

# Reflections on Poverty and the Dynamics of Place

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## ABSTRACT

There is a long standing debate about the relative effects of ‘person-based’ and ‘place-based’ programmes to tackling social and economic disadvantage in Britain. This has often resulted in developing parallel strands of research and policy, rather than bringing them together. This paper attempts to provide a more integrated assessment, by exploring how the experience of living with dimensions of poverty varies according to space and time and how the salience of ‘place’ varies in the attitudes and actions of households living in socially and economically disadvantaged areas. It will also consider the extent to which the experience of poverty in more socially and economically mixed areas acts as a stimulus, or as a brake, on households’ ability to ‘move on’ and ‘move out’

The first part of the paper examines the findings from elements of the large scale longitudinal household survey undertaken in 2002, 2004 and 2006 as part of the national evaluation of the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme. This examines how attitudes to ‘community’ and ‘neighbourhood’ have changed over the four year period, and how different types of households in NDC areas have responded. It will also compare these findings with the responses of households in comparator neighbourhoods elsewhere in order to gauge whether or not there is an ‘NDC effect’.

The voices and experiences of those at the sharp end of social and economic disadvantage can often be neglected in the development of both place-based and person-based initiatives. There is a tendency to grasp at ready explanations (whether behavioural or structural in emphasis) for the persistence of poverty and to develop universalised solutions in response. The second part of the paper will therefore outline the analytical framework for undertaking a major longitudinal study on the ‘dynamics of poverty and place’ funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which commenced in Spring 2007. This research programme will explore in more depth how households in different neighbourhood contexts experience poverty over time, how and why this changes, and how they act in response.

In conclusion, the paper will reflect on the prospects for the development of policies that are more sensitive to nuances of ‘place’ and ‘community’, so that they might be better placed to respond to the increasingly fragmented and diverse geographical, demographic, social, cultural and economic picture of poverty in contemporary Britain.

**Key Words:** poverty, neighbourhood, regeneration