

Place Attachment, Population Turnover and Social Mix

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the factors that create place attachment in deprived neighbourhoods and, in particular, the impacts that high turnover and social mix have on an individual's attachment. Place attachment is generally seen as having positive impacts for individuals and for neighbourhoods. For individuals, it may provide security or predictability; access to social networks; and/or a sense of identity. For neighbourhoods, it has been associated with increased stability, social cohesion, and more committed or active residents. The concept clearly sits well with current policy concerns with the promotion of "sustainable communities", particularly in more deprived neighbourhoods. On the surface at least, both turnover and social mix would appear to threaten place attachment by inhibiting the formation of social networks and by reducing familiarity or predictability. In this sense, the policy objective of promoting "mixed communities" may be at odds with the ambition for "sustainable communities".

This paper reports on the qualitative stage of a study to explore the relationships between attachment, turnover and mix. It follows on from a quantitative analysis of data from a major UK Government survey (the Citizenship Survey). Data from 39 semi-structured interviews from 4 case-study neighbourhoods are used to explore the factors which lead to or inhibit place attachment. Four areas with contrasting combinations of turnover and social mix were chosen from one city region. The findings from the qualitative phase support and give greater depth to the quantitative phase but they also provide new insights. The results have a number of implications for neighbourhood policy.

Key Words: place attachment, social mix, population turnover