risks and uncertainties. The 'empowerment' and 'participation' of local citizens then becomes about delegating responsibility and retrenching the role of the state in public welfare systems. However, as

Alcock (2004) warns, the fashion for citizen participation could be going too far in the opposite direction with a 'drift' towards bottom-up policy planning in danger of pathologising the problems of poor neighbourhoods; problems, he argues are caused by wider structural dynamics. Lupton agrees:

'Ultimately, we will not bring an end to the problems of 'Poverty Street'...unless we are also prepared to challenge seriously the inequalities in our economy and our society that are the real causes of relative poverty and of social exclusion.' (2003; 220)

Similarly, for some, programmes such as NDC should be complimented by wider action on the wider causes of exclusion, not just the local level: *'...the success of neighbourhood regeneration programmes depends on wider action to address regional economic divisions.'* (Lister 2001; 432)

Benington and Donnison have voiced similar concerns:

'...a small area focus of this kind can run the risk of diverting attention away from the wider political economic forces which cause and maintain the concentrations of poverty and unemployment in these areas.' (1999; 65)

This was a critical theme picked up on by one of my respondents ('Carol', community worker) who queried whether NDC was a *'sticking plaster'* for a deeper problem and questioned whether it was tackling the *'root causes of exclusion'*. According to this logic, the techniques of 'empowering' residents and 'building community' through the prescription of 'ACE' is about *avoiding* radical change by seeking to change local behaviour to be more responsible and less passive and possibly (social) welfare dependent, rather than addressing the regional, national or international structures that create and perpetuate poverty. Judged against this criteria it is hard to argue that NDC offers much in terms of more profound egalitarian, anti-poverty objectives and renders its participation agenda rather shallow.

This leads us to a point where we have two critical angles on 'ACE'. Firstly, there is a question mark over the propriety of the aspirations that underpin 'ACE' and the extent to which they challenge the exclusion of areas and people. Secondly, this question mark manifests in a disconnection between the empirical reality of 'communities' and assumptions about a requisite unity of values, needs and conduct, with deviants reconstructed or rejected by the 'community' around them. As we have seen, this disconnection has implications for

the ability of NDC's to build 'communities' and tackle exclusion in the way government foresees. At this point, it seems that we have come full circle. Whilst the goal of this thesis was to examine NDC, it appears that the investigation has repeatedly thrown up the same question – if it is so problematic in practice, why 'ACE' at all? The next section may shed some light on this question.

7.6 Why 'ACE'?

My examination of NDC in this chapter worked on the premise that 'ACE' as a combination of analyses and aspirations underpinning NDC was problematic. Furthermore, that this meant in crucial ways, NDC in practice suffered from a disconnection with the reality in which it was embedded. I have argued that this disconnection has some negative effects on certain groups in the 'community' and for NDC partnerships on the ground who must manage the tensions and complexities that 'ACE' does not account for. Ultimately, the detachment of 'ACE' from reality raises serious questions about NDC's propriety in tackling social exclusion, a point to which we will return later. However, given the arguments made about the problematic nature of 'ACE', it seems that there is a need to move the discussion away from the effects of the disconnection and refocus on 'ACE' and consider why, if it is so problematic, it has been applied via NDC.

The fundamental purpose of this thesis has been to examine NDC as an embodiment of 'ACE' and a mechanism for engineering the 'communities' New Labour would like to construct. The bulk of this chapter has been devoted to identifying how 'ACE' can have negative implications for NDC partnerships and their residents and in light of the attention it has received, it seems appropriate to re-examine the reasons for its place in New Labour's welfare reform agenda. As we saw in chapter two, 'community' and responsibility are key facets (along with opportunity) of New Labour's welfare policy discourse (White 2001). It is the position of this thesis that one of the functions of NDC is to be a policy mechanism that operationalizes all three of these concepts. However, it is also the position of this thesis that the way they manifest in practice exposes some problems and tensions for residents and reveals their initial conception to be problematic and lacking a grounding in reality. Having established this, surely the question needs to be put: why are there inadequate understandings of 'community', agency and exclusion inscribed within NDC? Possibly it reflects a calamitous lack of awareness of the realities of socially excluded terrain wherein NDC has been foisted on disadvantaged areas creating problems for residents and staff charged with 'making it work', with little thought given to how notions of participation and consultations will play out in practice.

However, consideration is due here to the government's very deliberate attempt to avoid areas of overt conflict and division and reward '*correct expressions of community*' (Holman 2005; 21) (areas with relative homogeneity and consensus). That is, the selection of those areas with the 'best' chance of success and a return on government investment betrays an attempt to try and 'get it right' and suggests that policymakers believed they had minimized if not jettisoned the possibility that NDC zones are *also* contested and divided spaces. This is not calamitous; it may lack an understanding of the subtleties of how 'communities' (dis)function and the way individual identities are bound up in the negotiation of local spaces as my data suggests, but these are complexities that it is perhaps unfair to use to castigate policy, given the limitations inherent in the prescription of any government programme. In reality, NDC has attempted to 'learn the lessons' of past regeneration failures and genuinely tried to circumvent local conflict and division to some degree²⁰ as well as improve methods of participation and inclusion of the 'community'.²¹ Again, this is a pragmatic attempt to enhance the possibility of a successful programme. Furthermore, there is a clear attempt in Salford to 'brand' the 'community'; clearly, something this NDC believes will increase the likelihood of success. In other words, whilst one can argue that NDC is shaped by the concepts of 'ACE', it is also influenced by a set of pragmatic measures designed to improve delivery of the programme and augment the construction of the kind of 'community' government wants. There is a level of self-awareness and an experimental aspect of NDC that should be acknowledged and perhaps applauded – this is what makes them such intriguing interventions. To some extent, it also disproves the notion that NDCs, on their own terms, are a calamity because they are actually relatively astute programmes trying to maximise their chances of meeting their objectives by selecting the right ingredients for their 'community' recipe. Therefore, whilst this thesis has identified some weaknesses in this approach, it has done so from a critical plane that whilst important and valid, is probably different from that occupied by government policymakers.

Nevertheless, if we accept this combination of conceptual aspiration and expedient policymaking, then the active attempt to avoid getting embroiled in overtly splintered 'communities' reveals New Labour's desire to implement its project ('ACE') on excluded terrain. The level of self-awareness shown here in applying 'ACE' to specific areas and create

²⁰ As noted previously, this does pose questions for those areas defined as conflict ridden and troublesome. They seem to have been written out of NDC's remit, which questions the application of 'ACE' further and intersects with evaluations of NDC's appropriateness in tackling exclusion. That is, it doesn't, unless you happen to inhabit an apparently homogeneous 'community'.

²¹ Although the dubious commitment to geographically based regeneration projects remains undimmed. Given the degree of disquiet about such an approach (see section 3.3.4), perhaps it will be the next generation of policymakers who eventually 'learn' this 'lesson' and jettison the area-based poverty initiative.

a successful regeneration experience inevitably leads one to examine the intentionality behind the project and how ‘successful regeneration’ is defined.

If we consider the tendency in New Labour towards animating and responsabilizing excluded residents via ‘ACE’, their focus on behaviour resonates with communitarian notions of refurbishing the physical and social bedrock of ‘communities’. As Phillip Selznick explains: *‘Personal responsibility is most likely to flourish when there is genuine opportunity to participate in communal life.’* (cited in Deacon 2004; 918)

The normative aspect of NDC has been reiterated throughout the thesis and it is clear that New Labour does not hesitate in asserting its vision of how ‘communities’ should be. One explanation for implementing ‘ACE’ in ‘appropriate’ areas therefore could be rooted in a normative aspiration to *‘recreate community engagement’* and *‘foster moral dialogue’* (Rose 2000; 1404) within excluded spaces. ‘Community’ then becomes an instrument adopted by NDC to instil social order and recast the terms of citizenship. As we have seen this can entail residents being co-opted into strategies of management and surveillance. If this angle on ‘ACE’ is correct, then NDC is not about authentic ‘empowerment’ of residents, it is actually a mechanism for inscribing - to reiterate Rose – *‘...the norms of self control more deeply into the soul of each citizen...’* (2000; 1409)

In addition, ‘ACE’ is not about recognizing and responding to diversity and difference in ‘communities’ because,

‘...this version of the politics of community seeks to foreclose the problems of diversity by propagating a moral code justified by reference to values that purport to be timeless, natural, obvious, and uncontestable. In operating at this moral pole...the Third Way sets itself in opposition to the very autonomy it purports to respect.’ (Rose 2000; 1409)

Therefore, if we accept this argument, ‘ACE’ is a regulatory mechanism with prescriptions to construct the future trajectory for excluded areas and those who inhabit them in such a way that they become sites of discipline and surveillance. Moreover, it identifies certain spaces as being more receptive to such strategies than others. This argument shares the same Foucauldian ground as the discussion of the policing of antisocial behaviour discussed in section 7.4.1 and was mentioned in relation to Marinetto’s (2003) argument about ‘community’ involvement in chapter three. In all these examples, the suggestion is that the state is, in effect, delegating control to non-state actors and entities, such as ‘communities’ in

the belief that order and individual conduct can be better maintained through the activation of citizens, than through its own activities, which are increasingly viewed as overbearing or inefficient. Therefore, concepts such as ‘empowerment’ in a regeneration context are inherently regulatory, evinced by the fact that they are heavily circumscribed by government-defined expectations about how agents should behave and should provide support for a model of governance conceived by government, but without participating in the conception process.

The arguments of Rose, Marinetto et al are interesting analyses of governmental strategies that offer some valid insights into how New Labour conceives of ‘community’ and the way it is mobilized to govern individual conduct. Moreover, there does indeed seem to be some evidence to suggest that, looked at this way, ‘success’ for NDC is partly about regulating the behaviour of excluded ‘communities’ and this aspect of NDC (embodied by its agency model) has featured throughout the thesis. However, it also seems simplistic to dismiss NDC as just being a disciplinary mechanism. I would add that if we are trying to ascertain ‘why ‘ACE’’, then ultimately the answer does not lie in discussions of this kind, but remains, somewhat prosaically, because New Labour believes in the models that comprise ‘ACE’. That is, despite the problematizing of the models and the disconnection revealed by this thesis, it remains the case that New Labour thinks it has a recipe for success in excluded areas that comprises a workable, sustainable and beneficial package. Moreover, its ‘ACE’ project is only a normative agenda of the type alluded to above insofar as it believes that if the conditions are right, participation, ownership, order and so on will be the inevitable result of NDC’s presence. That is, New Labour appears to believe these aspects of ‘community’ and agency are lying latent in certain spaces and with a little government assistance will spring into life. Selected areas are rewarded with NDC funding because they are thought to deserve that opportunity for renewal and ownership. This is where the assistance or treatment it is thought will work best. In other words, New Labour’s conceives of the regeneration process as liberating rather than regulatory. Of course, we can assess the liberating credentials from alternative critical angles and the recipe begins to look far less appetising, but this does not undermine the fact that New Labour has a concrete belief in the ‘ACE’ package and the benefits it can offer residents.

7.7 Conclusion

Having described much of my dataset in chapters five and six, this chapter began with the task of discussing my research ‘findings’ and reflecting on NDC and its ability to tackle the social exclusion of neighbourhoods and citizens. The bulk of the subsequent discussion was based around New Labour’s ‘ACE’ – the conceptual driving force behind NDC. Firstly, this took the form of a reiteration of the important points of departure between ‘ACE’ and the

realities of excluded 'communities', with each model unpacked and problematized individually according to my data. Secondly, section 7.3 discussed why, if the Salford zone was so contested, was it selected for the NDC treatment. It was here that the local influence on the 'winning' of NDC was first explored, as the role of local planners and politicians was considered in constructing this zone as a suitable 'community' as requested by NDC guidelines. This discussion left us with two major areas to explore - on the one hand, why policymakers at the centre had inscribed certain objectives into those guidelines in the first place given that they seemed - from my study - to be misplaced. On the other hand, there was a need to explore more deeply the implications of the disconnection between policy and reality.

Section 7.4 examined the effects and possible implications of the disconnection between 'ACE' and local reality. It did this under three headings: contesting behaviour, sanctioning conflict and animating the 'community'. Within each of these discussions, the disconnection inherent in 'ACE' was drawn out as were some of subsequent problems caused by the disconnection. The narrative of these discussions tended to be that because 'ACE' misunderstood the reality of residents' lives and of 'communities', the actions of NDC and the expectations on people were problematic and in some cases appeared to have negative effects on residents and their relationships with each other. Furthermore, this examination raised a range of ethical concerns about, for example, demanding participation from local people. That is, at certain points the discussion shifted from an empirical to a theoretical level to consider some wider perspectives on the disconnection under scrutiny.

The final section of the chapter was concerned with determining why, if 'ACE' was as flawed as I was suggesting, does New Labour subscribe to it as a recipe for supporting excluded 'communities'. Firstly, it was contended that due to the self-aware and experimental nature of the NDC programmes, where 'ACE' is complimented by pragmatism in implementation, that it was unlikely that NDC should be defined as a calamity. The fact is that New Labour believes that the 'ACE' model is applicable, but particularly in areas with certain pre-existing ingredients such as unity of values and needs and largely, people feel they are on the same boat (apart from the problem few). As this thesis has illustrated there are some crucial problems and tensions at the heart of New Labour's equation that need exploring further, but to question the initial reasons for NDC being applied may be off the point somewhat, since government patently has no idea about or interest in understanding some of the complexities of 'communities': it is not on their policy radar. Their energies, it appears, are spent reifying 'community' as opposed to genuinely unpacking and understanding it.

Nevertheless, in posing this question about New Labour's belief in 'ACE', I was able to posit some alternative explanations that offered critical slants that could inform my assessment of NDC. Perhaps the astute application of NDC to consensual areas meant that New Labour viewed it as a disciplinary and regulatory technique that could enforce its own normative prescriptions. Indeed, it is possible to argue that New Labour's 'ACE' contains elements of this approach evinced by its normative commitments to prescribed forms of individual and 'community' behaviour. However, the final point of this discussion was my desire to resist dismissing NDC as a purely regulatory mechanism since it seems clear that government believes 'ACE' to be a liberating project that offers residents a genuine opportunity to transform their relationships with their 'community'. It is here that this thesis has intervened to demonstrate that New Labour's faith in NDC's liberating potential is rather misplaced. The key outcome of this discussion therefore, seems to be, not that NDC is regulatory, or that it is a 'sticking plaster' necessarily, but that it misunderstands the nature of excluded 'communities' and those who reside in them. The final chapter will discuss this further and conclude the thesis.

Chapter Eight

Summary and conclusions

8.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to set out the conclusion and evidence that has constituted the thesis and got us to this point. It will proceed by summarising the arguments presented in each chapter, drawing out the key points and claims and ensuring that the narrative thread of the thesis is clear. It will conclude by suggesting that the central claims of the thesis comprise a substantial but balanced critical framework with which to understand and examine the NDC project and elements of New Labour's welfare reform agenda. In addition, it will consider the critique offered by the thesis and the possibilities that it creates for an evaluation of NDC.

There are two key arguments around which my thesis has been based. Firstly, that to some degree NDC is shaped by a set of concepts derived from the New Labour political renaissance and its consequent reformulation of the welfare state. I have asserted that the framework that underpins NDC can be traced back to three key principles underpinning the wider New Labour 'project' – community, opportunity and responsibility. These governing precepts have seeped into the regeneration policy arena as the government tries to refurbish some of the poorest, excluded extremities of the social body through a combination of reconstructing individual behaviour and the delivery of extra and better resources.

Secondly, it has been argued that this framework for refurbishment can be problematized on the basis that it lacks awareness of or sensitivity to the complexities of the terrain that it seeks to engage. Consequently, it has been suggested (based on a period of fieldwork) that this lack of awareness/sensitivity, in addition to some very deliberate governing techniques, creates potential or real tensions in the refurbishment project envisaged by New Labour.

8.2 The contributions of each chapter

The thesis opened with a discussion about the attention paid by policymakers to concentrations of poverty and disadvantage and identified the emergence of a policy discourse that problematized poor spaces as requiring some form of government intervention.

It was noted that from the initial concern with the ‘slums’, from that documented by Stedman Jones (1971) and in Orwell’s *Road to Wigan Pier*, to New Labour’s prioritising of tackling ‘excluded neighbourhoods’, there is a consistent narrative about the stunting effects of living in such areas and the concomitant need to ‘regenerate’ or abolish them.¹ Consequently, a range of government policy responses have attempted to address the existence of poor areas possibly out of both genuine concern for the inhabitants of such spaces and out of protection for some sense of self or class interest. New Labour, it could be argued subscribe to both reasons and has introduced a third. In keeping with its reputation for ‘prudent’ economic management, it has recast the ‘problem’ of poor areas as one of economic wastefulness. When Tony Blair states that ‘*we all have to pay the costs*’ of excluded estates, he appears to be referring to both a social cost in terms of the growth of deviant lifestyles in such areas manifesting in a lack of ‘respect’, as well as the economic cost of policing, higher welfare bills and a loss of tax revenue.

The other major contribution of chapter one was the introduction of the research approach by which NDC was examined. This strategy suggested that when compared to pertinent work done by scholars and researchers, it appeared in theory as if New Labour might have misjudged or misunderstood the nature of ‘community’ and how social agents construct and negotiate their social context including their relationship with welfare systems. Furthermore, it was explained that this ‘discordant’ literature would be the framework in which I would not only problematize NDC, but also construct my research questions. It would provide the prospective research with a critical lens to try to understand how the dynamics and experiences of ‘communities’ are shaped.

Whilst chapter one located NDC within a lineage of poverty programmes driven by a policy discourse preoccupied with poor spaces, chapter two attempted to trace its origins to the wider New Labour welfare reform project. It is the position of this thesis that NDC reflects both a construction of poor areas as a policy ‘problem’ and the *prescription* applied in the course of addressing this ‘problem.’ The objective of chapter two was to explore the genesis of this prescription and theorise its relationship with broader New Labour concepts and analyses. It was asserted that a substantial part of New Labour’s governing project is about reforming welfare systems and reframing the relationship between citizen and state.

¹ This policy approach can be contrasted with those associated with the New Right who posit that it is the pathology of the poor that creates such rundown areas, not the other way round.

Whilst it was noted that Giddens' 'post-traditional' society analysis is key to understanding New Labour's reform of the welfare state, the core principles woven throughout much of the reform agenda were identified as: community, opportunity and responsibility. New Labour's social vision is underpinned by these three concepts that act as both policy objectives and organizing precepts. It was argued that New Labour seeks to both provide opportunities and expand the attendant responsibilities of citizens on the basis of 'community' membership. Not only are we expected to participate in economic and political life, but we also have a crucial role to play in maintaining the moral fabric of the 'community' - so must participate in the public negotiation of behavioural standards, what Flint and Nixon have described as a call for '*positive action*' focused on '*the governance of others*' rather than simply a personal, passive '*desistance from incivility*' (2006; 952). A responsible citizen should do more than look at their own behaviour and should try to shape the character of others.

This process is also partly constitutive of what has become known as 'active' citizenship - *participation* in the civic life of the 'community' where members are involved in constructing the public realm through volunteering, involvement in local politics and social entrepreneurialism amongst other things. It also underpins New Labour's conception of the 'community' as one that contains a crucial dividing line between the decent majority and the antisocial or deviant minority. To overcome this division 'decent' members need to take responsibility for policing the behaviour of the deviants in their midst.

The identification of this welfare reform agenda is crucial for understanding NDC. This thesis has argued that the prescription for poor areas devised by New Labour can be traced back to these broader political and philosophical positions. As chapter two moved on to discuss NDC, it was asserted that 'community', responsibility and opportunity could be translated into agency, 'community' and exclusion comprising New Labour's 'ACE'. This is a recipe that divides its attention between regenerating the environment in which residents live (what might be called a structural component) and changing the behaviour of those same residents (an agency component). Each of these terms were theorised as models that included both analyses and prescriptions for poor areas and their inhabitants and was broken down as follows:

'Community' in the context of NDC was identified as the guiding principle for the refurbishment process in the sense that NDC represents an attempt to mould a 'community' out of malleable socially excluded terrain entailing the allocation of responsibilities on residents and the construction of an identity for chosen spaces. 'Community' underpins the

future trajectory of NDC areas – what New Labour would like the areas to become post-NDC ‘treatment’.

Clearly, part of the ‘community’ vision is a model of individual agency propounded by NDC. This model relates to the wider importance attached by New Labour to responsibility and manifests at the local level via NDC as a range of duties expected of residents in the course of building the ‘community’ envisaged by New Labour. Specific forms of participation are expected in the course of ‘animating’ the ‘community’ to be active, responsible local citizens. Again, New Labour’s model of agency presumes that there is a majority of residents who are ready and willing to participate in building the ‘community’ and local decision-making and service delivery. NDC’s role is to provide the opportunities and avenues for this activity to flourish, including the spread of ‘respect’ and decent values.

The final ingredient inherent in NDC relates to exclusion and is linked with the wider concern for providing opportunities for citizens. Whereas the models of agency and ‘community’ share some degree of concern about changing behaviour and cultures of poor areas, the model of exclusion represents the need to refurbish the physical and political context of these areas.

Having theorized the conceptual framework of NDC and established how each model manifests as a set of aspirations for residents and their ‘community’, chapter three shifted the focus of the discussion onto the discordant literature so central to the research supporting the thesis. After exploring some of the critical assessments of New Labour and its rhetoric and welfare reforms, the chapter proceeded to focus on the three ‘ACE’ models – agency, ‘community’ and exclusion. With reference to a range of literature, I attempted to problematize the analyses and objectives inherent in each model and develop research questions on which to base my fieldwork.

Having subjected each model to substantial critical scrutiny and exploring the discordant literature, the next task was to set out the research questions. The initial questions designed to shape the research strategy were as follows:

- To what extent is the NDC ‘community’ a contested space?
- To what extent is social exclusion experienced heterogeneously?
- What interest and involvement is there in NDC from local residents?

These were constructed with the intention of ‘testing’ the discordant literature and illustrate a methodological commitment to generating data about the complex and ‘negative’ aspects of

‘community’ – precisely those aspects under-theorised by decades of community studies (as discussed in chapter three, section 3.3.1).

At this point in the thesis, the analysis of New Labour and the discordant literature provided in chapters two and three were left to one side to concentrate on an exposition of my practical research strategy designed to compliment the theoretical engagement already asserted. Chapter four focused on reasserting the role of ‘big’ research questions relating to resident’s accounts and the addition of two other questions designed to explore NDC and its impact on the ground:

- How does NDC operate in practice?
- Has NDC improved the lives of residents?

The addition of these questions meant a dual focus for the fieldwork on both ‘lay’ accounts to generate data about experiences of ‘community’, exclusion and NDC, and on the activity of NDC including its organizational structure and changes it has made or contributed to the ‘community’. It was decided that this form of knowledge would be an important dimension in considering the effect and propriety of NDC as a whole.

Having staked out positions in relation to methodology, epistemology and ontology and having considered ethical debates the thesis proceeded – in chapter five - to offer a description of the data generated during fieldwork. This began with a discussion of the relationship between the local authority and the local ‘community’ – one that was interpreted by some respondents as interdependent and dysfunctional creating a passive dependency culture amongst residents and an ingrained paternalism within the local council.

Evidence was also recounted here that suggested low levels of participation and limited engagement by residents with the official channels of NDC, largely explained with reference to perceptions of meetings as inhospitable and excluding places for local residents. Other explanations were offered ranging from laziness on the part of residents, consultation fatigue and general hostility towards and a lack of faith in the NDC process.

A further section was included in chapter five to offer evidence of the developments NDC has helped fund or organize since its arrival. These include an array of new or newly supported services and a substantial effort to ‘build community’ through a range of measures to strengthen the culture of civic engagement and collective endeavour. From the list in appendix five, it is possible to argue that NDC has improved (or will over the life of the

programme) some local services, particularly in terms of education, health and young people's provision. Its attempts to tackle exclusion on a geographical basis at least allow it to provide a core set of services that will benefit the majority of residents, for example, new health centres.

Chapter six saw a shift in focus with an account provided of the data generated with and about the residents and local stakeholders in the NDC area. This data was organized according to another three headings – that which related to the interest shown in NDC and the 'community' in general, data that related to the extent and nature of contestation within the 'community' and finally, data that explored the way in which exclusion is experienced by a range of residents.

To begin, it was re-iterated that local interest in NDC was rather limited and that involvement in the 'community' per se was mixed, with some respondents mentioning the importance of their immediate street or block, but declaring little contact or affinity with the 'community' defined by NDC. Attendance at residents and tenants meetings was found to be relatively high, but distinctly gendered. Moreover, territorial division was found to influence the priorities of associations and provide a division that cut across the NDC zone as a whole.

In terms of 'community' and the extent of contestation, it was argued that social divisions undermined the pockets of 'community' engagement that do exist. Data was described that illustrated conflicts between residents needs and values relating to local policing strategies and redevelopment plans. There was also evidence to suggest that the presence of 'outsider' groups (what I termed 'space invaders' – students, asylum seekers and transient private housing tenants) was the cause of contestations of space and identity. Finally, evidence was described that illustrated how some residents have clashed over the use of physical space within the 'community', generally manifesting in a conflict between young people who consider themselves reliant on public space, and older people who define such occupation as a nuisance to be controlled. It is the contention of this thesis that the combination of data around contestations and divisions produces a substantial case for questioning New Labour's model of 'community' as either being in existence, or the possibility of it being created.

The final body of data to be discussed was that relating to exclusion and how residents experience it. In response, it was suggested that three distinct processes were in operation that shaped experiences of exclusion in differing ways. Firstly, evidence was offered to suggest that needs were shaped by the interaction of poor local services with social location or division. Secondly, it was argued that within a defined space such as this, that there are

simply a range of needs exhibited by different individuals and groups to conduct their everyday lives. Finally, a relational dimension to the configuration of needs was explored. This entailed recounting evidence that showed how social relations could shape or reinforce experiences of exclusion through the existence of territorialism and the maintenance of insider/outsider boundaries.

The combination of data explored in chapter six was not suggested to be an all-encompassing account of 'community' experiences and dynamics, but nonetheless offer evidence of contested and heterogeneous terrain that raised concerns about NDC's awareness and sensitivity to the 'community' it sought to regenerate. It appeared to underwrite a disconnection between how New Labour conceived of excluded spaces and the 'ACE' prescription it had devised for refurbishing them and the realities of socially excluded 'communities'. This disconnection was discussed in chapter seven and distilled into several key themes by which to reflect upon NDC. Firstly, it was asserted that given the contested nature of the 'community' under study, we have to question why it was selected as being 'suitable' for NDC funding. The response offered and restated here is that the area in Salford was not selected by central government planners, but by local strategic decisions designed to 'win' funding to compliment local planning and regeneration aspirations. It was at the local level that the decision was made to bid for NDC resources and the construction of this space as a 'community' occurred.²

Secondly, the disconnection between 'ACE' and reality was discussed in detail in chapter seven with reference to the implications of three key components of New Labour's NDC project. Firstly, it was argued that the belief that it is the duty of government to facilitate the assertion of 'decent' values and the policing of deviancy within 'communities' actually has a disproportionate effect on young people who are most likely to be constructed as deviant or antisocial.

The second area of disconnection identified was in New Labour's apparent belief in the benign presence of NDC partnerships. It was suggested here that NDC's presence actually functions to inadvertently create conflict as soon as it 'names' the space as a 'community'. Consequently, claims are invited on territory that can manifest in social closure and on NDC resources that can result in in-fighting as has been reportedly the case in a number of NDC areas (See for example, Weaver 2002; Power and Wilmott 2005).

² Although of course the bid had to be accepted by central government who had to be satisfied that selected areas contained the requisite local ingredients in terms of shared values and aspirations.

The final disconnection to be discussed was between the belief that NDC can ‘animate’ the ‘community’ and the reality of distrust and disengagement from the process. This was examined from a range of perspectives and it was suggested that an over-weaning commitment to citizen involvement without necessary support will be of limited value to residents and raises some alarming ethical questions.

Finally, chapter seven concluded with a discussion of how best to understand NDC and the intentionality behind its application. If calamity is ruled out, perhaps NDC is about imposing a normative vision on excluded ‘communities’. Therefore, empowerment rhetoric is indeed disingenuous because NDC is predominantly about maintaining the status quo and creating ‘communities’ that are sites of discipline and surveillance. However, whilst the thesis recognised that NDC does contain elements of imposing a normative vision, it argued that rather than being a sinister attempt to regulate poor people and spaces, New Labour conceives of NDC as liberating and giving people what they want. The problem is that when its prescriptions – its liberating project - is revealed as flawed, NDC begins to look like a crude attempt to impose its own vision and control excluded spaces.

In conclusion, it is the assertion of this thesis, that these examples of a disconnection between the reality of living in excluded areas with an NDC presence, and the imagined prescriptions found within the ‘ACE’ recipe reveal some very important flaws in the NDC project for refurbishing ‘communities’. Whilst much further research needs to be conducted to better understand some key dynamics and effects of NDC policies, it is the argument of the thesis that they represent a case against NDC that must be balanced against the positive practical developments it has helped initiate in Salford. It seems clear that the thesis illustrates how, in some key areas, NDC is not an appropriate basis on which to tackle social exclusion. In fact, NDC functions to reinforce or neglect the exclusion of some groups in the ‘community’.

However, the thesis has also considered whether NDC’s can be reformed on the basis of this analysis and has noted that such possibilities could exist at the local partnership level. Perhaps there is a need, following Jessop (2003), to accept that all modes of governance have a tendency to fail and that NDC partnerships should be encouraged to *‘develop self-reflexive means of coping with the failures, contradictions, dilemmas and paradoxes’* (2003; 10) that appear inscribed in the NDC project. However, it has also noted that such attempts at local reform would be swimming against a tide of centralizing power wielded by New Labour. Overall that is, the thesis highlights that New Labour’s commitments to citizen involvement and ‘bottom-up’ policy planning actually represent its *own* prescriptions for individual behaviour and ‘communities’ – unmatched on the ground at this point. Furthermore, there

appears to be reluctance at the central level to relinquish output driven target cultures and control over resources. Politically, there is a need to work through this tendency towards selfish government or the recent enthusiasm for 'new localism' (Ellison & Ellison 2006) may be exposed as nothing more than the iron fist of 'old Labour' paternalism lurking within the velvet glove of New Labour discourses of freedom and empowerment. From a policy perspective, it appears that until such times as genuine and more realistic commitments to the local level can be formulated, policy interventions in excluded spaces will continue to look towards the 'community' as a policy solution, but without supplying the requisite means or capacity for addressing its problems and limitations. This may mean an exacerbation of local conflicts in the absence of any genuine local power or control to shape agenda and open up opportunities for local development projects to mediate and resolve contestations. It may also mean that people who inhabit the spaces identified by the regeneration policy radar continue to be subjects of policy who must respond to New Labour's imagined 'community', rather than developing future plans of their own.

There are two key points to this final critique therefore. Firstly, despite its attempts to avoid division and disorder by applying NDC to specified areas disaggregated to a level of 4000 or so households, it still appears that government is neglecting the temporal and relational dynamics that (re)create local entities. Secondly, this lack of understanding of residents' lives means New Labour can be accused of undermining the potential of citizens to determine their own lives whilst expecting that they will participate in specified ways in their 'communities' and legitimize the government's regeneration programme. In light of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that several NDCs have been characterised by resistance and tensions (Weaver 2002) as residents respond to what is a frustratingly contradictory approach to regenerating people and spaces. Ultimately, it demonstrates a lack of regard for human agency by pulling residents in two directions at once – placing demands, whilst failing in an understanding that would supply good enough opportunities. This 'deal', it may be recalled, is New Labour's article of faith, but in the context of NDC, it is one that is skewed away from the best interests of residents.

Appendix 1

Questions for initial key respondents

NDC Deputy Co-ordinator

- What is your official job title?
- Is the development trust in place?
- Does the community committee cover more than New Deal area?
- Focus group / community committee times
- Any surveys done to illustrate community voices?
- PA team – evaluation? Contacts with community animators?
- Who within NDC can give me an insight / contacts with / into the community?
- How much of a say in policy does the local community really have? What ongoing measures have been implemented to consult local people?
- Community chest – contacts to see who received money
- Has the children's play area been introduced?
- Info on CCS – contacts, any documentation?
- Contact for Community Safety officer / sector sergeant / nuisance link worker / ASB officer / domestic violence support service
- Have neighbourhood wardens been introduced?
- Any ASBOs been implemented?
- Who is involved in the minor works fund?

NDC Sector Sergeant

Introduction

- Role within NDC, how long in position, who else is part of NDC policing team?

Resident's input

- Bearing in mind the ethos of NDC – residents being included in decision-making about their area, how much influence do local people wield over policing matters?
- What channels are open to residents to influence?
- Do you welcome resident input?

Conflict

- What are the main concerns of local people in terms of crime and safety?

- To what extent are they 'genuine'
- What action has been taken to quell those fears? What initiatives have been introduced?
- Is there evidence of a conflict between groups / individuals / areas in terms of the priorities of policing? Eg. CCTV
- Is it possible to meet everyone's demands and expectations about policing priorities?

Additional

- What role does policing play in a regeneration programme like NDC?
- Is it important for areas like this to have specific, targeted, policing initiatives?
- Where are the main problems in this area to your mind? And who is responsible?
- How many ASBOs have been introduced? How have they worked?

Community Representatives

1. Experiences as a representative of the community and the extent of competing voices within the community and how they interact with NDC.

- how did you become a rep? is it a rewarding experience?
- what kinds of issues do residents raise?
- to what extent do local people have differing needs and issues?
- so is there much conflict or tension within the community regarding what NDC does? Eg CCTV
- what, *in your opinion*, are the main issues needing addressed in the area?
- What should NDC be doing to improve the area? What should be the priorities of NDC?
- how do residents feel about you being part of NDC?

2. On resident input

- how much input do residents have in NDC decision making?
- so, is inclusion of residents effective? Examples? Where locals have got something they wanted
- Is inclusion ever an obstacle? Where NDC want to do something but cannot. Any examples where inclusion is not effective? Is that a price worth paying?
- do clashes between residents ever prevent NDC projects from being implemented?
- are task groups productive? Any conflict?
- is there conflict with other community reps?
- do you feel on the 'same side' as NDC?

3. On crime and community safety?

- what are the main concerns residents have in terms of this?
- is anti social behaviour an issue?
- is heavier policing the answer? Is that what residents want?
- how much input do young people have into NDC?
- is the exclusion / eviction of troublemakers vindicated if local people want it?

4. Other information

- Contact with other reps?
- Task group times?
- Residents Groups?
- Budget sub-committee?

Appendix 2

Focus group interview schedule

MY INTRODUCTION

I would just like to begin by thanking everyone who has agreed to take part in this group discussion and taken the time to come along. It is much appreciated. I will just begin by clarifying a few things and telling you a bit about my background and the details of my research.

Firstly, my name is Andrew and I am a researcher from the University of Leeds. This is my assistant and friend..... They are here simply to take notes and ensure I don't miss anything. They will remain silent throughout and is purely here to observe and help me write up my report.

Before we do that, I have to remind you of your position. You are attending this meeting on a voluntary basis and are, therefore, completely free to get up and leave at any time.

Everything that is said here is being tape-recorded to help me write my report later on and to save me writing everything down. When writing my report, everyone will be completely anonymous and no one will be referred to by name.

The reason that I want to conduct these group discussions is that I am doing some research into local people's experiences and perceptions of their community. The reason I have chosen *this* community is that it is close to where I live and forms part of the Government's New Deal for Communities programme. If you haven't heard of it, the New Deal is about giving government money to local communities to spend on regenerating the area. What *I* want to do is find out if what the New Deal team is doing matches the needs and ideas of local people and find out a bit more of your experiences of living in this area.

So - I would like to stress that I am interested in *your* personal opinions and experiences. There are no right or wrong answers here, just different opinions and perceptions. I would like to cover a variety of topics, which might take 90 minutes or so. Hopefully, that should be long enough for us to have a good discussion which will allow everyone a chance to contribute.

Has anyone got any questions about that?

EXPLAIN TASK

Ok, so to begin, I would like to get everyone to do a short task which will hopefully get the discussion going.

Let me start by handing out these sheets of paper.

As you can see, there are a list of areas that you can spend the government's money on.

What I would like everyone to do, is imagine they are in charge of spending that money and rank from numbers 1 to 8 what they believe to be the order of priorities in the community and how that money should be spent. One being the main priority and eight being the least important priority.

I will give you a couple of minutes to think it over and fill in the boxes. Please be selfish and think about your own experiences and priorities when making your decisions, not those of a friend or even the government!! Think about which of these choices would improve your own life. Although you cannot keep the money!! And try and keep it practical!!

Obviously, these are quite general categories. So, if you want, you can give a specific example of your choice. So, for example, say your number one priority is leisure facilities. This covers quite a large range of things. You might be thinking of something in particular like a new pub, a new sports centre or new library. Please write these down in the 'specific suggestions' column.

Also, if you believe there is something missing from this list that you believe to be more important than the 8 things listed, then please specify what that is in the 'suggestion' column next to 'other' at the bottom.

I will also hand out some blank paper, in case you want to make notes or remind yourself of something during the discussions.

Has anyone got any questions before they complete this task?

DO TASK**INTRODUCTIONS - Icebreaker**

Get everyone to introduce themselves – name and main priority and reason for that decision.

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

Always go back to their lives and personal experiences

1. Explanations and motives for choices

- how would benefit you personally? How would you improve it?
- why do you rank it as more important than the other options?
- what did you vote as least important? Why?

- what is the situation at the moment?
- why do you think it is missing from this area?
- has anyone had similar experiences of this?
- what aspects of living in this area do you think don't need improved? why?

Issues to query – exclusion from access to services / facilities

(health, transport, dependents, fear, crime)

Relating to inequality, stratification, diverse needs.

- who knew about the New Deal before today?
- one thing I am interested in, is whether anyone has had the opportunity to have their say about New Deal?
- what attempts have New Deal made to include local people?
- do you feel your voice is heard? Are you interested in what they have got to say, or telling them your opinion? If not why not?
- what has New Deal achieved in your view so far?

2. Comparing and contrasting choices (moving from the personal to the collective)

- imagine this was a Charlestown / Lower Kersal community meeting, with all sections of the community present. Who in the community do you think would agree or disagree with your choice? Why?
- are there any groups or sections of the community that you think get more money than they deserve? Why?
- are there any groups or sections of the community that you think deserve more money spent on them? Why?
- what do you feel about asylum seekers being housed locally? Do they get enough support?
- how do you feel about students living in this community?
- is there a feeling of community across Charlestown and Lower Kersal?

- has anyone any experiences of community organisations? How do you feel about them?

Who is involved in those?

3. Dimensions of exclusion and community experience (personal experience)

Going through each issue and discussing experiences (emphasising diversity)

Need to address areas of local life, not mentioned in the task like, say, pubs and social scene.

Who uses them. Experiences.. Also strategies of resistance and support in response to exclusion either from services or from certain spaces?

Exclusion and stratification regarding other people / groups

(abuse, crime, divisions) relating to voices, choices

Appendix 3**Priorities for your area**

If you were in charge of funding for your community, how would you spend it?

From **your personal** point of view, please rank the following from 1-8 in order of importance (1 being most important). If you can please give reasons for your choices.

Leisure facilities

Job creation

Shopping facilities

Transport links

Childcare facilities

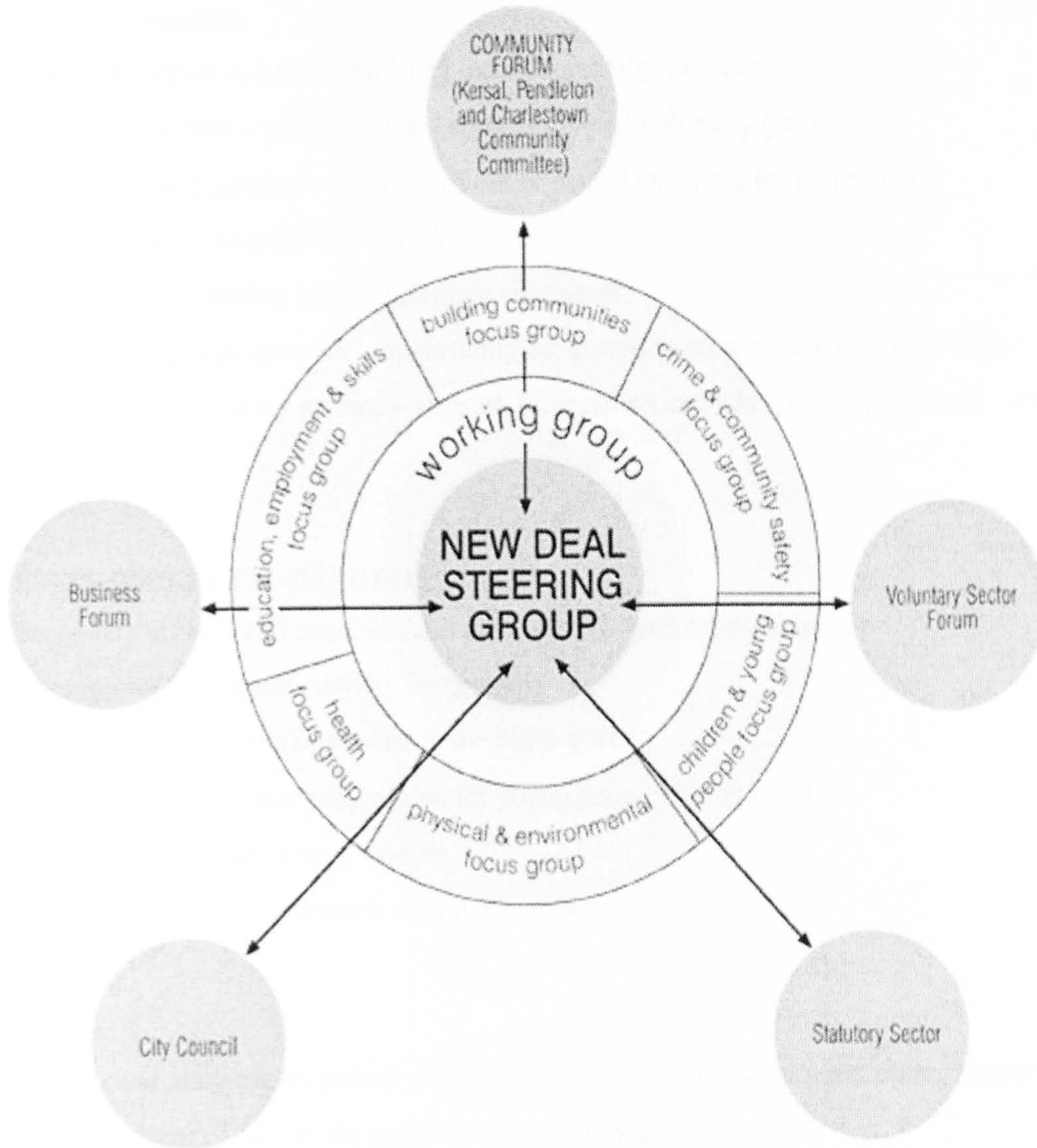
Housing

Healthcare / Social services

Physical improvements

Other?

Appendix 4



Appendix 5

List of key developments since 2001

Building communities

- Financial support to keep open 5 key local community facilities
- Community Chest – grants for local community and voluntary groups
- Rewarding participation – payment of out of pocket expenses for community representatives involved in NDC work.
- NDC ‘Oscars’ evening held to celebrate volunteers
- Community groups network – opportunity for groups to meet and share knowledge
- Age Concern advocacy service – support, information and advocacy for residents over 60 years old

Children, young people and education

- Secondary school with attached (and incomplete as yet) resource centre
- Community Sports and Activity Programme
- Multi-sports facility in one estate in the NDC zone
- ‘Summer Fun’ – leisure programme for young people during holidays
- Advisor for pregnant young women
- Young Volunteers – scheme to encourage voluntary work

Health

- CHAP (including expert patient programme, healthy living project and carers support)
- Refurbishment of facility for people with mental health difficulties
- Food co-operative selling low cost fresh fruit and vegetables (organised and run by local resident)
- Healthy living centres (still under construction, with one temporary centre established)

Environment

- Communal gardens (fenced off – local neighbours are key holders)
- Development framework – plans for housing demolition and some renovation and redevelopment of riverside

- Sports Village – under construction but will include football academy. New bowling green completed
- In Bloom – grants for hanging baskets and flower planting
- Alleygating – gates erected in 23 alleyways for security purposes

Security

- Dedicated NDC-zone sector sergeant and ‘nuisance link’ officer
- CCTV around shops and main roads
- Burglary reduction programme – new alarm systems, security lights and locks
- Crime prevention fund – resources for erection of anti-motorcycling gates, installation of knee railings to prevent vehicle crime

Transport

- Community minibus – for hire to community and voluntary groups

Business, employment and skills

- Job shop in the community
- Skills for life centre – in partnership with a local FE college
- Grants for local businesses – for refurbishment etc.
- CHANCE – low cost handy-person service to local people and businesses
- Salford innovation centre – to-be-built centre for training and business

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