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Mixing Communities? Riots, Regeneration, and Renewal on problem estates in France and England

BERT PROVAN

Abstract

Riots, social exclusion, and endless improvement programmes have been a feature of the poorest neighbourhoods in France and England for the last 35 years or more, particularly focused on large social housing estates. Programmes of improvement have followed similar paths in each country, with mixed success. This article sets out a short overview of these programmes in each country, then contrast and compares the objectives, approaches, and outcomes. Each country has key elements of inter-agency working, local and resident participation and planning, large scale building rehabilitation and demolition programmes, though the French system is more based on specific local contracts between cities and the central Departments. Similar evaluation outcome indicators and frameworks of floor and “gap” targets have been set, although evidence of success is limited, and particularly in France there has been considerable criticism of the approach and framework. In parallel, however, the concept of “mixed communities” has emerged as an alternative strategic approach – intuitively reasonable politically popular but lacking an evidence base and often ineffective in dealing with poverty.

Keywords: housing, estate regeneration, mixed communities, exclusion, ghettos, gentrification

Introduction

Riots, crime, and mass vacancies on large, poor and often isolated housing estates have been a recurring problem for the UK and French governments for the last forty years, particularly on high rise estates created by the industrialised mass social housing building programmes of the 60s and 70s. Those high-profile disturbances in these problem neighbourhoods often provoke “law and order” reactions amongst the general public but also draw attention to the underlying deep seated problems of concentrated poverty and social deprivation, including highlighting racial discrimination and other problems of stigmatisation of the residents and the locality. In response, each country has implemented a constantly changing, and only partially successful, string of programmes to try to regain control of the underlying social, and security problems. These most often include a focus on cross agency and participative social programmes to improve the education, health, and civic participation of estate residents, as well as tackling crime and disorder and design defects. Similar programmes have been tried in each country – dealing here with England as the other UK nations have slightly different and devolved responsibilities - with strikingly similar approaches to gathering data and initiating evaluation studies. Part of this has been because of mutual influences, with for example the French *Zones Franches Urbaines* being inspired by John Major’s Enterprise Zones, and the creation of the data agency *ONZUS* being inspired by the similar deprivation data monitoring systems implemented in England. In addition, the policy drivers of the often changing priorities and programmes have often been political rather than based on evidence; and particularly in France the value and effectiveness of the programmes has been subject to extensive criticism based on the failure to link policy changes to evidence of outcomes (evidenced by Epstein¹, whose comprehensive analysis of France has informed this article). “Success” in many cases has been achieved by large scale demolition and rebuilding, often presented as a policy of creating more “mixed” neighbourhoods of private and public housing, but also resulting in the dispersal of more vulnerable communities and residents to other areas of poor housing, where the underlying social issues remain unresolved. Why has this problem been so seemingly intractable?

The neighbourhoods and the remedial programmes

The history of the construction of large social housing estates in the post WW2 period, and their subsequent drift into areas of concentrated poverty and social exclusion has been extensively documented². Poverty has historically also been concentrated in other poor areas of cities, where industrial workers have been concentrated for the last 150 years, as well as in some rural areas. One thing which is not lacking is empirical data on where these neighbourhoods are. In England, since 2000 these areas of poverty have been mapped at small area level (about 1,400 households) using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) using seven key dimensions: income, employment, health deprivation and disability, education skills and training, barriers to housing and services, crime, and the living environment. This was based on a prior 1998 “Index of Local Deprivation”. In France, similar information is provided through an “Atlas of Priority Areas (ZUS)” created in 1996 based on a 1995 index of deprivation (the “Indice synthétique d’exclusion” (ISE))³. After 2003 this was developed and managed by the National Observatory of Deprived Areas (ONZUS, now ONPV, following the 2014 change to a new index of deprivation and new geography which identifies “Quartiers Prioritaires” based on the fraction of the population falling below the 60% of median income poverty line).

Turning to programmes, there is a long history of changing programmes and objectives, although the underlying principles can be quickly summarised. The overall objectives of the continuing French programme was summarised by the Cities Ministry (in 2011) as

“The cities policy (Politique de la Ville) aims to reduce territorial inequalities within urban areas by mobilising national and local stakeholders. Designed to house more than five million people, the social housing neighbourhoods built between 1950 and 1975 are as part of the post war boost are often poorly integrated into the cities of today... The purpose of this policy is to establish a balance within cities which is beneficial to all residents”⁴.

In England, a similar statement of direction was set out in 2001:

“Over the past twenty years, hundreds of poor neighbourhoods have seen their basic quality of life become increasingly detached from the rest of society. People living just streets apart became separated by a gulf in prosperity and opportunity....The vision [is] that, within 10 to 20 years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. People on low incomes should not have to suffer conditions and services that are failing, and so different from what the rest of the population receives⁵.

Beneath these pious statements of intent, however, lies a continuous series of policies, programmes, priorities, and funding streams to improve the quality of life and life chances of residents of these estates, starting in 1977 in France and in 1973 in the England. The two tables below of some of the main programmes and their objectives in each country give a flavour of the extent and nature of these programmes, as well as the similarities and differences:

Date	FRANCE: Programme/ Change	Overview
1973	Stop to building large new peripheral social housing estates	Circular "Barres et Tours" also dealing with tackling social segregation
1977	Launch of "Habitat et Vie Sociale" programme	1st national programme aimed at improving housing conditions and social cohesion in 53 social housing estates
1981	"Les Minguettes hot summer"	Rioting in one of Lyon's largest social housing estates. Triggered DSQ
1983	Dubedout report "Ensemble refaire la ville"	Start of work by Commission Nationale pour le développement social des quartiers (DSQ)
1984	148 DSQ contracts signed for neighbourhood improvements. These were at neighbourhood level.	First major national programme aimed at radical improvements to difficult estates; first set of city contracts
1989-90	Creation of the National Council for Cities (CNV), and the Inter-ministerial Committee for Cities (CIV, chaired by the Prime Minister), and the General Secretariat for Urban and Social Development (SG CIV) who administer the policy	Provision of a national cross government focus for policy advice and programme implementation around the problems of poor neighbourhoods.
1990	Riots and looting at Vaulx-en-Velin, Lyon involving clashes between police and residents	President Mitterand appoints Michel Delebarre as first Minister for Cities, and pledges action
1991	First "Grands projets urbains" (GPU) or large urban projects, addressing a wider geographic area than the DSQ contracts.	Conceived as 10-15 year projects, 14 sites, mainly social housing estates but also covering larger areas. Small sums in addition to main programme funds
1991	More general provisions: City de-segregation act ("Loi d'orientation pour la ville") and City financial solidarity act ("Loi de la solidarité financière")	"Orientation" lays the foundation for developing mixed communities in every area, which is backed by the "Solidarity" provisions allowing for transfers of funding from rich to poor areas.
1996	City renewal pact ("Pacte de relance pour la ville") sets up a new urban geography of areas in difficulty and new special "zones". Start of systematic national monitoring of areas in difficulty (ONZUS)	"Zones" are priority areas in difficulty for city contracts (ZUS, of which 751 were identified), areas for additional "re-dynamism" funds (ZRU) and wider areas where additional funds and tax advantages to companies are available in return for guaranteed employment of ZUS residents (ZFU). Also special youth employment measures
1999	New "Grand Projects de Ville" (GPV) or large city projects, succeeding the GPU project framework.	These new contracts were to cover the period 2000 - 2006.
2000	City solidarity and renewal Act (loi SRU)	Obligated cities of over 3,500 people (1,500 in Ile de France) to provide 20% social housing (raised to 25% in 2012) - thereby stimulating mixed communities
2002	Highly critical Cour des Comptes (similar to UK National Audit Office) report criticising lack of progress and value for money	Report concludes lots of activity but too much programme complexity and frequent changes, which undermined local innovation and effective delivery of improvements
2003	Loi Borloo (named after the then cities minister) sets new direction and priorities: "breakup the ghettos" through demolition and reconstruction; more employment and social support in poor neighbourhoods; and simplified, decentralised procedures. ONZUS to evaluate progress	Creation of national urban renewal agency (ANRU) to fund the demolition of 200k estate homes, renovate 200k, and build 200k new homes in the 751 poor (ZUS) neighbourhoods (€30bn programme 2004-8). National Urban Renewal Programme (PNRU) launched to plan renovation in 530 neighbourhoods
2005	Multiple and serious riots across France in poor social housing neighbourhoods. Six special "equal opportunities" senior officials (Prefects) appointed	€200m of damage, 2 deaths, 9k vehicles burned out; 3k arrests; 200 police/ firefighters injured.
2006	Increased and consolidated activity around poor neighbourhoods to address riots and continuing problems. New contract structure announced (CUCS, city contracts for social cohesion, starting in 2007)	ANRU funding for renovation increased 25%; 15 new jobs and economic support zones created (ZFU); . €100m more for local associations; new national Agency for social cohesion and equal opportunities (ACSE) to be created. CUCS priorities are housing and quality of life; employment and economic development; education; crime and citizenship; and health
2008	"Hope for the excluded suburbs" programme (Dynamique Espoir Banlieu) launched	Aimed to focus cross ministerial action on the poorest neighbourhoods. Little major new funding, but 350 "délégués du préfet" (central government single points of contact and coordination) appointed in the worst neighbourhoods
2012	Another highly critical "Cour des Comptes" (NAO) report on lack of progress and value for money in the programmes	Used evidence from ONZUS to illustrate lack of progress in closing gaps between worst neighbourhoods and average. Criticisms included over complexity of programmes, lack of ministerial coordination nationally, and lack of local/central coordination; lack of resident consultation; poor linking of housing development to social programmes; underfunding and poor use of funds
2014	Completely new framework of contracts and priority neighbourhood geography announced, put in place by the "Loi de programmation pour la ville et la cohésion urbaine" (City programmes and urban cohesion Act).	New contract priorities are social cohesion, living environment, and urban renewal. 1,300 neighbourhoods in the period 2014-2020, alongside a new €5bn National Neighbourhood Renewal programme (NPNRU).
2016	ONZUS (neighbourhoods observatory) becomes ONPV (National City Policy Observatory), reflecting the new contracts and the new geography based on poverty	

Date	ENGLAND: Programme/ Change	Overview
1967	Additional state subsidy for building high rise social housing withdrawn	Estates in the pipeline continued to be built, but no further stimulus for high rise
1978	Urban Programme	Financial assistance to inner cities and local partnerships
1979	Priority Estates Programme	First programme to explore local housing management on hard to let estates
1981	Government Report "An investigation into difficult to let housing"	First systematic government review of extent and scale of problems on social housing estates
1985	Estates Action Programme	Aimed at estate based management, diversity of tenure, private investment, and new management models like trusts
1991	City Challenge	Extension of Estates Action, but competitive funding targeted on larger more run down areas
1994	Single Regeneration Budget	Consolidated several related funding streams; competitive bidding
1999	New Deal for Communities programme	39 neighbourhoods with £50m over 10 years of locally controlled area regeneration aimed at "closing the gap" with average
2000	Indices of Multiple Deprivation (also 2004, 2007, 2010, 2015)	New comprehensive assesment of crime, worklessness, skills, health, poverty, housing and enviroment in small areas (LSOA) of around 1,00 households, and rank index of deprivation based on these
2001	National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal	Programme vision was: "that withon 10-20 years no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live" aimed at "floor targets" (minimum standards) for crime, health, skills, housing and physical environment, and also closign the gap of these areas and the average
2010	End of national programmes, and responsibility devolved to cities under Localism agenda	NSNR framework abandoned, and resonsibility for neighbourhood renewal given to local authorities under "localism" agenda; developed within some "city regions" such as Greater Manchester's "inclusive growth" agenda

Despite this striking variety of delivery programmes, there are three main underlying approaches. These are measures focused primarily on:

- Improving the physical infrastructure of the neighbourhood and its buildings, including urban and economic investment in the neighbourhood or estate, demolition or renovation of the buildings and environment, remodelling and changes of the image or layout of the estate (for example to demolish walkways which contribute to crime, or wholesale demolition and rebuilding), and changes to the density (for example “decapitation” of 4 storey blocks to produce two storey terraced homes)
- Addressing the needs and issues of the people including their education and training needs, job readiness projects, improving levels of social capital and strengthening local associations, addressing health issues including drug addiction, and introducing strict crime prevention

programmes. This also includes measure to change the balance of “vulnerable” households, and introducing a wider range of tenure through “mixed” communities policies, whereby more middle class people and people in employment would be encouraged to move onto the estate by building affordable homes to buy, and expecting those households to “pass on” social values and standards

- Address the wider externalities including linking the neighbourhood more closely to the wider city economy through better transport links, job training and recruitment programmes, improving local schools, hospitals, commercial centres, and leisure facilities, and encouraging new economic activity in or near the neighbourhood.

Often these estates only come to public notice in moments of crisis. Public disquiet was aroused following outbreaks of civil disturbance (including major riots in France in 1990 and 2005 - with simmering anti-police discontent still current, - and in England in 1981, 1985, 1995, and 2011).

Meanwhile the IMD and ONZUS provided detailed empirical evidence about concentrated pockets of disadvantage focused action in specific small areas and estates. To take a comprehensive area based approach to the problems – and linking the three main types of measures set out above - required the intervention of several different local and national state agencies, as well as the private sector and semi-public agencies like housing associations in England and HLMs in France.

The initial phase of these programmes was experimental and innovative in both countries, with groups like the CNDSQ in France and the Priority Estates Programme in the UK developing and testing a range of design and housing management ideas in different cities and neighbourhoods.

These locally based approaches subsequently led to ideas about “Interministerial” action in France (from 1990 in France), and parallel “joining up” in England (from 1997). This involved identifying the need to coordinate the wide range of public, private, and third sector interventions in a way that would add value to each individual sector specific intervention (e.g. housing, policing, education) in a specified small area neighbourhood. This “joining up” should be seen in the context of the intellectual and administrative tension between “neighbourhood” programmes and “mainstream” programmes in

both countries. The first are organised around the idea that specific “neighbourhood” level actions and “locally joined up” actions are central to delivering better outcomes. This was sometimes based around the idea that there is an independent “neighbourhood effect” driving disadvantage in these areas, over and above the specific effects of poverty, worklessness, poor health, poor housing, and other social problems being addressed in “silos” by national programmes. In contrast “mainstream” approaches take the improvement of wider specific basic services as the starting point – better schools, better job and skills training, targeted economic growth programmes, national housing improvement standards and security improvements, with an emphasis on investing more effort and money in the poorest schools, housing, and low employment areas. These national and generally massively better funded programmes are often seen as being capable of targeting the underlying drivers of deprivation and poverty in all areas where they are needed, including in these poorest problematic areas. Tackling these key drivers of disadvantage will, under this approach, be sufficient to tackle even the most concentrated pockets of deprivation. This debate is informed by extensive statistical analysis which undermines the notion of an independent “neighbourhood” variable, although such statistical evidence does not end the more political and ideological tension between supporters of either mainstream or of local actions.

Consequently, and as might be expected, in both countries a mix of the neighbourhood and mainstream approaches has been adopted, which has in part contributed to the mixed record of success set out below. One striking aspect, however, is the level of national and Ministerial “ownership” of the neighbourhood programmes, at least up until the UK coalition government essentially abolished central monitoring and programming in this area in 2010. National governments like to be seen to be taking action to deal with the poorest, crime ridden, neighbourhoods. In France there has been a central Ministry of the City since 1990, coordinating action at a political and administrative level; and the period of the Labour government (1997-2010) in the UK saw the creation of the “National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal” as part of the portfolio for the Communities and Local Government Ministry (under its frequently changing names), with the responsibility for coordinating policies and programmes across government departments, as well as responsibility for funding and close monitoring of the performance of local government.

The nature of the oversight and management of programmes differed significantly, however. France set up a frequently changing system of detailed “contracts” between cities and their national and departmental partners which specified outputs and actions (DSQ, GPU, GPV, CUCS...). In contrast in England between 2001 and 2008 almost £3bn of funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) was allocated to local authority districts which included the most deprived areas in England – originally to 88 (subsequently 86) local authority districts. Responsibility for programme planning and investment was vested in a new set of “Local Strategic Partnerships” (LSPs) which involved the key city level agencies (housing, social services, environmental services), working alongside other local agencies like the Police authority, as well as regional or local representatives of national Government bodies (the Benefits Agency, Regional Investment boards) and the private sector. In contrast to France, while in England a substantial network of “good practice” advisors was set up, no specific contractual or delivery arrangements were mandated, and LSPs were free to choose how to deliver the key outcomes in housing, education, crime, health, and other measures. It is also of particular importance to note that these specific NRF outcomes being measured were at city level, rather than neighbourhood level, in contrast to the more area specific French neighbourhood focused programmes

In addition in England there was a separate, more localised, New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme which was targeted on a newly created set of 39 “NDC Local Partnerships” chosen using the IMD and other evidence. These “local partnerships” comprised representatives of the local statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors in the NDC area to plan action, allocate NDC funds, and be accountable for outcomes achieved. The idea behind the programme was that better outcomes could be achieved by the formal devolution of around £50m of specific funds over 10 years to be divided amongst and controlled by each of the 39 local neighbourhood boards where residents were “at the heart of” the process. Here the outcomes were focused on and judged in relation to the specific small neighbourhood, and not at the city level.

Street level local resident engagement and empowerment were essential elements of both French and English programmes. This was partly based on the wish to build social capital amongst the residents as part of the regeneration process, and partly a wish to identify local needs more clearly through

participative engagement. Youth engagement could often be a problem, however, as well as tensions between different groups on the estates with competing priorities. Local elected city council members also provided a competing locus of democratic voice, in competition with estate based groups who could be highly motivated but less legitimate claim to be representative of all the residents. For example, conflicts around priorities for spending in the English NDC areas were not uncommon between the city government and the local NDC partnerships.

Meanwhile, however, alongside these specific programmes to directly tackle the problems of the poorest areas, the idea of “mixed communities” was emerging as a more general planning and urban improvement idea. In 1991 two new French laws (on “City de-segregation” and on “City financial solidarity” – see table above) laid the groundwork for avoiding the creation of more social housing “ghettoes” of poverty; and the English 1984-94 Estates Action programme required tenure diversification in council housing estates, progressively adopted as part of regeneration schemes by later UK governments, and highly influenced by the Hope IV programme in the USA. The underlying principle (or perhaps seemingly obvious but naïve idea) is that since concentrations of mono-tenure social housing estates appears to lead to problems of poverty and deprivation in those areas, the solution needs to involve avoiding or destroying mono-tenure and creating “mix”. This eventually came to be highly influential in influencing, and undermining, other neighbourhood programmes.

What happened? Evaluations and criticisms

The short answer is that neighbourhood in each country showed some progress in some places, but not enough to achieve the intended major changes hoped for. The poorest neighbourhoods are still in place, and their problems continue (including with the 2017 disturbances in the Paris suburbs). In addition, there have been significant criticisms of the programmes in France; and in England they have now been abolished almost completely. Alongside, the “mixed communities” approach has emerged as an increasingly favoured approach, and in the UK is now also an important element of identifying funding to enable estate regeneration and new social housing building, considered in more detail later.

Monitoring of “neighbourhood programmes” in both countries includes a mix of “floor standards” and “gap analysis”, and in England these measures had the status of formal targets during most of the Labour period (1997-2010). In brief a floor standard is a national absolute level below which no neighbourhood in the country should fall, and education programmes target all and any failing schools. For example in England in the 2000s education targets set out that no school (including those serving deprived neighbourhoods) should be so bad that not even 25% of pupils attain basic qualifications; and in health policy no neighbourhood in the country should have more than a fixed level of teenage pregnancy. The most deprived areas in England were monitored against these floor targets. In contrast gap standards are a relative measure which compares the changes in a “deprived” neighbourhood’s outcomes to a national comparative average (identifying “deprived” neighbourhoods using the English ONS or French ONZUS geographies). An example would be around economic growth and reducing worklessness, where a gap measure would look at whether the improvements in employment rates in the “deprived” neighbourhoods were keeping pace with any national average improvements, with the aim that they should actually be improving more than average and in that way “closing the gap” between the poorest neighbourhoods and the average. ONZUS reports provided data on gaps between neighbourhoods and their parent city in terms of measures such as level of qualification, income, and worklessness, but unlike the UK there was no “carrots and sticks” (not even naming & shaming systems) to drive local policies. Other monitoring approaches in both countries can include a mix of self-assessment by local agents of progress, output measurement (numbers of buildings demolished or refurbished), and resident surveys.

Reviewing the French outcomes, some key outcomes for the period 2003-10 include for social outcomes:

- Unemployment: Gap (of poor neighbourhoods to the average) up from 8.3 percentage points to 10.6 (2003 vs 2010)
- Income gap up
- Poor health gap:- 6.4 percentage point gap for people in poor or very poor health in 2010
- Delinquency : a positive: 16% reduction in delinquency 2005-10

Output figures for this period include:

- 150,000 homes demolished
- 140,000 new build homes
- 340,000 rehabilitated homes
- 360,000 upgraded homes

These outputs were delivered using €46.2 billion of National Urban Rehabilitation Programme (PNRU) funding, 25% supported by the National Agency for Urban Rehabilitation (ANRU)

More telling, however, was a set of two reports on the overall programme compiled by the French Cour des Comptes, which is a similar body to the UK National Audit Office, charged with reviewing the value for money and performance of programmes incurring public spending. The 2002 report⁶ set out that the centrally directed cities policies to date have been characterised by:

- unclear strategies and objectives
- regularly changing processes
- a consequent unclear jumble of rules and confused focus on different areas for action
- an insufficient attention to the necessary cross departmental aspect of the work
- deployment of specific central funding to drive activities which are to the detriment of a more innovative and coordinated set of actions across all the agencies in the most deprived areas

In turn the 2012 report⁷ set out that evidence indicated:

- inequalities persisting despite a decade of reforms
- little movement in the gaps across the indicator areas
- increasing numbers of areas for priority interventions
- an unprecedented effort of renovation, poorly linked to the social actions of the programme
- uncertainty as to whether the theoretical budgetary priority theoretically accorded to the poorest neighbourhoods is actually being given

- a risk of using specific budget allocations to substitute for mainstream spending

The English National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and NDC programmes were subject to extensive independent commissioned evaluations⁸, commissioned by the Communities and Local Government Ministry. This national report, covering the period between 2001 and 2010, indicated that compared to the English city average, in the NRU areas:

- Overall gaps had stabilised, and narrowed on worklessness and educational attainment
 - but things had become worse on health and crime
 - and after the Global Economic Crisis gap started to open
- There was additional investment from mainstream programmes which were aligned
 - Sure Start, Decent Homes, Housing Market Renewal, Schools programme
- Savings from reductions in worklessness were five times the estimated £312m spent on this issue.
- Effective new ways of local partnership working were introduced through the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP)

This aspect of the local partnership through LSPs was found by the evaluation to be particularly important. They were judged to have delivered a range of outcomes in terms of partnership working and strengthening local governance through better prioritisation and coordination of local spend and actions. This means they are likely to have contributed to the delivery of service improvements as part of the NRU programme, and the model was rolled out to all English local authorities in 2009. Despite this evidence of effectiveness, LSPs were subsequently abandoned by the 2010 Coalition government, who indicated that any national level interference in how cities delivered services was contrary to their overarching principle of “localism” or minimal state intervention unless essential (based on little coherent or robust empirical evidence or comparative evaluation studies).

In addition, the NSNR evaluators created a useful “typology” of neighbourhoods based on in and outflows of different groups of people (definitions from DCLG/Amion 2009, with author’s edits):

1. **Transit** areas are deprived neighbourhoods in where people move in from richer areas – perhaps newly-established middle class young households on limited incomes, starting out on the housing ladder – then move on, but moving elsewhere to a less deprived area as their careers progress.
2. **Escalator** areas attract in movers from areas which may be similarly deprived, or immigrants from other places in the UK or elsewhere. Move on becomes part of a continuous onward-and-upward progression through the housing and labour markets. This is different to Transit areas in that the in-movers move in from areas that are equally or more deprived. Residents may be older (and not newly forming households).
3. **Gentrifier** areas are ones in which there is a degree of social improvement since most in-movers come from less deprived areas and most out-movers go to similarly or more deprived areas. This could be seen as a form of gentrification, displacing poorer residents, (and can be seen as the model for “mixed communities”, although this is not stated in the Amion report).
4. **Isolate** areas represent neighbourhoods in which households come from and move to areas that are equally or more deprived. Hence they can be seen as neighbourhoods that are associated with a degree of entrapment of poor households who are unable to break out of living in deprived areas.

The importance of this typology is that it provides a more nuanced approach to the types of area improvement activity and investment which may be effective in reducing deprivation and poor conditions.

For the NDC, there were specific local evaluations of each of the 39 NDC areas. In addition there was an overall summary NDC national report, covering the period of 2002-2008, using a wide set of 34 indicators of outcomes. This indicated that these neighbourhoods saw more positive change than in the parent City for 10 of 13 indicators; net positive change was especially marked in relation to burglary

and all three Key Stage education attainment levels. Compared to a control group of similarly deprived comparator areas, NDC areas saw statistically significant more positive changes for 11 indicators. Overall the biggest improvements were for indicators of people's feelings about their neighbourhoods: NDC residents recognise change brought about by the NDC Programme and are more satisfied with their neighbourhoods as places to live. This may be due to physical improvements reflecting the conclusion that NDC areas have seen more net change with regard to place-related change (housing and environment improvements which accounted for a third of all spend), rather than people-related outcomes. In all, from 1999 the 39 NDC partnerships spent a total of £1.71bn on some 6,900 projects or interventions. A further £730m was levered in from other public, private and voluntary sector sources. The NDC evaluation estimated savings to the public purse as between three and five times the amounts invested.

The issue of "mainstreaming" needs to be highlighted here also, however. While the NRF invested around £2.4bn of public funds, and the NDC some £1.7bn, alongside this the Labour government had invested considerably more on "mainstream" improvements which in many cases were also focused on the more deprived neighbourhoods. This included, for example, the Decent Homes programme which brought 90% of social housing up to a good standard (£22bn spend), the Sure Start programme which provided 3,500 Sure Start children's centres, two thirds of which were in the most deprived areas (around 0.5bn annual spend 2005-10), increased Health expenditure (£60bn between 1997/8 and 2009/10) and the Building Schools for the Future programme to refurbish all poor schools, focused on deprived areas (over £5bn). These amounts dwarf the expenditure on specific neighbourhood improvement programmes, and in each case have a targeted impact on the problems affecting those neighbourhoods. The English evaluations used comparator areas to gauge the specific impact of the neighbourhood based improvement programmes, and in this way attempted to take account of this wider mainstream expenditure, but the importance of "mainstream" spend should not be underestimated.

In both countries, then, there have been modest improvements, but in the context of changing programme and contract requirements, and a range of parallel mainstream funding programmes. The specific neighbourhood programmes were complex and often appeared to change in response to political drivers and priorities rather than the evidence of effectiveness of programmes and better outcomes. For example, Epstein has written extensively about this in France, and it is reflected in the Cour des Comptes reports above. And in England, the 2010 new Coalition government immediately decided to declare that neighbourhood deprivation was a matter for local city government to deal with and abolished both Local Strategic Partnerships and large elements of the system of floor and gap targets despite evidence of their effectiveness – as well as sharply reducing the Sure Start and Schools building programmes. Curiously although the French programmes have had a more critical evaluation, they still continue, whereas the English programmes showed modest successes but were abolished. Overall the programmes failed to gain much political traction or wide popular support (unlike, for example, the more domain specific English health programmes for cutting waiting lists, or reducing street homelessness, or some of the more police based anti-crime programmes in France). Mixed communities, however, tended to have both political and public support, as set out next.

Mixed Communities – the answer?

Perhaps the most prominent example of the driver of political preference rather than evidence is the continuing focus on “mixed communities” in both countries. This is a programme which was first promoted in the USA through the HOPE (Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere) initiative. It essentially views concentrated social housing and associated poverty as the main driver of neighbourhood problems, and sees creating a mix of tenures, incomes, and classes as being the main answer. In France, mixing has been central to neighbourhood policy since 2000 where the Loi SRU required every area above a certain size to have a minimum proportion of social housing available. In UK, planning regulations now require similar provision of “affordable” units within new developments, and social housing providers regularly plan renovation schemes including a mix of social housing and new homes to buy. It should be noted that the English approach is now almost inevitable in the absence of state subsidy for social housing, which means that building homes for sale (or for rents higher than

social rent levels) is now the main financial vehicle to subsidise the building of new social housing, or to build a property portfolio which is able to be used as collateral for large money market borrowing to keep social housing providers in business.

As well as avoiding mono-tenure areas, two underlying rationales can be found to justify this “mixing” approach:

- “Moral” (exogenous) mixing – new professional families entering a poor neighbourhood can teach deprived residents some standards of good behaviour
- “Capacity building” (endogenous) mixing: the presence of a more varied (and employed) population will diversify existing residents’ opportunities through exchanges of social capital. It will also help retain socially mobile households and build on existing current strengths and capacities of the poor community

In fact research evidence so far provides little evidence of success with this policy either. Research by Ruth Lupton⁹ in England found little evidence of better outcomes in mixed schemes compared to non mixed schemes. And in France both Lelévrier (2010)¹⁰, and Kirszbaum & Epstein¹¹ found that the policy often displaces poor residents who are to other (often worse) poor neighbourhoods, and that in fact rather than mixing the process of importing these new communities creates rich “sub-neighbourhoods”. Kirszbaum & Epstein comment:

“The social mixing approach has been devised by the rest of society, often against the wishes of the existing neighbourhood residents” (ibid)

Nevertheless the mixed communities approach continues to have political and popular support, based partly on the not unreasonable idea that building or tolerating “ghettoes” of poverty creates pockets of crime and deprivation.

Concluding remarks

Detailed and regularly updated small area data shows the continuing presence in France and England of neighbourhoods which are isolated from social and economic opportunity, and which house high concentrations of households with multiple problems who are subjected to ethnic and other forms of discrimination. This is a social issue which needs to be tackled, and not ignored. That said, we need to recognise that public pressure to take action may be driven by a desire to “rid” society of these problem neighbourhoods and the crime they are seen to harbour, based on the myth that the residents of these estates are essentially criminals, shirkers, and responsible for their own disadvantages. As set out above, these myths may be part of the popularity of mixing communities.

A starting point for the way forward may be to recognise that actually “mainstream” programmes to tackle poor schools, pockets of poor healthcare, unfit and badly managed housing, poor transportation, inappropriate skills training, poor leisure facilities and similar poor services can be efficiently targeted by their respective local and national departments in a way that recognises a wider range of poor areas as a whole (and not just the very poorest) need improvement. Funding can and should be directed to those local priorities driven by a more specific range of progressive and needs based funding criteria and targets in each domain (Ministerial) programme. The alternative approach of creating special programmes, complex bidding and rigid monitoring procedures with complex and malleable criteria seems to create layers of paperwork and administrative effort with, from what has been set out above, to have questionable effectiveness. The English Local Strategic Partnership approach of “joining up” local partners seems lighter touch, although the previous superstructure of continuous monitoring of hundreds of “gap” and “floor” targets may fail to focus on the key indicators of deprivation and poverty (but some specific nationally consistent and targeted local monitoring of key outcome indicators remains essential).

Second, economic growth is a key factor in area renewal. There is clear evidence, however, that the benefits of economic renewal and growth do not flow to the poorest neighbourhoods without some explicit programmes of training and job linking. This requires clear political leadership and long term

planning to link poor areas, and other poor and unskilled households, to the job opportunities using bespoke training, job linking, quotas, and other mechanisms to ensure benefits spread to the more disadvantaged households. Lee et al (2014)¹² have set this out in detail for England, and many levers already exist and are in use in some places in France to achieve this for example to give priority to local people for training and employment in renovation and development schemes.

Third, although in principle breaking up monolithic large isolated peripheral estates of system build and unpopular housing seems intuitively a good idea, there is no evidence that it is a successful policy.

What matters is how this is done. It seems clear that new build housing developments should certainly have a mix of tenures, to prevent a re-creation of past problems. In addition, where schemes are developed to improve existing tenanted estates, such schemes should recognise the strengths of the existing community, and put in place measures to retain and strengthen that community as far as individual resident households wish this (which is to say any choice to remain should be accommodated). Also, the key question of the inevitable problem of partial displacement of some residents must be clearly tackled. It is not a good policy to shunt unsupported and vulnerable residents to other parts of cities where the support services may be poor and opportunities no better. Planned moves provide the opportunity to improve their quality of life, and address the underlying social and family issues.

Third, for environmental and cost reasons rehabilitation and renewal of existing buildings should be undertaken in preference to demolition, even if this means remodelling for a more varied client group.

Finally, the possibility of social mixing between residents of different incomes and backgrounds within “mixed community” developments (and any intended benefits) will not be realised without specific actions to encourage and enable this. The most commonly observed outcome of mixing is de facto division into semi-gated sub-estates of different tenures and classes (where the only mixing may be the youth of the rich buying their recreational drugs from the youth of the poor). Areas of shared interest for all households include children and their education, leisure facilities, environmental conditions, safety

and security, and local commerce and services. Clearly the risk is that the better off go to private schools and gyms and shop in up market groceries, but these present opportunities to build links and more importantly build trust.

Endnotes

¹ Renaud Epstein and Thomas Kirszbaum (2010) *Synthèse de travaux universitaires et d'évaluation de la politique de la ville*. [Rapport de recherche] Comité d'évaluation et de contrôle des politiques publiques de l'Assemblée nationale. 2010. <hal-01267393>

² e.g. Anne Power (1999) *Estates on the Edge- The Social Consequences of Mass Housing in Northern Europe* Palgrave, London

³ The « décret [n°96-1156](#) du 26 décembre 1996 » set out the first list of 750 « Zones urbaines sensibles (Zus) »

⁴ Ministère de la Ville : Press release of 6/12/2011 *Politique de la ville – taking action for the social cohesion of cities*

⁵ Cabinet Office (2001) *A new commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* HMSO London

⁶ Cour des comptes (2002), *La politique de la ville. Rapport public particulier*, - Rapport Au Président De La République Suivi Des Réponses Des Administrations Et Des Organismes Intéressés. Cour des Comptes, Paris

⁷ Cour des Comptes (2012) *La politique de la ville Une décennie de réformes* Rapport public thématique Cour des Comptes, Paris

⁸ DCLG/Amion Consulting(2010): *Evaluation of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal Final Report* HMSO London; and DCLG/Paul Lawless et al (2010) *New Deal for Communities – final evaluation*. Sheffield Hallam HMSO London. On types of neighbourhood see DCLG/Amion Consulting (2009) *Understanding the different roles of deprived neighbourhoods: A typology* HMSO London

⁹ Ruth Lupton Rebecca Tunstall, (2010) *Evaluation of the Mixed Communities Initiative*

Demonstration Projects: Final report HMSO London

¹⁰ Christine Lelévrier, « La mixité dans la rénovation urbaine : dispersion ou re-concentration ? »,

Espaces et sociétés, 140-141 (1-2), 2010, p. 59-74

¹¹ Kirszbaum & Epstein 2010 op cit

¹² Lee, N et al (2014) *Cities, Growth and Poverty – evidence review* LSE, London