

**Social Exclusion in European Neighbourhoods:
Processes, experiences, responses**

Walker: a neighbourhood in transition

Ali Madanipour
Mark Bevan

Centre for Research on European Urban Environments
University of Newcastle upon Tyne

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SUMMARY.....	4
1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
2. NATIONAL CONTEXT: THE UNITED KINGDOM.....	7
THE GROWING INEQUALITY.....	7
CONCENTRATION OF THE POOR.....	7
POOR NEIGHBOURHOODS IN BRITAIN.....	8
POLICY RESPONSES TO SOCIAL EXCLUSION.....	9
SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND MODES OF INTEGRATION.....	11
REACTIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME.....	12
CONCLUSION.....	12
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	13
RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	13
RESEARCH STRATEGY: COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES ACROSS EUROPE.....	13
RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS.....	14
UNIT OF ANALYSIS.....	14
SELECTING THE CASE STUDY.....	15
UNDERTAKING THE CASE STUDY.....	16
4. DEPRIVATION IN WALKER: A QUANTITATIVE PROFILE.....	17
POPULATION.....	19
UNEMPLOYMENT.....	19
HOUSING.....	19
HEALTH.....	20
EDUCATION.....	21
CRIME AND PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY.....	21
BUSINESSES AND SERVICES IN WALKER.....	22
SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.....	22
CONCLUSION.....	23
5. PROCESSES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION.....	24
CONCLUSION.....	25
6. EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION.....	26
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.....	26
OBSTACLES TO WORK.....	28
OBSTACLES TO PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE.....	31
OBSTACLES TO SHARED EXPERIENCES.....	34
BARRIERS TO SPATIAL PRACTICES.....	38
PROBLEMS OF FACILITIES AND SERVICES.....	41
CONCLUSION.....	46
7. RESPONSES TO SOCIAL EXCLUSION.....	47
EAST END PARTNERSHIP.....	47
REMOVING OBSTACLES TO WORK.....	49
<i>Helping the young</i>	49
<i>What about the men?</i>	50
<i>Developing skills</i>	51
DEALING WITH SERVICES AND FACILITIES.....	52
<i>Facilities for the young</i>	52
<i>Not living in fear</i>	53
<i>Homes and neighbours</i>	54
<i>Access to shops</i>	56
<i>'Respect for the environment'</i>	57
REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE.....	58

REMOVING BARRIERS TO SHARED EXPERIENCES	59
REMOVING THE STIGMA	61
RECOVERY OF HOPE	61
CONCLUSION	61
8. CONCLUSION	63
9. REFERENCES	65

Summary

Social exclusion has entered the public agenda in Britain after the election of the new administration in 1997. Specific initiatives such as the establishment of a high level Social Exclusion Unit and the introduction of Health and Education Action Zones signify the ways in which the government intends to combat social exclusion.

We have studied social exclusion in a particular socio-spatial context, the Walker neighbourhood in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. Combining the statistical data and the phenomenological accounts of life in the neighbourhood has given us a detailed perspective into the processes and experiences of social exclusion. Investigating the measures that are needed or are in place has also provided a platform for identifying possible responses to the neighbourhood's social exclusion problems.

All indicators show that the neighbourhood is suffering from severe social problems. It suffers from losing population, poor education and health, high rates of housing vacancy, high crime rates, high unemployment and inadequate services. Statistical indicators, however, are unable of showing how the situation has emerged and how it is being experienced by the people of the area. With a combination of statistical and phenomenological knowledge, it will be shown, we can find a fine grained insight into the life of the neighbourhood and find ways of responding to these challenges.

The main cause of the neighbourhood's problems has been economic decline. It has suffered for its reliance on a few employers and on manual work in heavy industries. With the decline of this sector of the economy, the people of the neighbourhood have been hit hard. Disconnection from the world of work has coincided with a disintegration of social and family networks, which is in turn causing further difficulties.

Walker has long been known as a respectable working class area, an image that is now changing into one of social decline and crime. The local people suffer from this stigmatization and emphasize that there is a spatial variation inside the neighbourhood in terms of its social difficulties and by no means is it a homogeneous place despite its relatively strong sense of community.

The main path to poverty is through unemployment, which in turn has an adverse effect on social and cultural links of individuals and households. To find work, the respondents showed concern about a number of obstacles that they had to confront. Limited availability of jobs is one major obstacle. The experience of people is also of ill health, low wages, lack of childcare, lack of skills and confidence, and lack of opportunities.

The area is strong in number of volunteers and the attachment of the local councillors to their area. However, most people are disengaged from the informal or formal governance processes, with which they do not identify. There is a strong sense of shared experiences that is inherited from a long history of attachment to work and to the place. But this is now under severe pressure of disintegration, especially as the fear of crime and lack of resources limit the spatial mobility of the population. Lack

of shopping facilities in the area is exacerbated by the cost of travelling to shopping centres elsewhere. Childcare and leisure facilities are not satisfactory and the relationships with the Council, on which many depend for their services, are not very positive.

The main vehicle in pursuing these responses has been the establishment of a partnership, which draws on the involvement of the public, private and the voluntary sectors, and securing major funding from central government. The main responses to the problems of the neighbourhood can be classified as those dealing with removing obstacles to work and those dealing with improving access to services and facilities. These are valuable steps taken to combat social exclusion. But there are areas that are left unaddressed. While there are many new opportunities for the young people to develop their skills and enter the job market, the men who lost their industrial jobs are undermined and women suffer from a lack of childcare and other forms of support. Attention to improve the physical environment is a useful step in restoring confidence in the area and for people to feel positive towards future. The core response to the problem of social exclusion should be the recovery of hope in the minds and hearts of people. Without removing obstacles to their participation in governance, however, chances of progress can only be limited. The shared experiences of people are also under strain and without provision of arenas for cultural development, the social capital which had historically been accumulated in the neighbourhood will be spent without being replaced.

1. Introduction

Some of the major problems facing European cities are now widely known. Moving out of an industrial base and into the predominance of the service sector in the economy has been a major shift in the recent decades, causing substantial changes in the social and spatial contours of many localities. Challenges of competition from a global economy marked by a multiplicity of competitors and the European response in the form of developing an integrative partnership are both aspects of globalization which have reshaped the social and spatial geography of cities. The restructuring of cities and societies, however, has been parallel with a growing social divide, long term unemployment and joblessness, especially for men, and casualization of work, undermining the quality of life for large groups of the population. These symptoms have led to concerns for the fragmentation of the social world, where some members of society are sidelined and where this exclusion is painful for the excluded and harmful for society as a whole.

As part of an attempt to understand this process better in particular places across Europe, this is a case study of Walker, a neighbourhood in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. Once a stable, working class neighbourhood with close links to shipbuilding and heavy engineering, the neighbourhood has suffered from mass unemployment and social deterioration. As a result it has been in danger of transition into a pocket of deprivation and social exclusion. The study is part of a larger, EC-funded project of research by ten partners from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Ireland and the UK.

The report starts by an outline of the national context in general and some of the measures undertaken to combat social exclusion. This is then followed by a methodology and sections on processes, experiences and responses to social exclusion in the case study.

2. National Context: The United Kingdom

The problems of disadvantaged neighbourhoods has come to the forefront of the new administration's agenda, with its establishment of a Social Exclusion Unit and announcement of several policy initiatives and reforms. This section looks at the context of deprived neighbourhoods in Britain and the work of the New Labour government in combating social exclusion.

The growing inequality

Unemployment has declined from historically high levels in 1993 when 14% of men and 4% of women were unemployed (Hills et al 1997). The current estimate is that 6.4% of the workforce is unemployed, 7.1% for men and 5.6% for women (HoC 1998). Thus, with the 1990s' upturn in the economy, male unemployment declined rapidly, while female unemployment increased. Youth (ages 18-24) unemployment is still high at 12% (HoC 1998). Unemployment rates vary by region. The worst figures are for Merseyside (Liverpool conurbation) at 10.1% and the most fortunate region is the Southeast (excluding London) at 4.3%. Unemployment rates have fallen by 15% over the last year (HoC 1998). In the last quarter of 1997, the unemployment rate in the UK, at 6.6%, was significantly below the average rate in the European Union, at 10.5% (HoC 1998, figures standardized). In April 1997, 39% of unemployed men and 28% of unemployed women had been out of work for more than a year (Hills et al 1997, 33).

Recent research indicates, however, that a better grasp of the scale of unemployment, related more strongly to social and economic change, is measured by the combination of unemployment and inactivity rates for those of working age. In 1991, these were highest in Inner London, at nearly 30%, and in mining and industrial areas, at 31.5% (Green and Owen 1998).

An important result of these social and economic changes has been an increase in inequality in income distribution. While the average income for the population as a whole rose by 40% between 1979 and 1994, the real income of the lowest decile fell by 13% and rose by 60% for the richest decile (Hills et al 1997, 37). Put another way, by 1994, 3.1 million people (5% of the population) had incomes below 40% of the average income in 1979 (Hills et al 1997, 37). The new shape of poverty also reflects institutional changes. Of the lowest income decile, only 30% are in receipt of state benefits of any kind. At the same time, the three main causes of poverty for those in the lowest two income deciles are old age (23%), unemployment (23%) and low incomes in work (21%) (Hills et al 1997, 35).

Concentration of the poor

One of the results of the growing divide between the rich and poor has been a concentration of the poor in deprived neighbourhoods.

Ninety percent of the population of Great Britain lives in urban areas, focused on eight major conurbations in England, two in Scotland and one in Wales. Within that framework, the balance of population has shifted, firstly, from central urban areas to

suburban areas (1970-1980) and then to exurban areas (1980-1990). The decrease in the inner urban population was associated with the decline in manufacturing industry and expanded access to owner occupied housing located in the suburbs.

The end result of social and economic change over the last twenty years has been to concentrate the poorest sections of the population of the population in distinctive areas. Of the 25 most deprived local authorities identified by Lee and Murie (1997, 23), eight are located in inner London and the remainder reflect the pattern of deindustrialization over that period, with twelve more located in the former urban manufacturing centres (Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, and Newcastle). The remainder are more scattered, reflecting the decline of the coal industry since 1980.

Institutional rigidities in the housing market are important in sustaining this pattern of spatial concentration, both the difficulty of obtaining inter-authority transfers in the social sector and the regional pattern of house price differentials (MacLennan 1994). However, Lee and Murie warn against identifying deprivation with a concentration of population in social sector housing. Of the 25 most deprived areas, the local authority owned stock accounts for only 41%, on average, of the housing available (compared with a national average of 20%). More detailed analysis indicates that there is also severe deprivation among some groups of owner occupiers (particularly among Asian households and former coal miners). Nevertheless, average household incomes in the social rented sector are the lowest for any tenure group at approximately one third the average for those purchasing their homes (Wilcox 1996).

Poor neighbourhoods in Britain

There are thousands of poor neighbourhoods of varying sizes across the country. In England in particular, 44 local authority districts have been identified to have the highest concentrations of deprivation, containing 85 per cent of the most deprived wards. In comparison with the rest of England, these districts have:

- ‘nearly two thirds more unemployment
- almost one a half times the proportion of lone parent households
- one third of children growing in families on Income Support, against less than a quarter in the rest of England
- 37 per cent of 16 year olds without a single GCSE at grades A-C, against 30 per cent for the rest of England
- more than twice as many nursery/primary and more than five times as many secondary schools on special measures
- roughly a quarter more adults with poor literacy or numeracy
- mortality ratios 30 per cent higher, adjusting for age and sex
- levels of vacant housing one and a half times elsewhere
- two to three times the levels of poor housing, vandalism and dereliction
- more young people, with child densities a fifth higher
- nearly four times the proportion of ethnic minority residents’ (SEU,1998).

The city of Newcastle upon Tyne ranks 19 worst in these 44 districts. As we shall see in the report, however, particular wards, such as the present case study, have a far worse set of statistics.

Policy responses to social exclusion

For most of this century, and particularly since the late 1960s, the governments have been investing in the deprived areas, from slum clearance schemes to Urban Programme schemes, Community Development Programme, Task Forces, Estate Action, City Challenge, Housing Action Areas, Renewal Areas and Housing Action Trusts and the Single Regeneration Budget.

These policies, however, have had limited success in tackling the problems of poverty and social exclusion. The initiatives have not been coordinated at national or local levels, or have paid too much attention to physical improvement rather than social development. The Labour administration has been working on a national strategy to deal with social exclusion.

- The new administration has introduced a number of national programmes, including New Deal to tackle unemployment, the reform of the benefit system, creation of Regional Development Agencies, and various measures on crime, drugs, housing, training, education and health.
- A number of area based programme supplement these national measures. The New Deal for Communities, with a budget of £800m over three years, deals with intensive regeneration of small neighbourhoods, starting with 17 pilot schemes. Another programme is Sure Start, to support young children in deprived neighbourhoods, providing for childcare, primary health care, play, and support for families. Single Regeneration Budget, a programme already in its sixth year, is being revamped and transferred to Regional Development Agencies, targeting areas on average with 25,000 people, i.e., larger than the New Deal for Communities. Health Zones, Education Zones and Employment Zones are also being introduced, targeting areas of intense social exclusion.
- Tackling gaps in policy and coordination is another strand of the national strategy. Eighteen teams from 10 Whitehall Departments work on five themes:
 - 1) Getting the people to work (jobs, skills, business)
 - 2) Getting the place to work (neighbourhood management, housing management, neighbourhood wardens, unpopular housing, anti-social behaviour, community self-help, arts and sport)
 - 3) Building a future for young people (school plus, young people)
 - 4) Access to services (shops, financial services, information technology)
 - 5) Making the government work better (making Whitehall work better, learning lessons, joining it up locally, better information).

This process is coordinated by the Social Exclusion Unit. A 'champion' Minister is in charge of each team, with the Minister for Local Government and Housing overseeing the process as a whole. The Social Exclusion Unit identifies its goal as simple: 'to reduce the gap between the poorest neighbourhoods and the rest of the country and bring them for the first time in decades to an acceptable level.' It therefore aims to develop a national strategy to tackle the problems of the poor neighbourhoods.

The latest initiative to tackle the problems of deprivation is the establishment of a Social Exclusion Unit. The term social exclusion entered political discourse in the UK with the election of the Labour Government in May 1997. The Government defines

it as “a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown” (Social Exclusion Unit 1997).

In his first major speech after the election, on 2 June 1997, the Prime Minister asserted the significance of modernizing the welfare state in ways which are appropriate to supporting a flexible labour market within an internationally competitive environment (Blair 1997a). The central theme was a broadly conceived welfare to work initiative, which recognizes three factors:

- A duty for the unemployed to take up suitable jobs where these are available
- The responsibility of the state in facilitating entry or re-entry into the labour market
- The need to reform the institutional mechanisms which create barriers to work

On 14 August 1997, the Minister who would assume responsibility for the Social Exclusion Unit in December summarized the Government’s general approach: “Our vision is to end social exclusion. Our priority is to redirect and reform social programmes and the welfare state towards that goal. Our strategy is to build a broad ranging political consensus for action.” He ended the speech by announcing that a Social Exclusion Unit would be set up within the Cabinet Office to “promote co-operation between departments, drawing together a panoply of new initiatives, shifting the focus of government programmes towards preventing social exclusion and making recommendations for changes in policies, programmes and machinery effectively to attack social exclusion” (Mandelson 1997).

The Social Exclusion Unit was launched on 8 December 1997. In his speech launching it, the Prime Minister’s speech emphasized two themes. Firstly, “Social exclusion is about income, but it is [also] about prospects and networks and life-chances. [It] is more harmful to the individual [and] more corrosive for society as a whole . . . than material poverty.” Secondly, he stated that, “The problems of social exclusion – of failure at school, joblessness, crime – are woven together when you get down to the level of the individual’s daily life, or the life of a housing estate” (Blair 1997b).

The Social Exclusion Unit is based in the Cabinet Office and headed by the Prime Minister. A Ministerial Committee has been set up to “champion” social exclusion within each department (Social Security, Education and Employment, Health, Home Office, Treasury, Trade and Industry, and Environment Transport and the Regions) and led by the Minister without Portfolio. The twelve members of the Unit include six senior civil servants and six experts from the probation service, social services, charities, church and police. It has been given a formal life of two years and parallel units have been set up within the Welsh and Scottish Offices. Its remit is to consult widely, which means that it also serves as a focus for political intelligence gathering independent of Departmental mechanisms.

The first phase of the Unit’s work, until June 1998, focused on three priorities: truancy and exclusion from school, street living, and the worst estates. It is charged with developing a method of working which:

- Improves mechanisms for integrating the work of government departments, local authorities and other agencies at national level and on the ground
- Contributes to the departmental Comprehensive Spending Reviews initiated by the Government in terms of redirecting priorities arising from the Unit's initial work
- Drawing up key indicators of social exclusion which can be used to monitor the effectiveness of Government policies.

Social Exclusion and Modes of Integration

The current UK welfare system is structured on the principle of individual citizenship, in which all citizens are eligible for benefits in kind (health and education) and some cash benefits (pensions). Most cash benefits are distributed on the basis of 'need', as is access to social sector housing. Approximately three quarters of benefits over a person's lifetime are self-financed, either through taxation or through National Insurance, with the figure only dropping below 50% for the lowest income decile (Hills et al 1997, 20). Thus, the main mode of social integration has been based on a largely unmediated relationship between individual and state. There has been little role in these relationships for the social partners, voluntary agencies or local democracy (local authorities in UK have an average population of approximately 200,000 and are part of a highly centralized governmental system).

The programme announced by the New Labour implicitly envisages a move towards a new mode of social integration. Key elements in this vision include:

Constitutional reform: Devolution for Scotland and Wales and decentralization for the English regions, as well as reform of the electoral system to allow a multi-party system to emerge

The welfare to work New Deal, comprising both the duty to seek work and proactive government programmes to support entry/re-entry into a flexible market, within which education, training, and child care initiatives play a strong role

Refocusing the mainstream cash benefits systems to eliminate the unemployment trap for a wide range of groups, both through the introduction of an earned income tax credit for low paid workers and the integration of the tax and benefits systems

Enhancing the strategic involvement of the private, business and voluntary sectors in all aspects of welfare promotion, from the development of pension systems complementing the basic state provision through to local neighbourhood management initiatives

Addressing the democratic deficit at local authority level by promoting new forms of decentralized neighbourhood management (and other localized initiatives such as Health and Education Action Zones) in ways which support partnership, capacity building, social entrepreneurship, and localized mechanisms of accountability based on resident involvement

The Government argues, in effect, that realizing this vision will create a new mode of social integration more appropriate to the socio-economic realities of flexible labour

markets within an increasingly globalized economy. The key elements of this mode of integration will be an increased reliance on organizations in civil society and the private sector for the delivery of social welfare services on a contractual or partnership basis and the reorganization of state services to support the insertion of workers in the flexible labour market.

Reactions to the Government's programme

First reactions to the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit were lukewarm. The launch was somewhat overshadowed by press reaction to changes in the benefits available to single mothers and, a few weeks later, for the disabled. *The Economist* (1997) pointed out that the initial priorities continue some of the policies of the previous, Conservative government. Hoggart, writing in *The Guardian* (1997, p 2) labelled the initiative 'gesture politics', while Toynbee, in *The Independent* (1997, p 13) was cautiously optimistic, saying that "Many have tried it, many have failed . . . But that does not mean it isn't worth trying again and again." Reactions to the Welfare Reform proposals have followed the same pattern, with much of the press complaining that the paper only sets out broad principles and gives no details of specific changes which may be envisaged.

After the initial interest in, and widespread publicity around, the Social Exclusion Unit, a period of uncertainty has followed. Some await the announcement of the later reports and policy initiatives to tackle social exclusion. The sceptics expect to see the various government departments to have to redefine their priorities alongside the Treasury's concerns, rather than the needs of local communities. After three budgets, a criticism is raised against the economic policies of the Labour administration, to be rewarding the 'deserving' poor and neglecting those seen as undeserving.

Conclusion

Within the framework of change envisaged by the New Labour government, social exclusion can be seen in two ways. Firstly, the rather loose definition of the term provides a source of motivation for a wide variety of agencies in the governmental, business and voluntary sectors to refocus their own strategies and commitments. Secondly, it provides a "shorthand" way of referring to an extremely diverse set of specific initiatives across the whole range of governmental activities which impact directly on the general welfare of individuals and the areas in which they live. By establishing the Social Exclusion Unit and the announcement of new, area-based initiatives, the new administration has recognized the spatiality of the social problems in the most deprived sections of the population and has tried to link a variety of measures to tackle these problems. The bulk of the problem, however, may remain unaffected if a distinction is made between the deserving and the undeserving poor.

3. Research Methodology

Research Questions

The main aim of the research is “to study social exclusion as a process in its spatial, cultural and policy dimensions”. In other words, the research asks how and why social exclusion occurs in particular neighbourhoods and how it can be confronted. To be able to find an answer, we have intended, as the project’s subtitle suggests, to study social exclusion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods through its *processes*, *experiences*, and *responses*. Three broad questions are therefore being posed:

1. What are the *processes* of social exclusion? This leads to the first objective of the research, which seeks to explore and develop qualitative indicators which capture the processes of social exclusion at the neighbourhood level and which can be applied in comparative analyses in a range of EU countries. This first question is mainly a methodological one and aims to problematize the concept of social exclusion and identify its dimensions.
2. What are the *experiences* of excluded people? This leads to the second objective of the research, which seeks to describe and better understand the realities of everyday life in socially excluded neighbourhoods. This is the main emphasis of our research across all case studies.
3. What are the policy *responses* to social exclusion? This leads to the third and fourth objectives of the project, which seek to identify and compare different forms of policy intervention and their impacts on social exclusion.

Research strategy: comparative case studies across Europe

Historically, social scientists have seen case studies as less reliable than other, more traditional methods of scientific research. According to Yin (1994), however, case studies offer preferable research strategies, “when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p.1). As such, case studies are ideal tools to study neighbourhoods, as they enable us to “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p.3).

A case study enables us to understand and analyse the phenomenon of social exclusion in a particular context. By using only quantitative information such as the census data or latest economic trends figures, we could get an idea of the problems an area is facing, but we will not be able to *explain* the phenomenon. Conducting a case study, therefore, is necessary in linking the phenomenon to its context. We have used our case study to find out how social exclusion has occurred in a neighbourhood and why. This allows us to *describe* social exclusion in a particular neighbourhood, to *explore* the processes which have been at work, and to *explain* the phenomenon in its wider context. When we link these strategies with our main questions of the research, in which we seek to find out about the processes, experiences, and responses to social exclusion, we can develop a matrix of how they can be related.

A common objection to the validity of case study research is that the results of a single case study cannot be generalized. However, a major challenge in claiming such validity for a comparative study is to conduct case studies according to a common and well defined strategy that make them comparable. Therefore, the main methodological questions confronting us in conducting our case were how to make our case studies comparable across different contexts? This involves attention to how we define our case study, how we establish which data to collect, and how we analyse and interpret our data? These are very broad questions and to find any answers, it was important to develop a carefully defined research design. Such design needed to clarify research questions, research propositions, and the unit of analysis.

Research propositions

The world of a neighbourhood is a complex web of people, places and events. Even a small place consists of thousands of interactions which cannot be mapped and described. It was therefore essential to be able to select the type of data we wanted to collect and the questions we asked in our interviews. Drawing a proposition at the beginning helped focusing the research and directing the attention towards the specific data needed.

Yin (1994) argues that case studies should not be used to make statistical generalizations. Instead, case studies make it possible to undertake analytic generalizations. That is why it was essential to develop a theory (or a set of rival, plausible theories) at the start of the work. This theory guided the empirical research and helped generalizing and interpreting the results.

Our work earlier had developed some theoretical perspectives in understanding social exclusion (Madanipour, Cars & Allen, 1998). These included the notions that,

- Social exclusion can best be understood at the microlevel of research, by concentrating on individuals in their social context, and its acute forms find a spatial expression.
- Social exclusion is the combined absence of access to work, to decision making, and to common cultural practices.
- It is caused by the lack of support for, and the inability of, individuals and groups to cope with change, occurred through structural economic change or displacement.

These concepts have enabled us to formulate our questions and to use these frameworks to analyse the results of our field work.

Unit of analysis

It was important to establish our unit of analysis to guide us in the collection of data. Is our unit of analysis the whole neighbourhood or is it excluded individuals? Are we collecting information from individuals to be able to map out a series of stories about

how these individuals have become excluded from certain aspects of living in the society? Are we then looking for the possible impact of the policy interventions on individuals lives? Or are we using these individuals as examples to build up the story of a group, a neighbourhood? Depending on this focus, our method of data collection and of interpreting data could be different.

Following the title of our project, we chose the neighbourhood as our unit of analysis. In this context, individuals are seen as the constituent parts of the neighbourhood, of a larger social group. We needed to collect information about the neighbourhood as a whole, and about some individuals within it, who have been selected randomly or through certain criteria. The importance of studying individuals here was not of statistical importance and their stories are not samples for generalization, but examples of potentially excluded people. By concentrating on neighbourhoods, we have sought to study individuals and groups within their contexts. Our focus on the neighbourhood is a focus on the *context* of which these individuals and groups are a part, and on the fact that social exclusion often finds a spatial expression.

If we only concentrated on individuals, each individual would have been a different “case”, as it happened in Bourdieu’s research (1993; 1996). There, he and his colleagues conducted and presented their interviews as case studies and made conclusions on the basis of these cases. For us, it was important to be able to contextualize and interpret individuals’ stories, i.e., to link these individuals to each other and to their context. In a sense, our conclusion would be these linkages between individuals, as we will show how they share in being exposed to social exclusion processes, what they share in their everyday life experiences, and to what extent they share the impact of policy interventions on their lives. This is why our emphasis on neighbourhood finds a special significance, as neighbourhoods provide the social and spatial context in which individuals can be studied.

Selecting the case study

Most studies of deprivation in Newcastle have focused on the city’s West End, which has some of the worst statistical indicators. In comparison, however, the East End is under-studied, as research has been limited to a few initiatives. It has, however, comparable indicators of social and economic disadvantage. An earlier study had highlighted many of the area’s problems, even though it had focused on making policy recommendations in connection with the rising tide of youth crime and vandalism (Dept of Social Policy,1991). Another, more recent, study has mainly focused on producing an appraisal based on statistical indicators (Newcastle City Council,1997). Fresh research was needed to study the area from a holistic perspective, combining quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

Choosing Walker, a Census ward at the heart of the East End, as a case to study has enabled us to have access to statistical and official data on the area. This makes it possible to compare the area with other wards in the city, in the region, and in the country as a whole.

Undertaking the case study

The case study combines two sets of data: quantitative and qualitative. It also involves combining phenomenological (how local people see the process) with sociological approaches (how outside observers see the process).

The quantitative data has been collected from Census results and from later publications by the local authority and others. This provides a general statistical background which gives a sectoral perspective into the life of the neighbourhood. The main set of data, however, comes from qualitative work, which has allowed us to go deeper in our knowledge of life in the neighbourhood. Twenty residents of the neighbourhood have been interviewed in one to two hour sessions. It was important to select these interviewees in such a way as to have a balanced sample in terms of gender and age. It was obvious that we were not seeking statistical validity with a sample of twenty. Their views and life stories, however, were to provide us with holistic perspectives into the neighbourhood, rather than sectoral perspectives of the official statistics. What we were seeking from these interviews were insights into social exclusionary processes and possible responses to these processes.

One of the main criteria for choosing the interviewees was whether they were engaged in neighbourhood affairs. Walker has a relatively large group of volunteers who work on various aspects of community life. Through the City Council's Community and Housing Directorate, we contacted one of these groups and asked them to introduce to us some residents who do not participate in community affairs. Our assumption was that those who are disengaged are more at risk of exclusion. For the sake of comparison, we also interviewed some volunteers. We wrote to the respondents and asked for interviews, which were conducted in their homes or in the Walker Park. These stories, however, could potentially represent a bias in favour of the neighbourhood. To compensate for this and to hear the stories of those who were specifically disappointed with the neighbourhood, we asked the area's housing officer to introduce to us some public housing residents who had applied to leave the neighbourhood. Although it was more difficult to contact these, it was essential for us to know their views.

We have also interviewed some local authority officers, to get to know the perspective of the city managers about the life and problems of the neighbourhood. We interviewed six officers, who were engaged in community development, neighbourhood regeneration, housing, and education¹.

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4. Deprivation in Walker: a quantitative profile

Newcastle upon Tyne is situated in the north east of England, and with a population in 1991 of about 264,000 is the largest city between Leeds and Edinburgh. The city is part of the larger conurbation of Tyne and Wear, with a population of just over one million, which is one of the larger urban agglomerations in the country. Descriptions of Newcastle upon Tyne draw attention to the contrasts which exist in the way of life which people lead within the city (Robinson, 1988). Indeed, the small, compact nature of the city serves to exacerbate the propinquity of poverty and affluence.

The 1998 index of local deprivation for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions shows that Newcastle ranked 19 worst in terms of deprivation out of 366 local authority districts (DETR, 1998). Nevertheless research has emphasised the way that the city has worked hard to overcome such difficulties. Newcastle developed its role as the service centre for the region. Four fifths of employment in the city is in the service sector, of which half is within the public sector. The city centre, along with the Metro Centre at Gateshead, serves as a regional shopping centre. The city centre also doubles as the focus of a vibrant night life for the city and region.

At the same time, problems experienced in other parts of the city have proved more intractable. The West End of the city has attracted considerable attention in terms of academic research, the media, policy measures and investment in terms of regeneration programmes levering in public and private finance into the area. In contrast, problems associated with the East End have courted less attention, although this lack of exposure in research or media belies not only the nature of these difficulties but also the effort which is being made to address them.

The subject area for this research, Walker, forms one part of the East End of Newcastle, located to the east of the city centre. Its geographical area is defined for this study by the ward used in the 1991 Census results by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Its southern and eastern boundaries are formed by a bend in the river Tyne. Its western and northern boundaries are a continuation of mixed residential and industrial areas, formed by the adjacent census wards of Monkchester and Walkergate.

It is possible to compare Walker with the rest of Newcastle and the Northern region by drawing upon two studies of indicators of deprivation. The first was a study of deprivation in all wards in the Northern region using four key indicators. On the basis of these indicators, Walker was ranked fourth worst in the Northern region in 1991 (out of 678 wards which make up the Northern region). The indicators of material deprivation included: % persons unemployed (men 16-64, women 16-59); % households with no car; % households overcrowded (more than one person per room) and % households not owner-occupied (Phillimore, 1994).

The second comparative study was a Poverty Profile of the city undertaken in 1994 by the City Council. This profile ranked wards within Newcastle on the basis of eight indicators: Households with access to a car; economically active adults who are

unemployed; household population who are long term ill; children who live in single adult households; owner occupied households; local authority households; those who work in low skilled and unskilled occupations, and children who live in households where there is no earner. Walker was ranked second worst out of the 26 wards in the city (West City ranked first, South Gosforth, 26). By way of comparison, the adjacent ward of Monkchester was ranked third worst, whilst Walkergate was ranked seventeenth (Poverty Profile 1994, Newcastle Research Unit).

It is possible to examine the experience of deprivation within Walker by using quantitative indicators drawn from the 1991 Census. The ward is divided up into twenty enumeration districts (groupings of approximately 150 households) which allows variation within Walker to be shown. A number of census indicators were used to map circumstances in different parts of the ward (see Figure One). The results suggests that there is a large variation in the experience of households within Walker ward (although this is not to say that the *same* households within each enumeration district are affected by the issues highlighted by the indicators).

	% No Car	% un-employed	% long term ill	% One Adult with dependent children	% Local Authority tenants	% semi or unskilled manual
England	32.3	9.1	12.4	4.1	19.8	9.0
Tyne and Wear	51.0	13.8	16.4	5.5	35.5	9.8
Newcastle upon Tyne	54.4	15.0	15.8	5.9	34.6	8.7
Walker	78.9	29.9	19.6	8.9	76.5	16.0
Enumeration Districts						
1	69.7	34.5	18.9	9.6	88.0	4.8
2	69.0	22.2	18.8	13.4	74.3	0.0
3	77.7	23.3	20.9	7.3	68.0	28.6
4	79.7	29.5	19.9	11.7	73.4	13.6
5	73.5	29.3	16.3	13.0	86.5	15.0
6	85.2	39.3	26.0	8.7	94.9	5.0
7	90.8	36.5	29.4	4.6	96.9	15.8
8	70.6	17.9	20.2	3.3	66.1	11.1
9	85.4	37.8	19.2	12.1	92.4	13.3
10	79.6	26.5	17.0	11.5	81.9	14.8
11	52.6	20.0	14.0	7.7	28.7	10.0
12	52.8	8.5	4.9	1.1	0.0	11.1
13	86.2	36.8	18.5	11.0	94.5	10.0
14	78.9	18.2	23.2	1.4	65.6	13.6
15	74.7	27.5	15.5	3.8	50.5	27.8
16	91.8	47.1	17.7	11.0	73.1	14.3
17	86.3	41.8	16.7	21.9	98.3	25.0
18	86.8	36.3	20.9	6.3	80.0	42.9
19	88.8	46.2	44.9	1.1	95.7	16.7
20	80.0	28.6	18.4	11.0	82.0	15.0

Figure One. Indicators of deprivation in Walker (Source: 1991 Census)

Population

The number of people living in Walker has declined considerably over the last ten years. The population of Walker stood at 8,854 in 1991, compared with 11,166 in 1981, or a fall of about 21 per cent. This decline can be compared with the city-wide fall in population of 6.8 per cent in the same period. Only two other wards in Newcastle experienced higher rates of out-migration between 1981 and 1991 (Moorside and West City).

Information on the ethnic origin of the heads of households was available from the 1996 Inter-censal survey of the city. Ninety nine per cent of heads of households in Walker were European (which includes UK). One per cent were Asian. This figure can be compared to the average for the city of 96 per cent European (with the remaining 4 per cent being predominantly Asian).

The 1996 inter-censal survey also described the population structure of Walker. The survey showed that the proportion of elderly residents in Walker was close to the average for the city as a whole. About 24 per cent of the population of Walker was of pensionable age, compared with 23 per cent of the population in Newcastle. On the other hand, the proportion of the population in Walker aged between 16 and 24 was lower than the average for the city. Seven per cent of the population in Walker was of this age compared with thirteen per cent in the city.

Unemployment

A high proportion of males are either skilled manual (43 per cent) or semi and unskilled workers (40 per cent). The respective proportions for the city as a whole were 26 per cent and 20 per cent. As a result the area suffered severely from industrial decline. The 1991 census showed that the rate of unemployment in Walker in 1991 was about thirty per cent. This figure can be compared to the total for Newcastle upon Tyne which showed that on average 15 per cent were unemployed (whilst an average of nine per cent were unemployed in England).

Large differences are apparent between unemployment rates amongst males and females. The Community Appraisal in 1997 estimated joblessness in wards (produced by the Tyne and Wear Research and Intelligence Unit). Male unemployment for April 1996 was 32.7 per cent and female unemployment was 9.5 per cent. The respective figures for Newcastle upon Tyne were 17.8 per cent and 6.1 per cent. An earlier study has highlighted the level of unemployment amongst young males in Walker. The inter-censal survey (1996) showed that the proportion of males between the ages of 16 and 24 who were looking for work was 73 per cent, whilst 9 per cent of females in the same age group were looking for work. A particular feature of unemployment in this area is its longevity. Almost a third of unemployed males in 1997 in Walker had been out of work for over two years (Community Appraisal, 1997).

Housing

Housing tenure in the ward is predominately local authority with about 77 per cent of households living in this form of tenure in 1991. The respective figure for Newcastle was 35 per cent whilst about twenty per cent of households lived in council housing in

England. Nevertheless there was quite a large variation in tenure within Walker ward. One enumeration district contained no local authority tenants, whereas 98 per cent of households in another enumeration district were local authority tenants. A large proportion of the housing stock in the west of the ward (Riverside and Walker estate) was constructed in the 1930s. In the east of the ward there is a mix of older stock combined with unpopular high and low rise developments dating from the 1960s (Newcastle upon Tyne City Council, 1997). Some of this newer housing stock are targeted by the council policy for limited demolition.

Health

A further comparative study of wards in the city has been conducted, with a focus upon deprivation and poor health. This study suggests that a key issue in Walker is the level of poor health of many of its residents. Walker was ranked second worst in Newcastle (out of 26 wards) in terms of most deprived, worst health as measured by mortality among under 65 years (Phillimore *et al*, 1994). A further indicator of health can be derived from low birth weight. National average of live births that are less than 2.5 kilograms is around 8 per cent. The respective figure for Walker was 19 per cent. (Although this is not the worst area in Newcastle upon Tyne. Walker is ranked seventh worst in terms of low live birth weights).

The 1991 census also includes a question on limiting long term illness. The Census showed that more people in Walker were likely to experience a limiting long term illness (20 per cent) than the average for the city (16 per cent). Figure One shows that there was a large variation in the number of people experiencing long term illness in different parts of the ward. About 45 per cent of residents in one enumeration district (ED) (which also contained a high proportion of elderly residents) were experiencing a limiting long term illness in 1991. This ED was towards the south of the ward, close to the river. In contrast, another ED just to the south of Walker Park (which had the highest proportion of owner occupied dwellings and the lowest proportion of elderly residents in the ward) had just five per cent of its residents experiencing a limiting long term illness.

In addition, the burden on other household members arising from long term illness is reflected in the nine per cent of people in households in Walker who were caring for another person. The respective figure for Newcastle as a whole was 5 per cent.

Health problems have been attributed to a combination of factors, including long term unemployment, low incomes, unhealthy diet and lifestyle, and in some cases, the consequences of working in heavy industry evidenced by high rates of coronary and respiratory disease (The Regeneration of Shields Road, 1995). Nevertheless, there is a history of initiatives to alleviate poor health in the area. Walker Health Project was established in 1982 to give people in the area opportunities for better health. A community worker was available to give advice, along with a Women's Group, a Food Group and a Health Project shop (Robinson, 1988).

Education

There are a number of primary and secondary schools serving the Walker area. Primary schools comprise West Walker, St Anthony's C.E. Tyneview and Wherrier St. Both secondary schools, Benfield Comprehensive and Walker Comprehensive, lay just outside Walker ward in Walkergate. On average, children at these schools tend to perform below average when measured on school performance tables. Nevertheless, both comprehensives are attempting to develop strategies to enhance the educational potential of pupils and local residents. For example, Walker Comprehensive has obtained funding through a regeneration initiative (Single Regeneration Budget) to develop a community education wing to provide training for employment. Further, there are links with voluntary organisations in Walker aiming to develop life long learning, such as Walker Open Learning and Fitness Centre. The schools are increasingly recognizing the link between the children's performance to their parents' level of skills and knowledge or to the way children are treated at home. The West Walker primary school has been subject of national attention when praised by the Education Secretary for its dramatically improved performance, turning falling pupil numbers to lengthy waiting lists and increased attendance rate (*The Guardian*, 23 February 1999).

Crime and perceptions of safety

Data from Northumbria Police highlighted in the Community Appraisal (Newcastle upon Tyne City Council, 1997) showed that the rate of burglary in Walker was slightly lower than the average for the city as a whole: 58.61 per 1,000 households, compared with 62.90 per 1,000 city wide. However, this average for Walker masks considerable problems in certain locations within the ward. Shopping centres are a particular target for burglary in Walker. A further difficulty relates to problems with crimes committed by young people.

The Biennial Resident's Survey (1994) found that 17 per cent of residents did not feel safe living in Walker. Twenty three per cent of residents stated that they had been personally affected by crime in the twelve months prior to the survey (Again, these figures are slightly less than the city-wide averages). This survey also asked if respondents felt that their neighbourhood was improving, staying the same, or getting worse. Forty seven per cent of respondents in Walker felt that their neighbourhood was getting worse. Only Byker ward had such a high proportion of respondents who held this opinion.

Newcastle City Council and Northumbria Police point that, unlike other areas in Tyne and Wear with high levels of deprivation such as the West End of Newcastle and areas in the adjacent authority of North Tyneside, Walker has not experienced acute civil disturbance. These organizations suggest that the absence of serious disorder such as rioting can be put down to the degree of cohesion within the communities in the East End of Newcastle, which includes Walker, as well as a tradition of mutual co-operation. However, there is also a perception that there is no room for complacency in this respect, and there is concern that without policy attention, the East End of Newcastle could rapidly become 'another West End' (referring to the difficulties experienced in parts of the West End of Newcastle). Domestic violence,

which is a form of internalization of what appears as riots in other parts of the city, and organized crime are aspects of crime which need persistent and careful responses.

Businesses and Services in Walker

There are few retail outlets in Walker itself, which are based around small shopping centres, such as Church Walk. Difficulties associated with these centres are that there is limited choice of goods on offer to residents, and these shops suffer from being a target of crime. The main shopping area for this part of Newcastle, along Shields Road, has fared poorly in competition from the city centre. The only department store closed in 1984, and many retail units are currently standing vacant.

Residents have taken steps to broaden the range of services available in Walker. In the absence of financial service provision in Walker from mainstream businesses, the Walker Community Credit Union was established in 1990 to give people access to a saving and loan facility. Furthermore, a food Co-operative has been established to provide a low cost alternative service for local residents.

The means by which residents can gain access to services outside Walker is constrained by the very low levels of car ownership in the ward. The average proportion of households lacking cars in England in 1991 was 32 per cent, whilst 54 per cent of households in Newcastle did not have a car. The respective figure for Walker in 1991 was 79 per cent. This feature is reflected in the greater reliance on walking or in the use of public transport by residents in Walker. Nevertheless, residents have established Community Minibus Groups to help access for residents.

Social geography of the neighbourhood

There is a range of different forms of differentiation in Walker. The historical pattern of differentiation, which it shares with the rest of Newcastle, follows topography. The riverbank, which is the lowest point in the neighbourhood, is known as the poorest part. By moving uphill, away from the river towards the north, the social composition changes to higher income levels. This overlap of social and physical configuration is in line with the historical development of the city, which has moved away from the riverbanks to the northern heights. Although recent regeneration efforts have revitalized parts of the river front close to the city centre, other parts of the city still follow this historical pattern.

This topographical pattern is a very crude representation of the conditions in the neighbourhood, but one that seems to have made a long lasting impression in collective memory. A combination of statistical data (Figure One), when overlaid on the map of the area, shows a different picture, one with a more complex pattern of differentiation, where some parts that are near the river are better off than those further up the bank. It shows how the social geography of the neighbourhood is more complex than is generally held to be represented by proximity to the river or by topography.

A third pattern of differentiation, which shows further complexity, is the way some parts of the neighbourhood are stigmatized. The residential areas in the

neighbourhood are mostly public housing, and as such should have a consistent reputation. It is clear, however, that some parts and some estates are marked as unpopular by the residents, to the extent that the list of vacant dwellings in these areas are long. Again the poorest District on the riverside has the strongest stigma. But there are areas that are stigmatized but are not detected by the ED level, census data or the topographical-historical pattern. Some parts within Districts with average statistics can become unpopular with residents as areas to be avoided due to the presence of some households or particular features.

These three patterns of differentiation, the topographical-historical, the statistical, and the subjective image, cannot be used only on their own, as their validity can be limited. A fine grained map of the social geography of the neighbourhood, therefore, would contest the various forms of representation but would have to offer a complex representation of the area. It needs to take into account the experiences of people who have lived in different parts of the neighbourhood and the understanding they have from their living environment.

Conclusion

All indicators show that the neighbourhood is suffering from severe social problems. It suffers from losing population, poor education and health, high rates of housing vacancy, high crime rates, high unemployment and inadequate services. Statistical indicators, however, are unable to show how the situation has emerged and how it is being experienced by the people of the area. With a combination of statistical and phenomenological knowledge, it will be shown, we can find a deeper insight into the life of the neighbourhood and find ways of responding to these challenges.

5. Processes of social exclusion

The area developed as an important focus for a range of industries, including engineering, chemical works, shipbuilding and coal mining. With regard to the latter, ten pits were located in Walker after the end of the seventeenth century, although by the turn of the twentieth century, only one, Ann Pit, remained in use. As a residential area, Walker expanded rapidly in the nineteenth century, as various firms built dwellings to house their workforce, mainly along the line of the river. The accommodation provided by companies was very poor, and overcrowding was a serious problem in Walker at the turn of the century. At this time 199 families were reported as living in tenements with one room. Infant deaths ran at a rate of one in five. In 1904, Walker was incorporated into the city of Newcastle Upon Tyne, taking over from Walker Urban District Council. After the First world war, a considerable amount of local authority housing was built in the ward.

Heavy industry continued to be a crucial source of employment for Walker well into the twentieth century. This reliance is reflected in the current unemployment rates in the area, as heavy industry has declined. In 1975 unemployment in Walker was below average compared with the city as a whole, and 74 per cent of workers were employed in manual occupations. The unemployment rate jumped in the recession during the early 1980s, and by 1986 unemployment was double the average for the city.

A number of schemes have attempted to deal with the closure of industries, dealing with reclamation and contamination of land. Riverside Park benefited from an early scheme in the 1960s, although by the 1980s another scheme was necessary to regenerate this area further, and also deal with the closure of a tarworks in 1981. Further efforts to regenerate the area have come through the construction of an off-shore technology park on Walker Riverside, partly with the aid of the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation.

The processes of social exclusion in Walker can clearly be traced back to the change in the economic base of the neighbourhood. This neighbourhood, and others in the East End of Newcastle, were concentrations of working class residential areas around traditional industries such as mining and shipbuilding. As in many other industrial cities, the riverside in Newcastle was the main location of these industries. The naval yards marked the East End of the city and provided employment for men for most of the twentieth century before their dramatic decline in the recent decades. Now, however, these traditional sources of employment have disappeared one after the other, leaving a workforce whose skills are no longer needed. As these industries have declined and disappeared almost completely, the economic base of the neighbourhood has eroded, to be replaced by state subsidy.

The loss of connection with the world of work and the resources necessary for a working household has been at the root of the problems of the neighbourhood. This has hit the neighbourhood very hard, to the extent that in the 1991 Census, Walker had an average unemployment rate of 29.9 per cent, as compared to the national average of 9.1 per cent. In some Enumeration Districts of Walker, this rate reached up to 47 per cent. Chronic economic problems could only lead to mounting social

problems. Being disconnected from the world of work had inevitable, negative consequences for relationship between individuals and others as well as with themselves.

The process of economic decline was running in parallel with a transformation of the traditional working class family. The number of single parent households in Walker (8.9 per cent) was more than twice the national average (4.1 per cent). Social organization within the neighbourhood appears to be changing, although social relations have remained fairly strong.

Disconnection from the world of work and subsequent pressure on the world of household have had adverse effects on the wellbeing and health of the individuals. One in five residents of Walker (up to one in two in one District) had suffered from long term illness and health problems.

These substantial changes have gradually cut the links between the residents of the area and the larger society in which they live. The strongest connection is with the state, as most people live in public housing (76.5 per cent compared to the national average of 19.8) and many receive social welfare benefits for unemployment and ill health. This connection with the state, however, is under pressure, which further threatens the stability and the livelihood of the neighbourhood.

As the mobility of the population is very limited (only one in five have access to car), their spatial connections with the rest of the city and region remains poor. Also as many remain unskilled or have skills that are not appreciated in the marketplace, their economic connections with the outside world remains weak. The only asset in the community appears to be its historically developed sense of social cohesion and communal feelings. As the social and economic conditions of the parents generations are becoming weaker, the young find it difficult or even undesirable to reproduce the social relations of the past. The disappearance of this sense of community would be the last step in the disintegration of a once stable working neighbourhood. Exclusion of the displaced and disconnected individuals would be the result if this last set of connections was to be dissolved.

Conclusion

The main cause of the neighbourhood's problems has been economic decline. It has suffered for its reliance on a few employers and on manual work in heavy industries. With the decline of this sector of the economy, the people of the neighbourhood have been hit hard. Disconnection from the world of work has coincided with a disintegration of social and family networks, which are themselves causing further difficulties.

6. Experiences of Social Exclusion

Representations of the neighbourhood

Walker's image for the rest of the city has long been one of a respectable working class area with a strong sense of community. This has been in sharp contrast to the West End of Newcastle, which has been seen as a problem-ridden area for a long time. The positive image of Walker to the outside world, however, appears to be breaking down, as unemployment and crime have started to cause a degree of stigmatization for the entire neighbourhood.

Some of the residents are very aware of this negative image of the their neighbourhood in other parts of the city. To the people of the area, however, Walker still has its charms and the long term residents of the neighbourhood fight against the stigma. As one middle aged woman, who has lived here all her life, puts it,

'I mean other parts of the city might think 'Oh it's a tough place' and all this sort of thing, but it's only like a very small element, for my money anyway. You know what I mean? There's just certain sections, you know what I mean? but you're going to get that in any case.'

This highlights a point that a number of people were keen to emphasize, that they felt only certain streets within small areas of Walker were rougher and these distorted the image of Walker as a whole.

'It's just a small element in Walker and they're getting the whole place a bad name, and I.. I don't like that. I don't like that one bit. They're only hearing about the bad people. They're not hearing about the good people ...'

Most respondents had a very positive view of the area. Some commented from the position of having spent most of their lives in Walker.

'It's just a nice place. It's lovely to get away from, but you can't wait to get back, you know, when you go on holiday and that, you're dying to get back. It's a nice atmosphere and everything.'

Other respondents had moved to Walker from other parts of the city and could compare their view of Walker as a current resident with their image of the area when they lived elsewhere.

'Its had a bad reputation years ago, cos like I'm originally from Forest Hall and when I was 16,17, Walker had a bad reputation then, so I got told anyway. But now, I wouldn't shift from here now. Walker is great.'

'It did have a bad name when I moved here. A lot of people ' Oh I wouldn't move to Walker'. And it's not what they make it out to be, you know, it's nice.' '

The long term residents of Walker have an obvious pride in the area and feel strong attachment to it. As an old woman suggests, *'Well, I know a lot of people that've left Walker, but they've come back again.'* The reason is, she stresses, that people in Walker are friendly. This is confirmed by a father of two who has lived here for the last three years,

'... in this street everybody talks to you, and it's great you know, summer time especially everybody's on their front street and you know sort of like walking to the pub, the Stack or the County, and it's couples and you know, and it's OK.'

Pride in the area was evident in a resident showing the area off to her relatives.

'I brought my brother over here for the first time... and he spent a weekend here and he said it was great...he got a nice surprise when he came down. He went back to [his place] and told his mates.'

A positive feeling of change is felt by those who are engaged in voluntary work.

'I think like Walker is opening its eyes to things that should have been happening years ago...It's getting better for doing things now. At one time it was a sleepy little place but now, it's opened up a bit more.'

Some younger people, however, do not seem to share this enthusiasm. A young man says the area is all right *'so long as you keep yourself to yourself, and if you don't you're like asking for trouble really.'* Trouble came to a couple who have lived in Walker for only eight months with their four children. According to the mother,

'Just there's that many young uns drinking ... drinking through the day and swearing. And my children will not play out. They'll not even play in the garden. It's just so bad. If we could move tomorrow we would. We've been broken into. We've been assaulted in the house, like a gang of them. We've had the car broken into. We've had the car lights smashed several times.'

For them, Walker is *'a terrible place'*. She says, *'I knew it had a name, but I didn't know it was as bad...'* Another household who wants to move out had similar problems,

'It is a wrong place, for certain people to be honest. The rougher you are, the more you can steal etc., the more you are accepted.'

Such wide range of representations of Walker and the experiences of its residents may seem puzzling. The opinion of a woman in her thirties who lives in Daisy Hill may seem a good explanation of the range of experiences in Walker:

'I think it would just depend on where about we lived and what it was like, you know.'

But the reputation and image of the neighbourhood in the outside world is shaped more by the negative, rather than positive representations. It has been the rising tide

of economic and social problems that has supported this interpretation of the neighbourhood by those outside and on its margins. To those who are situated firmly within the neighbourhood and who identify with Walker more closely, however, this is a stigma to fight against.

Insensitive representations, even of positive initiatives, seems to stigmatize people and areas and be embarrassing for people. A father, whose son had featured in a newspaper report as a poor child, was furious.

'But he said yes he's in the Journal, so I went out and bought a Journal, and he was standing there with other pupils that go to that school, and because he likes school and always gets 100% attendance, and it had like an article with three pupils from that school, and they were standing with their certificates and they said that these people from Walker Primary school got 100% attendance allowance even though some have to go to school without breakfast and get themselves up in the morning. Well, you know everybody who sends their kids to that school were just furious you know cos....it's a horrible thing, but apparently the headmistress hadn't said it. She'd been misquoted, according to her but..... My boy and my friend's little girl.... so....when I'm out and about..like sort of my friends say 'you've fed that bairn!'

Inside the neighbourhood, people have a rather clear idea about the popular or troubled areas. An internal system of stigmatization seems to be at work, which creates a negative image of particular areas, such as Pottery Bank and Hexham Avenue. For one man,

'Anything this side of Walker Road, I think, is brilliant ... I wouldn't fancy anybody going the other side.'

The bad reputation of some area are widely discussed among people and by the media, which adds further to such stigmatization. However, for a young woman who has lived in one such area, bad reputations are not justified.

'When I moved here ... Pottery Bank had a bad name then, and I had to walk up to the chip shop, only five ten minutes ... and I though argh, you know it had such a bad name, who's gonna run up with a knife ... and it was all in your mind. You think somebody's gonna hang out in a corner sniffing glue, and you think how could it get such a bad reputation, Walker, and it's nothing, nothing at all.'

Obstacles to work

The main source of employment in the area, heavy industries such as shipbuilding, has disappeared. This loss of employment has had a devastating impact on those who were engaged in these industries. Ill health seems to be a result of these changes as well as a major obstacle to finding new work. A 40-year old man, who had moved to this area with his family to be near his shipbuilding work, was made redundant. He was engaged in several different jobs but since his redundancy he has had a major car crash and a heart attack and is now unemployed. Another man living with his wife and two children is also not working due to ill health, for having got a slipped disk for

heavy work and also for suffering from panic attacks. A couple told us that they were both on the sick before the woman found a job.

In addition to ill health, another obstacle to work is the low wages which are comparable or below the social benefit payments. In choosing what to do, many make the rational decision of opting for receiving the benefit, i.e., the same amount of money for less or no work. As a man says,

'I'm a chef by trade. When you've got a family to support, you don't go out to work for £120 a week when you get the same benefits for doing nothing.'

A woman explains,

'They say it gives you all pride to go back to work, but you don't get the initiative to go back to work, you know. They expect you to work 40 -50 hour a week for a few...you know less than a £100. So it's not worth it. As I say by the time you've paid your gas, just basic things that you need like your gas, electric, your food, your rent, you know, you're left worse off. It's not worth it, and that's why a lot of people won't do it.'

'It's a no win situation. Once you're on the dole, it's hard to get off it.'

Low wages, therefore, are a major obstacle that many know and avoid.

'...say I got a job. If you work more than sixteen hours they take money off you ..the dole, so you're stuck that way. Unless it was good wages so I could say, 'You keep that and I'll work for my own money'. But that's very rarely now.'

Low wages are also a problem for the self employed.

'It's not that she gives her self a big wage. She's got her own shop, but she still can't afford to give herself a big wage, and he's doing the job for a pittance.'

Another major obstacle to work is the lack of skills, which damages the chances in the job market and the self esteem of individuals.

'I'm useless at spelling ...I've got no confidence in myself.'

In the absence of manual work for the unskilled and semi-skilled males, the pressure is more and more on women to find work. They are increasingly the main breadwinners of the households, having to undertake sometimes two or three lowly paid, demanding jobs. Apart from low wages, women need support with childcare, which is difficult to arrange. For many households, it is the family that is the main supporting mechanism for childcare.

'... there's not many crèches and things like that, so people that haven't got their mams anymore it means they're stuck with their children and can't go to work.'

Even when family members are available and help with childcare, they may be themselves put off work for doing so.

'Now if I had a paid job where I had to go I don't suppose I would mind a couple of days a week, a couple of hours or a couple of days a week, but with having like (my grandson) and that, it's not a paid job...'

For those without access to family support, it is the cost of childcare that prevents them from looking for jobs.

'I could have had a job going back to the firm I used to work for, but by the time I paid for a care, someone to look after the children, that put us off you know. It's defeating the object.'

It is not only the cost of childcare, but the quality of childcare is also what concerns parents.

'All these after care clubs and stuff, you see you don't know who's looking after your kids. They say they're vetted and all this, but ... there's things still happen you know. And you cannot take the chance.'

Some women know what type of job they are interested in, but find it daunting even to try getting that job for their lack of skills and confidence. A woman who *'would love to be a play worker'* identified her problems as,

'...I'm too nervous. I can't speak out. I'm dead quiet. I just sit there don't say a word because I get really frightened. ... I think it's too difficult for me, cos I'm a bad speller. I get nervous when I've got to write in a book...'

For another middle aged woman who had never worked, it was the commitment and the routine that looked daunting: *'I hate routine'*.

There are some sources of help in getting training and jobs.

'...an agency in the town wanted people for telesales, so I went over, and it was for BT. And I didn't expect to get the job, and I just went over inquiring, and I got an interview and then they told us that day, that I could start a week or two later. So I just jumped at it...'

Support is also available at the neighbourhood level.

'Over at the WOLF centre like she...the careers woman there...she's got a list of jobs, and she helps you with CVs and she does the phoning around, and arranging interviews and things so I could go over there.'

But for someone who is trying to find another job, this service is not available

'...I only get one day off which is a Saturday when she's not there.'

Even those who have been trained and have some qualifications have to search hard for opportunities. As a young man explains,

'I've got two first aid things, all the qualifications but I just can't get in you know! You need someone to give you a boost you know.'

Obstacles to participation in governance

One of the dimensions of social exclusion is to be disengaged from political processes. Not having a voice in the running of daily affairs or alienation from larger processes of governance would lead to serious marginalization of individuals or groups and a local crisis of legitimacy for the political authorities. Therefore, one of the main vehicles of combating social exclusion for an individual or a group is to be actively engaged in decision making about what affects their lives. To have access to some form of power, to be involved in governance processes, would enable people to search for a way out of their problems and to have a say in how to run their own affairs.

The East End of Newcastle has a reputation for a strong culture of engagement in local politics. The three elected councillors of the ward are born there and have close ties with the area, a situation which may not be the case in other areas. In Walker, however, while there is some evidence of people's engagement in helping others with some daily issues such as childcare, our interviews gave us little evidence of participation in political processes, informal or formal, local or national. Only one in ten appear to have voted in the last local elections.

According to a City Council officer, Walker has 50 volunteers working with community organizations, i.e., apparently more than any other area in the city, which partly reflects on the strong sense of community in the neighbourhood.

The mainstay of community activities are older people, although we came across some young volunteers keen to make a difference in the neighbourhood conditions. Those who are engaged in community organizations and activities come with different motives and perspectives. Being able to help others is obviously important for volunteers. According to a young man,

'It's just that I enjoy. I like to be around that sort of thing, crafts and that. They were good to me when I was little, so I thought why not put something back.'

After the local school had asked parents for support, a woman's reply was that

'... me and me friends sat down one day and said well why don't we try and help the school so it just come about and it gets more and more all the time us doing more and more.'

For some, it is a way of keeping contact with others and having fun. It is a way out of the home, where they may be on their own or where an unemployed husband is living. As a woman who is involved in one organization puts it,

'[I] Come here all the time... Cos I love coming here. It's nicer to home.'

Another, older woman says,

'Oh I enjoy it... keeps you young, stops you from getting morbid...'

But it is not only getting away from the harsher realities of home. It is also a vehicle of personal development,

'It's brought me on a lot. I've learnt loads of things that I thought I could never do.'

But the volunteers may be cautious about the extent of being involved in community organizations.

'You don't want to go too far out your way cos you don't know what you're getting into you know.'

For the newcomers to the area, who are not part of the local social networks, information about community organizations is not easily available.

'You've got to go and find out about them, you don't...there's no leaflets or anything. I think if they have got things going on they should, you know put leaflets about if there's stuff for kids or adults, let people know.'

Even those who know about the organizations may find themselves alienated by the atmosphere or the type of people involved. As a man puts it,

'...there's little groups of women and if you're not part of it you just get pushed to the side.'

The reason for not being involved, therefore, as one City Council officer suggested, may be the people who are. This is confirmed by a resident who says,

'...the type of people that go there puts you off.'

The majority of population are not interested or involved in such voluntary work. The same appears to be the case with involvement in local and national politics. Most respondents did not know anything about local councillors or were not sure about what they did.

'I don't think it [voting] would matter, you know. They don't do much. They say they will but they don't.'

Even those who are active in voluntary work can be sceptical about, or have no knowledge of, politics or about voting.

'I haven't had much dealings with them anyway. They seem to cut back on things that seem to be important, like your health and schools and stuff. But

they still drive round in great big cars and have great big lavish parties, stuff like this . They should put the money where it's needed.'

'I've never voted. Never ever. I don't bother.'

Some had voted in elections, but only one respondent was unequivocally supporting the formal politics.

'Well I think you've got to [vote]. Whether you believe they've done any good or not I think you've got to... I don't know like any council would do any good, one way or another, whether Labour, Tory or whatever. I don't know whether any of them would be any good. But like for me if you get that card it's up to you to go and do it. What effort is it?'

Some may not feel to have anything to do with politics in its formal, abstract sense, but see some sense when it related to issues of their concern, a notion that one respondent explicitly expressed.

'I'm not, well, into politics. It's just things that touch our lives that bother me.'

An example is confronting pollution.

'I'm not bothered who gets in. as long as there's somebody there to help with the environment and things like that... because if you've children that suffer from asthma and things like that it's handy to have somebody that can say we'll do this for the environment and that for the environment. Like I think a lot of these cars and vans should be stopped from coming up and down here.'

Similar alienation and disengagement is shown with national politics.

'... same with your like Parliament, London and places like that. Once they get in they're all right you know. They promise you this and they promise you that. You vote for them but once you've done that, once they get in they think right we're here you know, they're not bothered. So they're OK sort of thing you know.'

One respondent's comments on the change of national administration was that,

'It doesn't affect us. It doesn't really affect us. Does it?'

For another, the realm of national politics was far away from the concerns of everyday life.

'I'm not into things like that it doesn't bother us. I'm not really bothered. I'm not into the news. And I'm not into reading newspapers and things like that so I don't know much about them.'

The disengagement from governance processes can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it can be seen as alienation and marginalization of the poor from power.

On the other hand, it can be seen as a self-conscious decision by people for not participating in processes that do not have a clear and obvious relevance to their daily lives. They can be seen as passive victims, or on the contrary, as actors who withdraw their stake from what seems distant or irrelevant to them. As a woman puts it,

'I'm sort of used to be in my sort of like space, and I just don't take no notice what's going on around us. I'm used to me and my family and don't care what's going on around us.'

Life indeed can seem to happen within a labyrinth.

Obstacles to shared experiences

One of the routes to social exclusion is to be marginalized from the social and cultural processes, to be cut off from shared experiences and common narratives. In Walker, however, this is generally held to be to the contrary. Most of our respondents talked about the friendly atmosphere and community spirit in the area.

'Good contacts all the time. Talk to them and tell them what's happening. Kids play together. It's a good community.'

Part of what is valued about being in the area was the proximity of family and friends. Often an important element of this proximity was the provision of care for children, sick or elderly family members.

'For me, I'm close to all my family down here now. My family's always been in Walker: my brother, my nana and the rest of my relatives are all round Walker you know. So we're not very far from each other if we need each other. So we're close together.'

'...it's handy having your mam on your doorstep. If anything goes wrong it's just a phone call. You just pick the phone up and she's here in two minutes.'

'We were born on Walker Road, cos there's like five of us. Five daughters. We were born on Walker Road, and then I moved here, but my sisters all live within ten minutes, like the top of the park or over here, you know, five to ten minutes walk away. So we've all stayed like close. And my sons all live round here as well. Ten minutes away you know. So, proper Walkerites!'

'I mean in this street alone if you want to take a trip away for the summer you'd get a bus full. That sort of thing still goes on.'

The Walker community is a collection of smaller networks and groups. There are, networks and events that may connect people together. A woman is involved in a dart team.

'I only go there once a week, and ... we have a good laugh...'

Historically, however, there has been an overall sense of community whose members support each other.

'For all they're still in Walker, they've still got their own little communities as it is, but I suppose if it came to a protest or something, like that you'd still get plenty of people going...if something...happened... and you wanted a crowd, somebody to stand up with you, you would get it.'

This feeling of shared experience is enhanced by particular events, such as the fair in the park. But these arenas for shared experience are under pressure.

'Well this year it's never happened, cos the one that used to run it didn't like the riots that were going on. But this was a handful of kids again ... and they run riot in the park and upset everything.'

There was concern over the stability of the community within which respondents lived. Residents felt that a great deal of responsibility for this stability lay with the council and it was the council that had the power to make or break streets through its allocations policy.

Some areas are already destabilized through high turnover.

'There's a lot boarded up about on the estate, where we are. They say there's all these people that need houses. What it is a lot of people come look at the area and think no you know. They seem to stand empty for ages and then all of a sudden you get a load of people move in, and then suddenly a load of people'll move out. So it's always on the go.'

A real strength of many parts of the area was the social and family networks. There was a fear that by moving in new people who may be troublemakers, the council was putting at risk the broader health of the community. This issue is particularly relevant to Walker, which has a very large proportion of its housing stock in the public sector. However, in relation to potentially disruptive newcomers, perhaps the real distinction between an area of public housing such as Walker and areas of private sector housing is that Council tenants have someone to blame in the form of the Council, whereas in the private sector, the process is down to market forces.

'...leave the street the way it is. I wouldn't want anyone from Daisy Hill or the West End to move here, 'cos it's a nice street and I don't want it spoilt. I don't think that the Council should put troublesome families in a good environment.'

'You know, Pottery Bank years ago when I was a kid, it was...there were some lovely people down Pottery bank. And then they moved a bad element in and it spreads you see?'

'Now to me, I think the Council put the wrong people in this estate, cos this estate has always been lovely. ...and it's always been a nice estate here. But these past two year, three year, I think they're putting everybody in.'

A number of respondents commented on the erosion of the sense of community in the area. A recent newspaper article highlighted this issue, describing a new scheme in the East End of Newcastle (of which Walker is a part) which aims to help foster and develop community participation in the area. One reason for setting up the scheme was because the organizers felt that a breakdown in community in the area was leading to greater isolation, particularly amongst elderly residents. The symptoms of social breakdown can be seen in high crime rates, family breakdowns, domestic violence and drugs abuse. According to a mother of five, who used to be herself a drug addict,

'Drugs round here is a way of life.'

Some respondents felt that younger people do not value where they live or people around them as much as older people. A 35 year-old father of three says,

'Respect from younger ones to the older ones is lost, and they don't care ... It does happen everywhere though.'

This is one of the main threats to the cohesion of the community, as the young ones show serious doubt, and matching behaviour, towards the norms of behaviour in the community. Another threat to the cohesion of the community comes from outside, which perceives this cohesion negatively, as isolation. In the absence of a new economic base, Walker is seen as an insular community, rather than outward looking, a feature which can be seen as hindering the use of possible economic opportunities.

A sense of belonging to the area is very strong amongst most respondents. However, for those on the margins of the community or for the newcomers, it can be unwelcome or intrusive.

'I just like being on my own. Around here they all like to know your business, like what you're doing, who you've got walking in your house and who you've got going out your house. Very nosy around here. They seem to know all your business.'

For people who are not from the area, it seems a difficult task to get connected to the local networks.

'It's very hard when you come to a place like this to try and make friends if you're not from round the area, especially if you talk with a different accent.'

Another respondent, who was able to make friends, felt this sense of community very strongly when she was excluded from it.

'When I moved here, everybody was all friendly here. But, mind you, with the slightest argument and they all turn against you if you're not from here.'

The notion of not being local or belonging to the area is also used by troublemakers to target newcomers to the area, to draw a barrier between 'us' and 'them'.

'I think what it was when we first moved in, if they don't know your face you get....you get terrorized sort of thing.....I mean they knocked one O'clock in the morning the week after they broke in and there was a big scuffle outside, and they shouted 'We done your house last week. You don't belong in this street'.

Those who want to move out include households who have had a bad experience and feel they have not been accepted here.

'From the first night of being here we've had nothing but trouble, because my son didn't like some of the boys that came to the door. We've had our windows smashed the very first night. We've had burglaries, we've had our lives being threatened. You saw all the graffiti on the door ... Because a) we are southerners and b) my son is not interested in stealing. Most of the kids around here steal cars, they steal property, they don't give a damn.'

The strong community spirit of the neighbourhood was based on a shared history of work by men in large firms. Sharing their time at work, in trades unions and in the pubs, men were the core of the community. Although confined by the traditional, patriarchal division of labour, women were also centrally engaged in developing a cohesive social world. With the change of the economic base, much of this has either changed or is changing.

Life for men who are unemployed has different routines and meanings. The low status of men is one of the main factors in destabilizing the community. These men stay in the house and just go out to drink and visit their friends. Their status, in their families and their social networks, which are based on the patriarchal concepts of work and family, gets damaged. As a result, their image of themselves and their self esteem gets also damaged. This has substantial implications for the identity of male residents. As identity is built through the image of individuals held by others and by themselves, a transformation of male (as well as female) identity would be inevitable.

What generated dignity and self respect in a working class culture is no more available, and men find it very difficult to accept the change. As a woman puts it, referring to herself and her husband,

'It's easier for us than for a man to get a job, cos we can do cleaning job or working in a shop and all that but I don't think he would.'

Some change, however, is under way, as some men have started to adjust to their new circumstances.

'I mean I'm here all the time and when I go home my tea's ready and all the housework is done, when I'm here all day he does the housework for me. And he puts the washing in and hangs it up for me. Can't get another husband like I've got.'

Barriers to spatial practices

The limits on the spatial practices of the residents is one of the causes and consequences of social exclusion. Lack of resources reduce the mobility of individuals and households. Fear of crime is another factor which limits the movement across the neighbourhood or further afield.

The very low level of car ownership in the area means that people are highly dependent on the use of public transport.

'There are a lot of buses, run every 7 minutes. ... A bike would get stolen, I prefer to walk or take the bus.'

'... them new buses, ... you know them low-liner buses ... I use them a lot ... they're easy access. I've got a big pram. A biggish pram - it's much better for getting around in.'

But even those on low budgets may have to use other means of transport.

'Going to shops is pure agony, so I have to get taxis to Shields Road and that.'

Going to shops can also be a problem for the elderly.

'...when my husband was alive we used to go to the town every Tuesday morning, to the old Grainger market. And you can get everything you want there. And things are cheaper; they are. ... we need shops down here.'

There is a minority who use their cars and have higher mobility.

'I think it's only twice this year I've taken a bus, 'cos I've got the car. Anywhere I want to go he drops me off and picks me up, so I've had no problems with transport.'

Generally, however, the level of mobility is low partly due to the costs of transport that the residents have to bear. Life for many is therefore limited to the neighbourhood.

'I can't remember when I was last on a bus to be honest. Like I say we're not going far anyway so.'

'Well he's unemployed, you know, so it' just a case of having to sort out finances and see what money you've got left to go places. I like walking anyway - they don't, but if we've got the money we go down the beach.'

Those who go out of the neighbourhood do so for shopping, mainly in Shields Road, Wallsend, or the town centre. Some travel to other parts of the city to visit their relatives and friends. The night life of the town centre has its attractions for the young. For those who cannot afford it, however, city centre may be a world away.

'... with him not working now, very rarely. There's just not the money to do it.'

The city centre has the image of an expensive shopping centre with some leisure facilities.

'It's a good shopping centre, you know. A lot of high price shops mind ... there's no harm going looking but erm I won't go unless I need to go you know. Unless I've got a reason to go.'

Another issue which reduces mobility is fear of crime. Especially for some women, fear can limit their spatial practices.

'Well over the road you've got like Pottery Bank which is...I don't venture that far. I like to stay in my own vicinity and that.'

The level of crime appears to vary in different parts of the neighbourhood.

'...you even just go shopping for an hour and you look for your alarm box smashed.'

There are particular areas that are feared and avoided.

'I won't go down the backs on my own. I'm frightened of that area behind my mam's house. where all the walk is all there. I'm not struck on going over there on my own of a night like through the day even.'

Fear of crime is especially felt at nights. Women particularly feel under pressure for going out at night.

'You can't go out in the night time because there's always fights, ... and I mean...that my husband doesn't let me go out for the night time because there's too many fights.'

'I'm always aware of what's going on anyway around us when I'm out. ... On the rare occasion I'm out when it's dark, I keep to well lit places.'

Even young men can feel threatened at nights.

'Sometimes at nights when I'm coming home from my friends I don't feel safe at all. Like coming home at 10.30 when its dark and you come round at the bottom road where the park is and the graveyard, in the bottom corner they hang out and then if you come up this way up ... there's normally gangs who hang out that way as well. And those are the only two ways I can get home, so I tend to go one way, it depends sometimes I go one way sometimes the other. If I see someone at the bottom corner, I don't go that way. But if not then I tend to go down [the] road and then jump on the bus right round to the top end and I come down this way you know. Sometimes you get trouble. Like the FA Cup day when the football was on, I went to come round the bottom way and I saw a load of kids with glass bottles, drinking and throwing them all over the place. I said I'm not going that way so I got the bus and went round.'

The older people are constantly fearful of the youth disturbances and some residents feel under siege from the youngsters. Fear of crime is the sort of limit that the previous generation say they were not familiar with.

'When I was younger, we could leave our front doors open... but now we ... gotta lock the house up properly before I can go out anywhere.'

The circumstances of the neighbourhood, and following that the mentality of the young, however, is completely different.

'... the groups? ... I know who they are, some of them I went to school with, but then even in school, I've never been involved with them. I don't really care what they do as long as I'm not involved. They did say like come with us, I said that no, cos of the trouble and my dad doesn't like that sort of thing. I just keep away, best to keep yourself to yourself you'll be all right.'

Rather than being carefree and relaxed, the young have to protect themselves.

'You tend to get more trouble if you're young.'

The groups of the young are threatening, but not for those who know them.

'And you see a group of kids now and you sort of avoid them because you're frightened there going to be dodgy kids and ten to one they're not. ... [My son] came down the street with his mates and there was somebody in front of me frightened of them. I could understand it, but I would be annoyed that you have to be frightened of them, you know. Cos the same lads would help you out, you know, if you had a heavy bag they take it off you and that.'

The ultimate spatial mobility is the ability to leave Walker, or even to move house inside Walker. But this does not seem available to those who most want it.

'We've still got the rent arrears so they're not considering it till them are paid off. I mean if I knew I could move tomorrow I would borrow it off somebody but we can't afford to pay ten, twenty pound a week off the rent arrears we're like struggling for starters. Cos my wage isn't much. That comes out just over £100. And he's had disability benefits, so like struggling at the minute.'

'I think once you're in Hexham Ave it's hard to get out unless you go private. Cos there's that many empty houses in the street they know they can't fill them up straight away so...they've got you in, they don't really want to get rid of you.'

The only way to leave is to be able to afford it. One resident would only leave Walker if he won the lottery.

'You couldn't stay in a house like this if you had money in your pocket.'

For another, it seems to be the only condition to be able to move.

'I'd have to win the lottery before I could move anywhere.'

The dream of a better future for the young includes an escape from Walker.

'It's a Council house. We've been here for 18 years. It's a nice house but my dad would never buy it cos of the area. The area is stopping us. ... But I'm going to find a place for myself as soon as I get on my feet you know. Hopefully out of Walker.'

Spatial mobility also depends on the background and frame of mind, rather than just access to resources.

'I'm from nowhere in particular that's what I say, I was born abroad, so me Dad was in the forces so I was born abroad. ... So I'm not used to being based and settled down in one place and I find it very hard. I'm used to moving around. Cos I always said I'm not going to end up opening the bedroom curtains and seeing cranes in the morning - and I do that.'

Problems of Facilities and services

There are contradictory views about facilities in Walker. A woman who has lived in other parts of the city appreciates the neighbourhood's facilities.

'Such a big park, swimming baths, library, buses, everything on your doorstep.'

For another respondent who compares this neighbourhood with another part of Newcastle, Walker has many advantages to offer for children. These views, however, are not shared by all.

In an area with a high rate of using public housing and welfare support, the state has a particular, predominant place in society. Without the state support, the welfare of the households and the nature of relationships in the neighbourhood could be substantially different. This is translated into a high expectation, and at time dependence, on the state for services.

'You've got to beg for front doors and things like that... I know people who've pretended to be broken into to get a door.'

Most complain about the shopping facilities available in the area.

'There's not enough shops and variety in the shops.'

'... there's nothing really in Walker, no shopping facilities, there's a Kwik Save on the corner. You've got a Pakistani shop there which he.. it's far too dear and if you want something you can bet your bottom dollar he hasn't got it.'

The neighbourhood's Kwik Save is used by many, and with mixed feelings. As a man puts it, it has *'less choice, less price.'*

Some remember a time when shopping in the area was better, but they think shopkeepers went away for security concerns.

'And it was the same lot that used to break into the shops all the time. that's what drove a lot of the shop keepers out you see being broken into constantly.'

But there was also competition from other shopping centres.

'There was everything on Church Street, there was much nicer to walk about, you know it sounds daft but it's sort of like cold. Do you know what I mean. You like Wallsend, it's all enclosed sort of like a friendlier sort of thing.'

The lack of shopping facilities in the area puts pressure for people to travel to other parts for their shopping. Shields Road shopping area is the most widely used, although it is not particularly accessible.

'We're on a tight budget. It's just really dear going to Shields Road...'

'We go to Shields road. if there were shops around here we would go shopping round here.'

Wallsend is also an area visited for shopping.

'The shopping centre is really terrible, 'cos you've only got like a bakery, a news agents and the bookies, chemist, post office, the hardware shop and Kwik Save. That's all we've got. We've got one big shopping and that's Kwik Save and it's not very good. That's why I go shopping down in Wallsend.'

Some also visit the town centre, although not for their food shopping.

'Mainly I go shopping in the town. Newcastle Eldon Square, I normally use that, there's more shops to use down there. Sometimes Wellbeck road, but even that, there's shops closing. It used to be good at one time but, it's all changing. It's good in one way but in another, shops are shutting down, there's nothing taking over, buildings are just left there. Get graffiti.'

Church Walk, a local shopping area, is being improved but it is not yet convincing.

'I don't really know. It's getting done out at the minute. They're building a bus terminus and all that down there. There's not many shops like, not much like to advertise for people and things like that. Not much.'

This is not the view of a household who have been here only for eight months and have had a bad experience but are happy with their housing and shopping facilities.

'...the only good thing there is around here: it's the size of the house and the shops that are convenient.'

The main problem, however, remains that households are on tight budget and cannot travel to shop.

'I mean it sounds awful , I mean the money we get, sort of covers basic things, there's no such thing as going shopping for anything special or anything like that, you know you spend your money on food, full stop, that's it you know.'

Facilities for younger children have satisfied some. A mother of two young children finds the area to have good facilities for children.

'I think there's a lot to do, especially for children. There's like the Park in West Walker, and you've got Walker Park over here. And the swimming baths are just over yonder. They are all in the same area.'

'Well I like Walker Park . There's a lot for children to do and that like the hut and play centre. And they do a lot in the summer time with them like in the six weeks holidays they've always got parties. It's good over there. I like it over there in the summer. ... the last day of the six weeks holiday they have a big party in the park. And they have a barbecue and the bouncy castles are going. And they get clowns. Some of the lads get dressed up as clowns and that. It's good. I like Walker Park a lot.'

Walker Park is particularly liked by many, even by the gangs who frighten others, which causes fear and anxiety among others.

'Kids down there, drinking, I mean 14 years or younger, sitting in the park with bottles of vodka and cans of lager.'

A smaller park in the neighbourhood has a poorer image.

'There's nobody there to look after the park, so you get all sorts in. You get all the kids sitting and drinking cider and stuff when the little uns are playing, swearing their heads off and stuff like that.'

The lack of childcare is felt by the parents of very young children if they need it.

'I've never heard of any around here. I don't know of any crèches or anything like that. I know the library has one, but you've got to be three before you can get into the little toddler group up there. There's another in West Walker, but they don't take children till they're four. So, there's not much... for the little uns to do during the day round here.'

There is strong support for the school, as reflected by the parents and volunteers helping the school and by its recent students.

'Oh it's brilliant. really good. Brilliant. I do a lot work up at the school. me and me friends help the headmistress and that and raise money for the kids and that. Because the government obviously won't help them.'

There is a sense of dynamism about the school that is conveyed by some respondents.

'Since I've been there, there have been vast improvements. They get volunteers and parents involved and that.'

'People tend to slag Walker school off, teachers are no good and that, but when I went there I had no hassles at all, the teachers were good, even at times when people weren't doing it and they were saying it's the teachers' fault, I said it's not, the teachers were great. I really liked the school.'

There are some sport and leisure facilities. Especially the Lightfoot Centre in Walker, which attracts people from around the city. But these facilities may not be easy to use or are not enough. Youths and the older people need more facilities of their own.

'Like in this area in general you've got the sports centre just up the road which is like one of the best sports centres around. Obviously the park, park is like a nice clean area. The park at night times gets like you know, all the gangs hang around in the park. There's not really what you call much ... There's nowhere for older people to go. That's why most of them just drink or whatever on the street corners. There's nothing for them to do.'

'Well, its like...they've got the new rings and tennis courts, but as soon as they got put in they were graffitied, the nets were taken down. I think you find that in most areas, things get vandalized and you just...no one respects what gets put in.'

'There is quite a good service round here but there is a need for more like play centres and stuff like that, they run to a certain age and then there's nothing. I think its 14 or something. ... there's nothing from that age group over, apart from the John Boste and noone wants to go there cos of the trouble there. There's no other youth clubs to sit and do things. They do drugs and everything there. It's not right.'

'...there's John Boste, sort of select people... If your face fits you get to John Boste if not you've had it. You need something for teenagers, ... they sit in the Park and drink.'

'...mainly the summer you find you have problems with the kids but as I say: pure boredom. Aha nothing for them to do.'

There are some misgivings about the level of maintenance of the sports facilities.

'The football pitches are a disgrace. And when they cut the grass they go over tins, bottles, and everything.'

There are contrasting views about the quality of health services residents receive here.

'But the doctors round here listen to you, talk to you and advise you, got time for you. Plus they'll give you the medication that you need, whereas the doctors in Shieldfield they wouldn't even give you Calpol - tell you to go and buy it!... So we changed doctors for the better.'

'There's this doctor over the road. Me mam loved him. He used to come in and see her, sit on the floor, you know beside her, lovely attitude. Now he's sort of looking after me dad now. And he's just brilliant.'

'None of us is registered down here. My friend is down here and he gets nothing but grief off his doctor.'

'I wouldn't say they're as good as they're made out to be. I'd rather go to a hospital...'

But there is apparently more agreement about the treatment they receive in the social welfare office.

'Never found them helpful at all. Not very often. I've never found them helpful! Never! They seem to muck you about...'

'You're sitting there for hours. They tell you to come back at 3.30, and you've been sitting there since 9.30, for your appointment, and it'll be some snotty bloke behind a counter, and he's talking down his nose, and they've got these glass barriers up now, just to stop people striking out, I mean, they've got their kids with them and it's hot in there. You can't smoke in there, no drinks, it's just...no one talks to you.'

'You keep trailing, or use your phone bill. Then it's costing you instead of costing them. Cos they never think of saying well give us your phone number and I'll phone you back. It's always, Can you hold the line. And then they pass you on to somebody else. And it goes on for ages.'

'You get some of them that think it's their money that they hand out to you.'

Despite this tension, there is some recognition of the other side's difficulties.

'Sometimes they're all right and sometimes they must have had a horrible day and thought right you're last one I'll take it out on you, you know. but it just depends on the person themselves, if you are courteous to them, hopefully they'll return it to you and be courteous to you.'

Some views about the City Council as a landlord or as in charge of the quality of environment are not very supportive either. It is particularly the long delays that cause frustration.

[They are] 'slow in coming to repair things. Even an emergency is classed as a full day. Say like I had a water leak or something. It wouldn't get done today. It wouldn't get done till tomorrow morning. Which I think is wrong cos an emergency's an emergency.'

'Basically, just a back door was smashed about 2 years ago and I asked the Council to come and repair it. The frame was actually hanging out of the

wall. It wasn't secured properly and somebody got in and stole everything. They don't do repairs at all...'

'I've been here 3 years and I've seen nothing done to the place.'

Conclusion

Walker has long been known as a respectable working class area, an image that is now changing into one of social decline and crime. The local people suffer from this stigmatization and emphasize that there is a spatial variation inside the neighbourhood in terms of its social difficulties and by no means is it a homogeneous place despite its relatively strong sense of community.

The main path to poverty is through unemployment, which in turn has an adverse effect on social and cultural links of individuals and households. To find work, the respondents showed concern about a number of obstacles that they had to confront. Limited availability of jobs is one major obstacle. The experience of people is also of ill health, low wages, lack of childcare, lack of skills and confidence, and lack of opportunities.

The area is strong in number of volunteers and the attachment of the local councillors to their area. However, most people are disengaged from the informal or formal governance processes, with which they do not identify. There is a strong sense of shared experiences that is inherited from a long history of attachment to work and to the place. But this is now under severe pressure of disintegration, especially as the fear of crime and lack of resources limit the spatial mobility of the population. Lack of shopping facilities in the area is exacerbated by the cost of travelling to shopping centres elsewhere. Childcare and leisure facilities are not seen to be satisfactory and the relationships with the Council, on which many depend for their services, are not always evaluated by the respondents as positive.

7. Responses to Social Exclusion

A better neighbourhood in the eyes of Walker residents would be free of crime, safer for people to move about, with better shopping facilities, better public transport, and provisions for the children, the youth and the elderly. This is a place where everyone is involved in their community and information is more readily available. The environment is better maintained and the traffic managed to keep pedestrians safe.

A community co-ordinator for the ward is responsible for identifying needs and developing possible responses and projects. The resources allocated here, however, are very limited and the main means of dealing with the problems in the area is a public private partnership. The community co-ordinator works closely with the partnership, which has to be convinced to support any suggested projects. Other sources of funding and other channels of organizing projects also play a role.

The current responses to the problems of the neighbourhood can be classified as those dealing with removing obstacles to work and those dealing with improving access to services and facilities. The main vehicle in pursuing these responses has been the establishment of a partnership and securing major funding from the central government.

East End Partnership

The main policy response to the problems of Walker has been through developing an East End Partnership, bringing together public, private and voluntary sector agencies in the regeneration of the area. The Partnership covers all the wards of Byker, Monkchester and Walker and parts of Walkergate and Heaton, with a population of about 35,000.

The Partnership is comprised of 10 City Councillors, 10 representatives from the private sector, training and regeneration agencies, and 10 representatives from the voluntary/community sector and public services. They have delegated the responsibility of the ongoing management of the strategy to an Executive Steering Group, who meet monthly to take decisions on individual projects and financial and monitoring issues. The Partnership has appointed a Regeneration Manager and a supporting team, who are based in the Newcastle Civic Centre and deal with overseeing the implementation of the regeneration plan and monitoring and appraisal of projects. Some working groups have also been set up to involve some key actors, including chairs and vice-chairs of City Council committees, to assist in running the programme.

The East End Partnership has made a successful bid to acquire funding from Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). This is the main instrument of urban policy in England, combining a number of other policies under one umbrella and is concerned with bringing together housing renewal, economic development, education and training, social welfare and recreation. By providing funds, it enables the private sector to involve the public sector in the regeneration of localities. In the east end of Newcastle, the SRB Challenge Fund covers a period of seven years (1996-2003) with

a total budget of £25m. With £15m input from the private sector and £19m from other public sector bodies, the grand total of investment in this period is expected to amount to £59.4m.

There are three sources of European funding involved in the Partnership. ERDF Objective 2 with a total contribution of £709,000, ERDF Konver with a total contribution of £176,000, and ESF with a contribution of £136,000 for the duration of the Partnership programme. The total of such contribution is £1.021m or around 2 per cent of the total expenditure for the programme.

The Partnership's strategy has the main purpose of tackling the combination of economic, social and environmental problems of the area. To reverse the spiral of decline in the area, it aims to attract private investment, stimulate enterprise and build confidence in the community and commitment to the regeneration process from the residents. The six key objectives of the strategy concentrate on

- the regeneration of Shields Road, the main high street in the eastern part of the city;
- enhancing employment prospects for residents, particularly the young and the long-term unemployed through education, training and job creation;
- assisting youth, support for the family and individuals with special needs;
- creating a safer and more secure East End;
- securing improvements to housing and the environment; and
- improving leisure facilities to enhance the quality of life (East End Partnership, 1998).

The Partnership has identified particular geographical areas in need of attention. The two focal points are the Shields Road district shopping centre in Byker, with some 150 retail units, and the Fisher Street/Walker Riverside area in Walker and Walkergate, with over 100 businesses with strong presence of marine activities. Other targeted areas are St Anthony's housing estate with over 2,000 houses, smaller estates suffering from severe deprivation, such as Pottery Bank in Walker, and areas suffering from the problems of run down facilities and anti-social behaviour such as around the two neighbourhood shopping centres at Raby Cross (Byker) and Churchwalk (Walker).

Particular groups have also been targeted by the Partnership for attention. Post 16 pupils at Walker and Benfield schools, those disadvantaged in the local labour market (the young, disabled, ethnic minorities, over 40s and women returners), young people in general and victims of domestic violence (East End Partnership, 1998).

The Partnership has spelled out some detailed output targets under each of its six main strategic objectives. It has identified the baseline, the existing situation at the beginning of the period of regeneration, the targets for each year, and the final goal to be achieved at the end of the period. This would allow the Partnership and the regional government office to monitor the progress of work and manage the funds. It is, however, too early at this stage to evaluate the progress of the regeneration work, as the peak of investment is expected to occur between 1998-2000.

The normal indicators of poverty as produced by an analysis of census data gives a picture of serious difficulties that need tackling. However, they are unable to show the strong feeling of belonging and community spirit, which should be seen as an asset of the neighbourhood life, despite some of its negative aspects. Without paying attention to this social asset, and making use of it in developing responses for the neighbourhood's problems, there is a danger of alienating those at the receiving end of the government help. A potential problem of the SRB programme may be a disconnection between the government programmes and local populations.

A major challenge for the Partnership is to deal with the predominance of the Council in decision making. Its role is to diversify this role and to introduce new mechanisms for governance relations in the area. Another challenge is to engage the local population in the governance processes. The participation of the community in the development of the bid has been minimal, due to the shortage of time available to prepare the documents. Even after the establishment of the East End Partnership, the presence of the community representatives is relatively weak and underdeveloped.

Removing obstacles to work

Helping the young

The disillusioned youth who have no confidence in themselves to find jobs and are disappointed by the example of heavy male unemployment are a major concern in the area. Providing opportunities for this group is one of the main priorities in the development of policy responses.

Training is one of the aims for the younger ones.

'Maybe go back to College and you know, see where it takes us. Maybe move away you know. Just depends on what happens, you know if you get the chance, stuff like that.'

But they can have difficulty coping with this if they have children and no childcare facilities available.

'I think the way most of the courses are structured they seem to think that everybody has got someone to...someone who's got no kids or has got people to look after them. They don't seem to realize ...or they're mainly night courses you know, not everybody has got somebody to look after children on a night time.'

One of the problems appear to be a lack of understanding for this need. Women say that the decision makers and politicians are middle aged men and are hardly sensitive to these issues.

A survey in the neighbouring ward of Monkchester in 1997 aimed at identifying the young (aged 11-25) people's views on their needs and their willingness to take part in the governance processes. They were asked what they did in their spare time, what

they liked to do, and what their reaction was to the idea of establishing a youth council in the ward (Principal Children and Young People's Officer, 1998).

The survey found out that over two-thirds of the young people usually hang out on the streets (30%), in a friend's house (20%) or in their own house (17%). Especially for the 14 and 15 year-olds, streets were more likely to be the place of spending their time, followed by a friend's, rather than their own, house. This spare time is spent to meet friend (25%, of which the girls were the two-thirds majority), to play football (14%, although only one of them played football after the age of 16), or watched television (9%) or listened to music (8%). Physical activity is dropped by most young people over the age of 16.

Loss of money prevented the young from taking part in their favourite activities. In some cases, looking after their own children was what prevented young females from meeting friends and other leisure activities.

More than one in five (twice in girls than boys) wanted to see more youth clubs. Football pitches (12%) and parks and open spaces (10%) were also asked for. Many thought that a regular newsletter (25%) or regular meetings (18%) would be good vehicles to communicate their ideas to the councillors. The great majority supported the idea of establishing a Youth Council for the ward. Over half (56%) expressed an interest to be involved in this council, where the issues of drugs (34%), contraception (16%), housing (10%) and training (8%) were among the most important issues to be discussed.

The strategic aims in helping the young include developing their employability by improving access to training and information technology and increasing the rate of staying on in education. By injecting resources into the secondary schools and providing facilities for the Sixth Formers, it is hoped to persuade more young people to continue their education after the age of 16. A Workfinder scheme helps people to produce curriculum vitae and get interviews. The YMCA also helps the young men, who are the most vulnerable to undertaking criminal activities.

According to the regeneration manager for the East End, one of the possible responses to the youth disturbances is to provide them with public open spaces, where they can freely congregate without been seen as a threat by the others. Apart from the Walker Park, no public open space is available to the young, who wish to spend time together but have no other place than the streets or each other's homes. For them, the housing estate becomes a recreational ground, where playing football until 3am, setting fire to the benches and stealing cars for driving around are seen as their entertainment. According to Carole Bell of the nearby Meadow Well estate, many young people have become known as 'nightshifters, because they have nothing to get up for in the mornings' (Rana, 1998:30).

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What about the men?

The group in the neighbourhood who have been worst hit by the transition out of industrial economy are men. They were the breadwinners and the centrepiece of the

community. Now they have difficulty coming to terms with who they are and who they are to be in the future.

Most programmes seem to be concentrating on the physical regeneration of the area and helping the next generation to find its way. Developing skills and providing the physical and social infrastructures for the future are obviously important tasks to pursue. But the question remains as to how to help the worst hit group, the male former industrial workers. In a weak regional economy and with the background of individuals in heavy industry, retraining for office and service sector work may only be possible for a minority. The prospect of a stable employment is not forthcoming for a large number of men. They keep in contact with their social networks but are often unwilling to take part in the community organizations and initiatives, which are dominated by women. As women take the lead, the men are pushed to the background, feeling disillusioned. As a middle aged woman active in community organizations in a nearby neighbourhood of Meadow Well estate put it, 'I think the estate is women led. The men have been overtaken by apathy. What is there for them now? It's very difficult to get them involved...' (Rana,1998:31). As the responses to the challenges of social exclusion concentrate on helping the young and developing the physical infrastructure, the future of men is far from bright. But no society can afford to abandon an entire generation of its workforce. It may be true that a change of the patriarchal culture was needed, especially from the viewpoint of women. But women themselves are suffering from having to enter the lower end of the workforce. Altogether, there is no inevitability in the suffering that is involved in such transition.

Developing skills

A Parental Development Worker works in the Single Regeneration Area to raise the profile of education and to try to establish a culture of learning so that the standards can be raised for the whole community. As there are clear links between parental qualifications and expectations of children's performance, she works with parents of school children to persuade them of the need for education, for themselves and for their children.

This often takes place through the local school, but the problem is that those who most need help do not go to the school. Another problem is apparently a high rate of mobility in the neighbourhood, which means frequent change of address; according to school records one in five had moved recently. Another problem facing the Worker is that men cannot be reached as easily as women, who get involved in what they see as relevant to their children. To reach people, therefore, the Worker stands in street corners, in shops and in community groups, for her face to be known in the neighbourhood and for people to come forward and communicate with her.

An audit was undertaken of carers' and parents' skills at West Walker Primary School. A brief questionnaire/interview was conducted among 140 parents and carers. The results show that half of them did not have any qualifications. One third of this group rated their own maths and English skills as poor, meaning that they felt they could not cope with everyday life needs. The research concluded that many people needed basic maths and English skills and that the only way to provide this was to take them to a centre for Adult Basic Education (Ruffles,nd).

Dealing with services and facilities

Facilities for the young

Almost everybody commented on the need to provide better facilities for young people, particularly teenagers. This age group is seen as the cause of many of the problems in the area, although we were reminded that vandalism can take place by men in their forties as well. Some residents speak of the need to approach the young with respect and helping them establishing self respect.

'I think it needs to start with the kids. Give them a bit of self respect, and maybe, because I think it's them that have to teach their parents not the other way round.'

A woman who has had no problem with the youths seems to know the answer.

'You've got to give and take with the youths. If you respect them, they respect you and don't bother you... This is a stage in kids' life... and ... you've got to grow with them.'

The disturbances created by the disillusioned youth is one of the major concerns of the local community, who feel powerless to deal with them in any way. Some youths are excluded from school and find themselves unattached to their families and the community. The school heads seem to claim that they can guess, with some accuracy, which pupils are likely to opt out or be excluded from school at an early age. As an officer puts it, this should be used as a warning indicator to start helping children as soon as possible.

Many local residents commented that there was very little for young people to do and that boredom was a big problem. That is why most seem to have felt a need to keep the young occupied.

'...more to kids, cos there is nothing for them here.'

'Things for the kids to do, keep them occupied after school at night times you know, things like that. Cos that's where most of your problems lay. Clubs and stuff for them and things for them to do, you know, schemes, and just trying to get them interested in the area. Be proud of their area, you know, That's the sort of things I would look at.'

'There's nothing for kids under five.'

'You've got 6 year olds who sit on corners cos their parents aren't bothered about them.'

'...for the age group say..8 onwards to 16 year olds, there's not much for them to do. I'd like to open youth clubs and things like that in the area.. which would be a lot easier. It would get them off the streets. Cos they're always

hanging around on street corners and that. And they're getting into trouble when they're hanging around so.'

'You've still got that dodgy couple of years before they leave school. Like 14 onwards they're at a bad age because they're in between. They don't want to be classed as kids but they're too young to be adults. Like my oldest one got into trouble from 14-15. It was only one year but there was nowhere for them to go. And it wasn't bad trouble it was stupid things he did. But there was just nothing for them to do. So him and his mates did daft things. But like I say touch wood they grow out of it . You know, turn 16, go to work and that it was different.'

'I would have something for the teenagers. Definitely cos that would keep them off the streets. Cos I mean it was just kids attacking our car, they were only 14, 15. And they stand around drinking, hang around in the park, they've got nowhere to go.'

The problems seem to start from school. Despite strong support for the school, there are some concerns and suggestions for improvement.

'I'd stop the bullying....there's a lot of bullying going on, but the head has just moved in and she's working on it, because she was from St Anthony's School originally, and she was very hard on bullying there ...But at the minute, apart from that, I don't think there's anything I'd change. It's a good school, it's handy. All the people I know send their kids to that school so it is pretty handy.'

There is also a need for more leisure facilities.

'There is no leisure facilities. There was a disco for the kids but only 70 tickets allocated. so I think something to get kids off the street.'

'a non alcohol neighbourhood club for teenagers'

'I would get Lightfoot cleaned up.'

New facilities, however, can be used by a variety of groups.

'I would like to see more...a big community centre, where they can cater for children , pre-school days, elderly people and all the people, they could use it.'

Not living in fear

Fear of crime and harassment has been a major cause for concern among the residents. A woman gives her top priority to safety:

'a few more people on the street, extra policing.'

Demands for safer public spaces is echoed by many and is taken seriously by the authorities. As a woman puts it, an ideal neighbourhood is where,

'Well..... you could go out and leave your front door open and that, and there was no fighting like it is now, and very friendly. More than what it is now. Be able to go out at night-time - now you get frightened to go out in case something happens to you, on your own.. I mean you could go out then (olden days) and now you're frightened to go out and frightened for my bairns. They keep asking me to go out and I say no. I mean they're 14 and 16 year olds, it shouldn't be like that.'

The regeneration strategy invests in improving security in the area. Securing the empty properties, dealing with 'bad tenants' and introducing new security measures have been among the demands of the local people for some time (Walker Community Co-ordinator,1995).

Homes and neighbours

The loss of jobs in the area has led to an outflow of population. As people have left and are not replaced by newcomers, there is an oversupply of accommodation in the neighbourhood. This is a trend in line with the rest of the city as a whole, where an oversupply of housing can be detected. The result is a high vacancy rate in the area, which is particularly acute in the less popular areas. The riverbank is one such area, where people want to move out of, especially up the hill, which has historically been seen as a sign of improved status. Fear of crime and harassment are, however, the major reasons why resident wish to move. In the conditions of population decline, high unemployment, housebound men and disillusioned youths, the relationship between neighbours is under severe stress, especially with the presence of some households. Despite the need for the modernization of the housing stock, it appears that the deterioration of the social, rather than physical, standards is the main concern by the residents as well as the housing managers.

The main movement of residents is within the neighbourhood. Very few move to the area from outside and it is therefore difficult for the authorities to halt the decline in the most stigmatized areas. The problem that the housing authority is facing is, however, that newcomers to the area are resisted by the local people, who sometimes express the feeling that Walker belongs to Walker people. The main problem is therefore how to deal with the local tenants, rather than the new ones. The housing officers, however, need to find tenants for their vacant properties and do not encourage transfer. Both the old and new tenants, therefore, can resent the Council: some protesting to the Council for transferring undesirable new tenants to their areas and others protesting for not being transferred to another place soon enough. Despite the increased turnover, the ratio of transient population in the area is not high, as compared to the West End. It is believed that if there are more transient tenants, more problems may arise in the area. If people are rehoused on the basis of their bad behaviour, they may start affecting the area they move into, which is one of the reasons we see a resistance by the local residents to newcomers. Even without the behaviour problems, the Council housing estates that have become a concentration of displaced and socially disconnected individuals are in danger of suffering from severe social problems.

The problems of bad behaviour and the high rate of vacancy are clearly related to each other in the minds of the residents. As one of them put it,

'Get rid of all the scum from Walker. They want to just evict the lot of them. And then...this street would be nice if there were nice people in it. It's a nice street. It's just the wrong people that's in. ...It's a shame there's about a dozen empty houses in the street and there's people need houses but they won't move here because of the reputation it's got itself. And they'll never get rid of that reputation until you get rid of the scum.'

Dealing with high vacancy rates and modernizing the existing housing stock are therefore some of the suggestions people have for the authorities.

'Try and get these empty houses filled up. because I think it's a sin and a shame the way they're left.'

'...tidy the houses up and things like that like extend them and do toilets and bathrooms together for hygiene and things like that.'

The main role of the housing authorities is to manage and maintain the existing housing stock. The nature of Council housing has been changing over the years. The existing tenants are becoming older and the prospective tenants younger. Council tenants are also poorer. Three quarters of the tenants receive Housing Benefit and nearly half Income Support (City of Newcastle, nd). One of the main items of its housing strategy is the renewal of the existing stock and the provision of a housing service in consultation with tenants (City of Newcastle, nd). No new Council housing development has occurred for the past two decades or is likely to occur in the future. New housing is provided by the Housing Associations, which attract tenants from the Council housing and contribute to higher vacancy rates. As the private sector and Housing Associations offer new possibilities for housing, Council housing stock becomes even more stigmatized. Nevertheless, the Council sees it a strategic objective to encourage the private sector and Housing Associations to invest in housing, especially in high stress areas like Walker, in conjunction with initiatives such as the Single Regeneration Budget. Diversification of ownership and provision of housing is a key response to housing problems.

The local housing office (one of 24 in the city) deals with the housing management and maintenance of the area. They are, however, also approached by people to ask for environmental improvement issues, such as street lights, road cleaning, potholes etc. Crossing the departmental boundaries of the City Council and offering a 'one-stop shop', where all such problems can be dealt with would be valued by the residents.

There are a number of tenants associations in the area. These are informal groups who meet the housing officers and discuss the conditions of the housing areas. Some of them are formed around particular issues, for example central heating, and tend to dissolve when the issue is dealt with. There are also formalized procedures and recognized groups who are supported by the Tenants Federation, which is a city-wide forum.

One of the main responses to the oversupply of Council accommodation is to demolish the less popular buildings and estates (City of Newcastle, 1998). There is a tendency to demolish the unpopular flats and maisonettes, as the majority prefer houses. Also the stock in the unpopular areas gets demolished, areas such as the riverbank where the vacancy rate can be as high as 50 per cent.

Other strategic objectives of the Council in housing include to support action to improve poor housing conditions in the private sector, to respond to the needs for housing for specific groups, and to promote and implement improvements in energy efficiency (City of Newcastle, nd).

The City Council can play an exclusionary role in its housing management practices. Those who are known to disregard the tenancy regulations are evacuated from Council housing. These tenants have to find alternative housing in the private sector, which may be nearby. The problems that caused their exclusion in the first place may continue and be concentrated in particular areas, as may be the case in a corridor along Walker Road. Practising exclusion from social housing, therefore, may solve some problems in some areas, but cannot deal with the next stage of problems that are created. It appears to be a temporary solution through the displacement of the problem.

Access to shops

Shortage of shopping facilities is specifically felt by many. One impact of criminal activity in the area had been the targeting of Church Walk shopping centre, which had caused a number of shop owners to close their businesses after repeated break ins. People felt this represented a real loss to the area. In this respect there was a view that facilities could be improved if more shops could be attracted back to the centre.

'I'd like to sort a lot of the shopping areas out cos there's not much around here. You could do with some more shopping centres and things like that, or different superstores even.'

'There's a big lot of waste land over there, that they could build a big, like a little shopping centre or something like that, cos there's a lot of mothers with children around here.'

'Better shopping facilities, public transport. you've got Kwik Save but it's always quite full. Every time you go there, there's only one person working on a till. There are Pakistani shops but they are a lot dearer.'

'There's a lot of waste ground here. Why not build something that gives Kwik Save a bit of run for their money? Give the people a chance to get bargains here without having to go to Shields Road or Wallsend.'

The Partnership is working on the regeneration of Shields Road, a nearby shopping street. But as we saw earlier, the problem of travelling to shops and carrying heavy loads, or alternatively visiting the shops everyday, are difficult for many elderly and

the parents of young children. That is why improving transport facilities is so essential for the community.

'I think all the buses should be them new buses that they've just brought out. There's only like a handful of these low liners. I think they should all be them sort of buses, cos there's a lot of people got children in the area, so.. . It's easier for mothers to get around. And if you're housebound or anything like that in a wheelchair you can get a wheelchair on as well so.. it would be easier for people, in a wheelchair.'

Apart from demands for leisure and shopping facilities, there are specific suggestions for a variety of schemes.

'And a bank. We could definitely do with a cash point or something round here...'

'Respect for the environment'

Apart from these concerns, the quality of environmental maintenance is also an important issue.

'You've been walking round here. Have you seen one litter bin?'

'The streets do tend to get a bit messy. They tend to leave them for a long time. And the grass, they tend to forget about them. But they're the first on your back if you've got a dirty garden... They're not quite quick with their own things, but they're quick for getting on your back if your things are wrong.'

'But the Council, as far as keeping the street and pavements it does try. But you cannot really expect anything more than that.'

'I mean it's very rare you see a road sweeper ...I don't think I've ever seen one of them on the Fossway. I've seen the big gulley wagons and that's all really. Could do with sweeping the streets a bit more and keeping them tidy. But that's down to the people as well. People [are] just prepared to throw their litter on the floor. You're fighting a losing battle.'

Improvements to the environment and accessibility to facilities are some of the main concerns of the people.

'The area needs a boost to start off with. More facilities for older people. The people who mess things up, get them more involved. Try to clean the place up, more community festivals, cos people turn up to them from all over. Like the park, loads of people used to come cos it was the only place that had anything, but the lack of staff and cutbacks, they couldn't do trips and that anymore.'

'Try to get the community involved, new facilities, look after the area, litter tends to be a problem down at the Park. People with dogs who just let them do their business on the grass and that. Keep the place tidy and respectable.'

There are, however, contradictory views about the ramps on the roads.

'Personally I'd like to see ramps, to slow cars. Young kids play in the street, and I'd like to see ramps. Last year there was a lad killed outright from driving too fast.'

'I would love to get these bumps taken off the roads. Cos I think they're a menace. They were put in to stop joy riders but they do it all the more cos they go over the bumps and that.'

Indeed, one of the main policies of the neighbourhood regeneration has been improving the physical environment through modernizing the housing stock and improving the quality of the local Church Walk shopping area. But there is more to be done.

Removing barriers to participation in governance

One of the new trends that seem to be developing in Newcastle city Council in its reorganization is to concentrate on area-based initiatives, such as neighbourhood planning. This is in line with the general direction of the current and previous governments, from City Challenge to Health and Education Action Zones, which concentrate efforts and resources on particular areas. This fits well with a demand for a 'one-stop shop' in delivering services. Some respondents felt that there was a lack of co-ordination between different agencies in terms of eligibility for benefits, not helped by a feeling that you have to know what to ask for, as information will not always be volunteered. In this respect a one stop shop could help in Walker.

One of the main problems of dealing with social exclusion in the city and the neighbourhood is the actual and perceived imbalance of attention to areas and initiatives. Some initiatives, issues or groups become widely discussed and therefore highly politicized, while others remain less emphasized and even undermined.

In the context of the limited resources, this may cause tension or resentment. At the same time, the limitations on resources have meant that, to be effective, only a clearly targeted programme can work. An inevitable outcome of the resource-led initiatives, however, is that the processes of dealing with the problem become highly politicized.

While unemployment and fear of crime are represented strongly on the list of policy initiatives, there is very little evidence of encouraging people to participate in governance activities. A problem that constantly comes to the fore is the gap between strategies developed and the everyday lives and needs of people. When strategies are developed without active participation of the local people, this gap is most obviously felt. Particularly, when politicians are not under pressure from opposition parties or pressure groups, they are in danger of undermining the people's voices and needs. The Council can be therefore seen as an ivory tower, making decisions about people without consulting them.

There are specific measures to keep contact with people and inform them about key issues, such as the monthly meetings in the ward to discuss issues that affect people.

Only a small number, however, take part in these meetings and the majority seem to be in the dark about the intentions of the local authority. Many do not see the relevance of the general or issue-based meetings to their daily lives or just are not interested in being engaged in civic issues. Others see participation in the governance as belonging to a network of politicized activists with whom they do not identify. But as one resident puts it, the responsibility is also with the people to want to take part,

'As I say it just depends on the people in the area - if they're prepared to help themselves, the area will get better, you know. If they respect the area. If you respect the area it'll get better for later on in the years.'

An earlier attempt to involve people in discussing their concerns was the establishment of Walker Riverside Steering Group, which brought together elected members of the Council with resident groups, to determine the need for action and monitor efforts to regenerate the area. The Group had been a victim of its success: when issues on the agenda had been addressed, the group drifted apart. People could also stop supporting the Group when their concerns were not given priority in discussions and initiatives. One of the demands that were put to the Council in these discussions was asking it to encourage the growth of local groups and to provide frameworks for community involvement which transcend the individual groups (Walker Community Co-ordinator, 1995) Councillors are in close contact with people and their surgeries are an active source of identifying needs.

One respondent who was new to the area felt that greater availability of information on activities and organisations in the area would be helpful. This respondent found it difficult to develop links in the area, and stated that it was not easy to know how people or groups 'go on' in the area. It was felt that more information would help, and perhaps give greater confidence to contact organizations in the area.

'they should have in the shopping centre, a bulletin board, you know, tell what's on in the area. Cos there's no way of knowing'

Many respondents valued information or advice centres such as the Citizens Advice Bureau. The only problem seemed to be that the CAB was so busy it was difficult to get an appointment.

'4-5 weeks is a long time to wait for an appointment'

Indeed, it was not just the information provided which was valued but the advocacy role which the CAB sometimes adopted with respect to official organizations, particularly in relation to benefits.

Removing barriers to shared experiences

The area has historically been well known for its strong spirit of community. With the erosion of its economic base and the fall of the men from their economic and social positions, there is a heavy pressure on this sense of cohesion. As reflected in the behaviour of the disillusioned youth, the social capital, which had been accumulated in the area for generations, is being spent without replacement. As social networks

come under heavy strains and are not repaired, the most powerful tool for the local residents to deal with their problems become weakened. One of the major deficiencies of the policy responses to the area is that the importance of cultural development is poorly understood.

When the social and cultural relations between the long term residents are not well understood, there is little to expect on the needs of the minorities. The statistics show that only one percent of the population of the ward are ethnic minorities, mainly Asians. Many therefore have commented that there is no racial problem in the neighbourhood. The ethnic groups who live in the area, however, are in danger of exclusion as they are disconnected from the social networks and at times suffer harassment. So far, due to their limited number, this problem has not been addressed seriously. A mixed race family, whose children were harassed on the street, had to deal with the problem themselves. Their complaint about racism, however, was later supported by the local authority.

For some people in Walker it must seem that as fast as they build things up other people are knocking them down.

I mean we used to have like the fairs in the park, and that only started about ten year ago....Well this year it never happened, cos the one that used to run it didn't like the riots that were going on. But this was a handful of kids from _____, and they run riot in the park and upset everything so everybody's got to suffer now for that handful of kids.

When I was going to leave that school, the primary school, we designed a playground before we left and we had a swing in there. They've had to take it down cos it's been vandalised and that. They had a sand pit with a slide going down - excellent! People just wrecked it again.

It is this tension between the efforts of some people to put time and effort into developing the sense of community in Walker and the negative input from people who vandalize, commit crime and give the area a bad name which seems to be so important for the future direction of the area (along with key factors such as employment) and whether the area will spiral downwards or upwards. Many respondents commented on the positive aspects of living in Walker, highlighting the friendliness of most people, the proximity of family, and the willingness of many people to help out in time of need. However, it is this aspect of life in Walker, which is outside the economic concerns, which many people highlight as important and distinctive to the area. It is this sense of community which many feel is susceptible to change through the letting policies of the Council, because such policies have an impact on the very core of what many respondents stress as key to living in Walker. A man, who now works as a hotel porter and used to work in the shipyards and building sites, sees the way to strengthening community to be through provision of facilities.

'Just try to add the facilities. Publicize the facilities... to emphasize, to try to attract more people into community facilities, and maybe that will generate more community spirit.'

Removing the stigma

Many residents find the increasingly bad reputation of the neighbourhood to be detrimental to their daily need, such as the ability to apply for credit, or the long term hope of improving the area and finding new opportunities for individuals. Some parts of the neighbourhood are notoriously well known across the city as black spots. Removing stigma is, therefore, one of the major tasks ahead of any regeneration of the area. Demolition of the run down, unpopular housing estates and improving the physical environment and modernizing the housing stock are among the measures that the regeneration efforts pursue. These will have inevitable positive effects on the image of the area for its residents and outsiders. The social problems, which have caused the stigmatization in the first place, however, are harder to solve. The exclusion of bad tenants may solve some problems in some areas, but create new ones elsewhere.

Recovery of hope

All the responses to the problems of this neighbourhood should aim at the recovery of hope, particularly for those who have lost it or are most in need. As one officer puts it, the core problem of the neighbourhood is the loss of hope. People have lost the hope in a better future. When asked about their future plans, many, especially the men, are reluctant to share their views and aspirations. Women are more ready to do so and those who do talk of modest dreams, with a feeling of resignation and at times happiness. A few told us what their picture of their lives looked like in ten years.

'I don't think it [my situation] would change. I'd still be a housewife looking after the children, and still be doing my keep fit, my cross stitching, my reading books, cos I like all that sort of stuff.'

'I would just be here, just with the grand kids. Cos what I really want out of me life is to see the lads all happy and settled, that'll do me. Unless I won the lottery I would just be here. and I'd be content to be here. I cannot see myself looking for anything else.'

'quite happy if things stay the same, if nothing bad happens.'

'Sitting in this house doing exactly the same things. I'll be older but exactly the same.'

'I just take it day by day now. I'm 76 now, how long have I got? And I just take every day as it comes. I think it's the best way.'

This is a view shared by a woman half her age.

'Nobody knows what's in the future anyway, so I take my days as they come.'

Only the very young talk of any big dreams and of the possibility of radical change.

Conclusion

The main vehicle in pursuing these responses has been the establishment of a partnership, which draws on the involvement of the public, private and the voluntary

sectors, and securing major funding from central government. The main responses to the problems of the neighbourhood can be classified as those dealing with removing obstacles to work and those dealing with improving access to services and facilities. These are valuable steps taken to combat social exclusion. But there are areas that are left unaddressed. While there is many new opportunities for the young people to develop their skills and enter the job market, the men who lost their industrial jobs are undermined and women suffer from a lack of childcare and other forms of support. Attention to improve the physical environment is a useful step in restoring confidence in the area and for people to feel positive towards future. The core response to the problem of social exclusion should be the recovery of hope in the minds and hearts of people. Without removing obstacles to their participation in governance, however, chances of progress can only be limited. The shared experiences of people are also under strain and without provision of arenas for cultural development, the social capital which had been accumulated in the neighbourhood will be spent without being replaced.

8. Conclusion

Is Walker a socially excluded neighbourhood? All the statistical indicators show that Walker is ranked very low in comparison to other neighbourhoods in the Northeast of England. According to these criteria, we could conclude that as a neighbourhood it suffers from the symptoms of social exclusion and is vulnerable to further decline and social disintegration. This is a picture drawn from above, with the use of statistical data, and leads to some stigmatization of the neighbourhood.

However, as we have seen, two points emerge from an analysis of the neighbourhood from the eyes of its residents. First, there is a variation in terms of quality of life and experiences across the neighbourhood. While some streets enjoy strong neighbourly relations and a quiet residential atmosphere, others are suffering from disturbance and fear of crime. There is therefore not a homogeneous experience across the neighbourhood. Second, there is a relatively strong degree of communal feelings in the neighbourhood, which prevents an extreme atomization and disintegration of social networks in the area. Both these points show that although the neighbourhood as a whole suffers from severe problems, it is not affecting everyone in the same way. What is needed in a way is to identify particular problem spots to improve and to support the existing social networks to be able to deal with many of the neighbourhood's problems.

Rather than looking at the neighbourhood only from above and concentrating on blanket treatment of the area, what is needed is a fine grained understanding of the circumstances with a particular emphasis on improving the relatively rich social capital of the neighbourhood. As evident in the lower rates of criminal activity in Walker, the social cohesion of the neighbourhood, which is rooted in the shared history of a unionized workforce, is its most important asset. It is an asset, however, which is being spent without replacement. It will run out if not replaced by fresh investment in social infrastructure.

The existing forms of social capital are changing. The neighbourhood's social networks and routines are somehow double-edged. While its relative social cohesion helps some to cope with the problems they face, it keeps others at bay, even furthering their exclusion, as experienced by the newcomers to the area. The tension between the residents and newcomers may lead to constant conflict or further isolation of the neighbourhood. It may also lead to a pressure on housing managers not to increase the transitory population of the area, which could lead to an increase in social disintegration.

With the decline of employment opportunities in Walker, a major dilemma for its residents is whether to leave the neighbourhood in search of work. As the neighbourhood's population dwindles, it is apparent that more and more seek to earn a living elsewhere, hence choosing mobility rather than the social ties which have historically characterized Walker. Those who remain show a relatively low degree of mobility, where lack of resources keeps them confined, almost trapped. One way out of this is to bring employment opportunities to the area. Another way out is to enable socio-spatial mobility, to enable residents to find work elsewhere without having to

leave Walker as a residential area. In both cases, the opportunities of a workforce with limited skills are severely constrained.

Some policy initiatives are in place in the neighbourhood, some of which are closely linked to the new national administration's drive for reforms and neighbourhood renewal. The East End Partnership, which is the main vehicle of combating social exclusion in the area, concentrates on physical renewal and training the young. The problems of the women and particularly men who used to work in the heavy industries and are disadvantaged for a lack of new skills and their stage in life cycle remain as yet unresolved.

The changing roles and relationships of men and women, and of adults and the youth, may entail the development of a new form of social cohesion, undermining the old, patriarchal system. The period of transition, however, is proving to be painful for those at the margins of the job market. We have seen how the combined lack of access to work, to shared experiences and to governance causes social exclusionary processes. What is needed is to enable residents to overcome these obstacles and recover hope and confidence.

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