

# Regeneration and poverty in Northern Ireland: Evidence and policy review

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# Introduction

This report reviews the evidence on the impact of regeneration on poverty in Northern Ireland. It is part of a wider research project for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that looks at the impact of regeneration on poverty across the UK. A main report - *Regeneration and poverty: evidence and policy review* (Crisp et al., 2014) - comprehensively summarises all the evidence across the UK. This report on Northern Ireland is one of three smaller reviews produced, respectively, for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to ensure full discussion of the distinct approaches taken across the UK with regard to regeneration as a devolved policy area<sup>1</sup>. Details of the methods used to review the available evidence are provided in the main report.

This review examines regeneration policies and strategies in Northern Ireland from the late 1970s to the present day. It then examines anti-poverty policies and strategies over the same period and reflects on the degree of connection between the two. In particular, it assesses the degree to which area-based regeneration in Northern Ireland has been proven to alleviate poverty, with the assistance of evaluation studies where available. 'Regeneration' includes both urban and rural initiatives although the policy area has an urban focus. Most activity involves comprehensive area-based programmes in disadvantaged areas, however property-based schemes are also included due to their claims to benefit communities through job creation and other forms of economic development. Some minor programmes have been omitted or mentioned only briefly. Space has also not permitted the inclusion of an important and problematic related policy area, that of the promotion of 'good relations' between the two main communities in Northern Ireland, on which there is an extensive literature. The paper reviews regeneration and anti-poverty initiatives chronologically in two sections, divided at 1998 when devolved government was introduced following the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. Each section is commented on separately and the paper concludes with more general discussion and with brief recommendations on how regeneration could contribute more effectively to the reduction of poverty in Northern Ireland.

The main arguments of the paper are as follows. Regeneration initiatives in Northern Ireland have been fragmented both before and after devolution. Fragmentation has taken different forms, for example: a large number of initiatives; several initiatives taking place in the same areas concurrently; areas receiving funding from different programmes; time-limited project funding; displacement of expenditure from mainstream budgets. All raise questions about the extent of genuine additionality. Despite this, many valuable projects have been funded through regeneration sources and evaluations have included impressive outputs relating to job creation and physical improvements. This means we have to ask why the same areas continue to score highly on deprivation indicators despite considerable additional expenditure over the years.

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<sup>1</sup> The main report and three smaller country reviews are all available at <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/>

Northern Ireland's regeneration programmes have usually been comprehensive and based on disadvantaged areas, with the exception of social housing investment which has been undertaken separately by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Competition for programme inclusion was never used in the region. Area-based initiatives have consistently addressed income poverty through economic development measures such as job training and creation, business support and the social economy; this has also been a feature of the small number of property-based initiatives over the years. There has been awareness of the importance of tackling social exclusion that pre-dates New Labour's election in 1997, perhaps due to the importance of European Union funding which adopted the concept earlier.

Northern Ireland's anti-poverty strategies, unlike regeneration, have adopted a 'mainstreaming' approach. They have had limited success, although the spatial component of disadvantage has always been recognised and regeneration is seen as an important part of these strategies. Anti-poverty work has always been more explicit than regeneration about the need to close the gap between the Protestant and Catholic communities, perhaps because the statistics in relation to poverty and unemployment are unequivocal whereas the regeneration picture is more complex. The two policy areas are connected strongly through the concepts of social exclusion and multiple deprivation, and (where it can be measured) it is arguable that regeneration has contributed to reducing social exclusion in Northern Ireland. It is less clear that regeneration has contributed to reducing income poverty.

# Regeneration and anti-poverty initiatives

## 2.1. Regeneration and anti-poverty policies 1977-1998

### 2.1.1. *Regeneration initiatives 1977-1998*

Urban renewal in the 1970s was focused on housing improvements and better transport planning (Cebulla, 1994), with no identifiable activity in rural areas. As in the rest of the UK, there was no overarching regeneration strategy in Northern Ireland during this period. Northern Ireland's first targeted urban regeneration initiative was the *Belfast Areas of Need* in 1977, established in response to a report which identified the main problems as high unemployment, poverty, housing condition and overcrowding, lack of skills, and disability (BASSN, 1977 in Cebulla, 1994). In addition, of course, by 1977 residents of these areas had also experienced nearly ten years of the Northern Ireland 'troubles'. Around £12m was targeted on the worst 20 wards in the city, including recreation and leisure centres, environmental improvements projects, schools renovation and neighbourhood business units, administered by statutory authorities (Murtagh, 1995). An updated report in 1987 showed that wards and sub-areas identified as the most disadvantaged in 1977 had remained so (PPRU, 1987 in Cebulla, 1994; Hughes and Carmichael, 1998).

The more substantial *Belfast Action Teams* (BATs) and *Making Belfast Work* (MBW) programmes followed in 1987 and 1988 respectively, and were amalgamated in 1994 (McKibben, 2000). Nine BATs were established between 1987 and 1991 by the Department of the Environment, and spent around £19.7m in areas of social and economic deprivation with the aim of creating employment opportunities, better co-ordination of public services and improving the local environment (Hodgett and Johnson, 2001; Birrell, 1994). An evaluation showed the focus to have been on community development, with only 11 per cent of funding relating to employment (PA Cambridge Consultants, 1992 in Birrell, 1994). The influential *Making Belfast Work* programme was launched in 1988, revised in 1995 and continued in some form until 2000. It covered the 32 most deprived electoral wards in the Greater Belfast area and aimed to improve employment opportunities and quality of life. Although it is generally accepted that the programme included attempts to improve community relations (e.g. Hodgett and Johnson, 2001), it was not stated explicitly in the aims and objectives. The programme was administered by the Northern Ireland Office until 1994 and then transferred to the Department of the Environment. It was intended that any project would be funded for a maximum of three years, after which departments should 'mainstream' successful initiatives, however this did not always happen (Quirk and McLaughlin, 1996).

The early years of MBW were not very successful, making little impact on unemployment and small business start-ups and without much private sector involvement (Birrell and Wilson, 1993 in Hart and White, 1999). The programme was relaunched in 1995 (Table 1) with programme expenditure reorientated towards community benefits and away from enterprise and employment (McKibben, 2000) and with a Partnership Board structure to increase local involvement in implementation and programme development (Hughes and Carmichael, 1998).

**Table 1: Making Belfast Work Mission Statement and implementation framework, 1995**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Mission Statement:</b> To strengthen and better target the efforts being made by the community, the private sector and the Government in addressing the economic, educational, social, health and environmental problems facing people living in the most disadvantaged areas of Belfast. |   |
| <b>Aims</b>  |   |
| To increase opportunities for residents of MBW areas to secure employment  | To improve the quality of life for residents of MBW areas   |
| <b>Mechanisms</b>  |   |
| A strategy focused on promoting the city for investment; access to further education and training; expansion of the social economy and incentives for small businesses.  | A social strategy focused on community development, children and young people, and partnership working. |

Sources: McKibben (2000: 295); Deloitte & Touche (1997).

A later evaluation concluded that 'MBW had been able to deliver a very significant volume of benefits which were relevant to meeting the socio-economic and environmental needs of the residents of inner Belfast' (Deloitte & Touche: 1997:16) and specifically mentioned low deadweight. Programme expenditure of £93.1m between 1992 and 1996 resulted in net additional benefits including: 1,900 jobs created; assistance to 4,130 small businesses; and 16,633 trainees. Although outputs were not compared to wider areas in Northern Ireland, a comparison with the Inner City Task Force Programme in England showed that Task Forces achieved more in terms of job creation and small business assistance, whereas MBW benefitted communities rather more (Deloitte & Touche, 1997). The overall expenditure figure for MBW is estimated at £275m, which funded a total of 350 projects (NIA, 2007).

The parallel programme in Derry/Londonderry was the *Londonderry Initiative* (1988 – 2004), with around £42m spent overall (NIA, 2007). The programme sought to 'enhance the effectiveness of public policy and to accelerate the social, economic and environmental regeneration process of Londonderry' (Cebulla, 1995: 63). There were three strands: a Town Centre Development Programme (TCDP): grant assistance for private sector renovation of derelict land; a Community Action Programme (CAP) which supported fifty community-based projects; and a City Promotion Programme (CPP) for city marketing. CAP projects were located in areas of multiple deprivation as identified in the 1981 Census. The Initiative was managed by the Londonderry Development Office. After a review in 1995-96, more resources were provided directly to the community sector (NIA, 2007). The programme was evaluated in 1993 (Cebulla, 1995). Although a small number of jobs had been created, evaluators found 'no evidence of any marked improvement in the social and economic conditions of residents in the Community Action Programme areas' (p.xii) but commented that this would be unlikely in such a short period and that a more strategic and long-term approach to tackling deprivation was necessary.

Returning to Belfast, the *Laganside Corporation* (1989 – 2007) was established to regenerate Belfast's waterfront. Laganside was an Urban Development Corporation,

however, unlike British UDCs it was not given planning powers (OECD, 2000). The area is now managed by the Department for Social Development. By 1998, funding sources included: £55m from regional government, £29m from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), £40m for Belfast's Millennium Project (the Odyssey Arena) and additional sums from Lottery and EU PEACE funds (OECD, 2000). By the end of 2007, a investment leverage ratio of 1:5 was predicted, to produce 14,700 jobs located in the area (Laganside Corporation, 2007). The programme was largely concerned with improving infrastructure, attracting private investment and building apartments for the private market, and it had little to offer the more disadvantaged communities nearby (Neill, 1995) despite the introduction of a Community Strategy in 2003 (Laganside Corporation, 2003; Sterrett *et al*, 2005). The original redevelopment area of 140 hectares was expanded to include the old municipal Gasworks site and, in 1997, the nearby Cathedral Quarter. The Cathedral Quarter's focus is on cultural and property-based initiatives (McManus and Carruthers, 2014) with a strong 'creative class' emphasis.

As part of the Community Strategy, the *Belfast Gasworks Employment Matching Service (GEMS)* began work in 2002 with the aims of developing links between local employers and the unemployed in the surrounding disadvantaged areas (Hemphill *et al*, 2006). Initial funding of £1.2m was provided by local and central government, the EU and a private donation (Plöger, 2008). The degree of additionality achieved by Belfast GEMS remains unclear; however the project was innovative and operated in areas where few other such services were available. The project continued to expand and to attract funding from other sources; by 2008, it had achieved: jobs for over 1,000 people; employability training courses completed by around 800; and contacts with over 400 employers (Plöger, 2008). It is still in existence today as GEMS NI.

Two targeted schemes ran across Northern Ireland during the 1990s, both funded by the DoE and the International Fund for Ireland (IFI)<sup>2</sup>. They were based on physical regeneration but effectively integrated community involvement: The *Community Economic Regeneration Scheme (CERS)* supported five projects in Belfast and Derry, to provide large centres including both commercial and community facilities (Birrell, 1994). The *Community Regeneration and Improvement Special Programme (CRISP)* supported community-led economic projects, grant for property renovation and environmental improvements in towns and villages (DoENI, 1999). A total of £58m was spent on 99 projects in 87 locations, with grant representing 80 per cent of costs (DSD, 2012a). Both programmes were regarded as having considerable impact including some evidence of cross-community working, with 'strong multiplier effects in areas of disadvantage but limited evidence of the experience being built upon in subsequent policies' (DSD, 2012a:17).

Three programmes for rural areas also ran during this period. The *Rural Development Initiative (RDI)* (1991-99) was co-ordinated by the Department of Agriculture (DANI) and spent £8m on eight Strategy Action Groups to support small projects and lever in other funds. It was implemented by a new arms length body, the Rural Development Council, and community involvement was handled by another new organisation, the Rural Community Network (Greer and Murray, 2003). Both organisations still exist today. Hence funding and implementation structures set rural regeneration apart from its urban counterpart. The RDI achieved impressive outputs including creation of over 1,000 jobs, 450 new business start-ups and the

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<sup>2</sup> 'The International Fund for Ireland (IFI) is an independent organisation established in 1986 and funded by contributions from United States of America, the European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.... The Fund's mission is to tackle the underlying causes of sectarianism and violence and to build reconciliation between people and within and between communities throughout the island of Ireland' <http://www.internationalfundforireland.com/> last accessed 20<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

involvement of 450 community groups in the programme (DANI data in Greer and Murray, 2003). However, as in some other programmes, it is not clear whether these outputs might overlap with those of the EU *INTERREG I and IIA* programmes (economic development in border regions and cross border co-operation respectively) and *LEADER I and II* (rural development), which both ran concurrently from 1991-93 and 1994-99 in their two phases. An assessment of the LEADER II partnership process concluded that, along with quantitative outputs, projects benefitted local partnership working and capacity building, and encouraged a more diversified rural economy (Scott, 2004).

Three further funding schemes contributed to urban regeneration during this period, although their primary purpose was economic development and they were not exclusively targeted according to need: *Urban Development Grant*, the *Environmental Improvements Scheme*, and the *Comprehensive Development Scheme* (NIA, 2007). Jobs were created in all cases although there was concern about deadweight in the first two cases (Cebulla 1994 and 1995; DSD, 2012a). All three schemes are still in existence today.

### *EU funding in Northern Ireland*

EU funding has been of great importance in Northern Ireland. The region had Objective One status from 1989-2006 (three funding periods) and Objective Two transitional funds from 2007-13 and for 2014-20. The two programmes from the 1977-98 period outlined below are URBAN I and the more extensive PEACE I (EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation Programme). It is arguable whether the PEACE programme is a 'regeneration' initiative as it is not targeted exclusively on areas of deprivation, however as will become clear its aims over its three phases have complemented area-based initiatives when implemented in disadvantaged areas.

Northern Ireland's *URBAN I* programme (1994-99) focused on areas of deprivation in Belfast and Derry, and funded projects connected with new economic activities, employment, improvements in health and social security provision, improvement of infrastructure and the environment, and housing refurbishment (Murtagh, 2001a). The Belfast sub-programme consisted of the Early Years Initiative, Greater Shankill Partnership (Protestant area) and Upper Springfield Project, Upper Springfield Development Trust (Catholic area). In Derry the targeted areas were the Catholic Bogside/Brandywell and the Creggan, and the small Protestant enclave, the Fountain. The EU contribution was £13.4m, which attracted match funding to total around £23m (PWC, 2001). The evaluation reported a comparatively small number of jobs created (252, assumed fully additional) but better outputs in other areas such as participation in training courses, the setting up of new community projects, and the involvement of volunteers and community groups (PWC, 2001). Communities had been successfully involved in project development and delivery but had expressed frustration at the slow pace and the bureaucracy; links with other programmes were good including some leverage; community capacity and partnership governance structures improved and the different needs of Catholic and Protestant communities were recognised (Murtagh, 2001a; Hughes and Carmichael, 1998); the comprehensive area-based focus was regarded as beneficial; but few projects were continued as mainstream initiatives; and the baseline analysis needed to be improved (PWC, 2001; DSD, 2003a).

The *EU Special Support for Peace and Reconciliation PEACE I* programme (1995-99) aimed to 'reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation by increasing economic development and employment, promoting urban and rural regeneration, developing cross-border cooperation and extending social inclusion' (PWC, 2003: 8). PEACE I's rationale was that greater

prosperity and social cohesion would assist with peace and reconciliation. However, funds were made available across Northern Ireland (and the border counties of the Irish Republic) rather than targeted on disadvantaged areas. Nonetheless, the programme did make connections between peace, reconciliation and aspects of regeneration and anti-poverty work, unlike earlier programmes such as MBW. Programme funding consisted of €500m overall from the EU, of which €400m went to Northern Ireland (PWC, 2003), with a total expenditure of €667m after match funding (NIA, 2011). Programme management was carried out by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland. The most notable administrative aspect of the programme was the creation of 26 District Partnerships in Northern Ireland, with membership divided equally between local councils, the community and voluntary sectors, and other local interests, such as the private sector and (unusually for the UK) the trades unions. The Partnerships have been acknowledged as a crucial step forward in improving community relations and opportunities for public participation (Hughes *et al*, 1998; Murtagh, 2001b; Buchanan, 2008). However, they only distributed 20 per cent of programme funds.

The PEACE I evaluation revealed that grant expenditure was almost 100 per cent despite the complexity of delivery mechanisms. During the course of the programme the balance of expenditure shifted towards social inclusion and away from attracting investment. Although funding was widely distributed geographically, there was a skewing of resources towards disadvantaged areas. A wide range of activities were funded, for example education, training and development, community development, economic development and childcare provision; jobs created were estimated at 7-8,000 and between 60-70 per cent of participants in training and development projects progressed either to employment, education or further training. The programme increased community involvement and cross-community activities. More resources were allocated to Catholic areas but when patterns of need were considered this did not appear unreasonable. There was little deadweight, with additionality observed in 95 per cent of projects. The programme acted as a 'catalyst for change' but it remained difficult to assess the longer term effect on community relations although it was successful in facilitating participation from previously hard to reach groups including victims of violence and politically motivated ex-prisoners. The lack of an ongoing evaluation plan throughout the programme caused difficulties with the final evaluation (PWC, 2003). Thus the programme may have assisted with community cohesion but would have made less impact on poverty.

### **2.1.2. Anti-poverty initiatives 1977-1998**

Strategic work to address poverty in Northern Ireland during this period consisted only of one programme, Targeting Social Need. In addition, the small but influential *EU Poverty 3 programme* in Brownlow, Co. Armagh (1989-94) aimed to build community cohesion, improve the local economy and to address poverty and deprivation in the area. The programme received £1m from Poverty 3 and match funding brought the total expenditure to £2.2m. Although the programme became an early good practice example in terms of community involvement, partnership working and the social economy, little progress was made in reducing unemployment (Bailey, 1995).

*Targeting Social Need (TSN)* was launched in 1991 and continued until its replacement by New TSN in 1998. TSN attempted to 'mainstream' anti-poverty initiatives by ensuring all government departments orientated their programmes towards those in greatest need. The policy recognised inequality between the two communities, which is more overtly stated than in most regeneration programmes. However, whilst TSN stemmed from a realisation within the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) that 'on all major social and economic indicators, Catholics are worse off than Protestants', the approach adopted by government tried also to encompass

the view held within the NICS that 'socioeconomic need existed in both communities' (NIA, 2001: 1). Priority areas were identified through the Robson index of multiple deprivation, derived mainly from the 1991 Census. TSN was implemented by the government's Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU) in conjunction with the Department of Finance and Personnel; the unclear division of responsibilities was identified as one reason for the lack of effectiveness of the programme (Quirk and McLaughlin, 1996).

TSN acknowledged that poverty and social exclusion were multi-faceted and that cross-departmental action was necessary. However, the programme faced resistance from some departments and was not regarded as having been a success. Reviews found that the majority of government departments thought they were already addressing social need; thus there was little evidence of TSN influencing departmental policy-making and expenditure patterns. Departments did not monitor outputs by religious background and resisted the suggestion that they should do so; therefore it was not possible to measure the results of the programme in relation to one of its key objectives (Quirk and McLaughlin, 1996; Osbourne, 1996). Under these circumstances, Quirk and McLaughlin (1996: 178) identified the gains from targeted regeneration programmes as 'the principal face of TSN'.

### **2.1.3. Analysis of regeneration and anti-poverty policies 1977-1998**

Regeneration during the period 1977-1998 achieved a great deal but faced many of the same issues as elsewhere in the UK along with the major additional factor of the troubles - which interestingly is barely mentioned in most of the literature and evaluation documents. As in the rest of the UK, there was no overarching regeneration strategy at the time. The most common structure was comprehensive area-based initiatives, although housing was generally omitted and dealt with separately by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Areas were selected using indices of multiple deprivation based largely on Census data. A small number of property-based programmes offered limited benefits to disadvantaged areas although they did claim to create jobs. Programmes were skewed towards urban areas, particularly Belfast.

Regeneration initiatives included community development activities but did not emphasise the promotion of better relations between the two communities until PEACE I and to a lesser extent URBAN I in the mid-1990s after the paramilitary ceasefires. The dual problems of weaker community capacity in Protestant areas and statistical evidence of higher deprivation in Catholic areas were identified. A strong partnership ethos was developed (including in rural areas), but without much private sector input. EU and IFI funding was extremely important as part of regeneration funding packages. Evaluations provided quantitative evidence of gains such as job creation and access to training, as well as qualitative gains in relation to capacity building. Improvements to infrastructure were also made. However, questions about the accuracy of some evaluation figures remain, for example whether double counting of outputs took place in some cases in programmes funded by both the Northern Ireland government and the European Union. It remains important to ask about the long-term impact of these regeneration initiatives, given that many of the same areas continue to be identified as disadvantaged today.

It is arguable that neither the small Poverty 3 programme nor TSN were actually anti-poverty initiatives at all. Both shared with regeneration programmes the use of a multiple deprivation index to target resources and were about tackling social exclusion rather than poverty. An important difference between regeneration and anti-poverty policy was the more overt recognition of greater deprivation in Catholic communities by the TSN programme, however the aim of closing the gap proved impossible to measure. Although TSN recognised the multi-faceted element of

poverty and social exclusion, a mainstreaming approach was unsuccessful and arguably less effective in tackling poverty than the regeneration programmes which included job creation and employment training. There is no evidence of organisational synergy between regeneration and anti-poverty policy: urban regeneration was co-ordinated by the Department of the Environment, rural regeneration by the Department of Agriculture, EU programmes by the Department of Finance and Personnel along with aspects of TSN, and TSN also by the Central Community Relations Unit.

The rationales for regeneration and anti-poverty programmes in the period 1977-1998 were very similar, underpinned by the concepts of multiple deprivation and social exclusion. The emphasis on economic development was grounded in an awareness of chronic unemployment problems and the need to encourage private sector investment, a standard UK regeneration approach which almost totally discounted the presence of the troubles and, after 1994, the fragile state of the 'peace process'. A recognition of the importance of community development and social programmes was supplemented after 1994 by a more overt expectation that community relations would improve as a by-product of tackling social exclusion, a hope that now appears somewhat naive.

## **2.2. Regeneration and anti-poverty policies 1999-2013**

The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and the Northern Ireland Act 1998 established devolved regional government in Northern Ireland with a wide range of responsibilities including urban and rural regeneration, housing, planning, health, education, transport planning, economic development and tourism. Welfare benefits are administered under a parity agreement with Great Britain. An enforced coalition of four (now five) political parties and a cross-community voting procedure for controversial issues sought to ensure agreement in a political system based upon national allegiance rather than on social and economic issues. Eleven government departments were set up - now twelve, with the subsequent devolution of the administration of justice. Ministers sit in an Executive and are accountable to scrutiny committees and to the 108-member Northern Ireland Assembly. The Assembly and Executive were suspended between October 2002 and May 2007, during which time the administrative structures were accountable to 'direct rule' Ministers at Westminster and to the UK Parliament. The period of suspension did not prevent a number of important regeneration and anti-poverty initiatives being introduced.

### **2.2.1. Regeneration initiatives 1999-2013**

Following devolution, urban regeneration has become the responsibility of the Department for Social Development (DSD) and rural regeneration is overseen by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). EU programmes are administered by the Special EU Programmes Board (SEUPB), reporting to the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). An ongoing Reform of Public Administration programme aims to reduce the number of local councils from 26 to 11 in 2015 and to devolve responsibility for most regeneration from regional to local level, along with decisions on Area Plans and development control. Social housing will continue to be managed at regional level but a restructuring is taking place in order to bring in more private finance. A promising aspect of the reforms is the introduction of community planning: a process led by the new councils to develop a shared vision for the area, involving a partnership approach and a long-term strategic analysis (DoE, 2013), as has been done with variations in other parts of the UK (Pemberton et al, 2014). Community Plans present an opportunity for local interpretation of both regeneration and anti-poverty priorities, along with the potential for greater synergy between the two policy areas. Strategic approaches to both regeneration and anti-poverty remain at the regional level.

### *Strategic approaches to regeneration*

Northern Ireland's approach to regeneration in this period was influenced by New Labour's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (acknowledged in DSD, 2003a; Adamson (2010) also notes the influence of the Welsh 'Communities First' programme). Labour's 'what matters is what works' approach also led to reconsideration of programme evaluation. A review of urban regeneration performance highlighted inadequacies in data collection which had hampered previous evaluations and recommended better baseline data and co-ordination between agencies (Tyler *et al*, 2002).

Northern Ireland's first regional strategic approach to the regeneration of disadvantaged areas was set out in *People and Place: A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (DSD, 2003b). The Strategy aimed to 'close the gap between the quality of life for people in the most deprived neighbourhoods and the quality of life for the rest of society' through improved access to services and opportunities; and by improving the environment (DSD, 2003b: 21). There were four strategic objectives with associated targets: community renewal; economic renewal; social renewal and physical renewal (although social housing was not included). The programme was also intended to tackle community divisions, so that 'integration of communities must be encouraged and segregation discouraged' (DSD, 2003b:5) and areas which have 'suffered the worst impact of the troubles, must not lose out on the social and economic benefits that the 'peace dividend' has brought for many of our citizens' (DSD, 2003b:2). However, measurement of community cohesion was not included in the programme targets.

Implementation was through 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) within the most deprived ten per cent of urban areas, selected using the Noble Index of Multiple Deprivation (15 in Belfast, six in Derry and 15 in other towns and cities). Areas were not coterminous with ward or electoral district boundaries because the DSD resolved that they should be 'a workable size; must complement and build upon existing initiatives and must 'make sense to the people who lived in them' (DSD, 2010:26). Boundaries were subject to consultation and some existing projects just outside NRAs were supported if they contributed to targets (DSD, 2010). Disadvantaged areas too small to qualify for NRAs (usually under 1,000 population) were funded as Small Pockets of Deprivation (SPODs) and 17 had been identified by 2009. This part of the programme was implemented in conjunction with the Housing Executive (DSD, 2012a). Once NRAs were selected, Neighbourhood Action Plans were put together by Neighbourhood Partnerships for each area, including the community, voluntary, statutory and private sectors. This process took several years. The programme's timescale was originally 7-10 years, but subsequently this was revised to 12 years, to end in 2015.

A Mid-Term Evaluation of 'People and Place' found that a total of £91m had been spent: £62m was revenue and £29m capital, with average expenditure per NRA of £2.5m and average per capita spend of £327 (DSD, 2010). Additionality was generally found to be high. The evaluation was necessarily incomplete because some targets required information from the 2011 Census to measure progress from 2001. However, it was also concluded that the impact of two strategic objectives could not be measured at all. The community renewal targets had not been clearly defined and there was no baseline position; the physical renewal targets did not have baseline data, and in particular it appears that resident satisfaction was not measured. The population of NRAs had fallen by 0.9 per cent whereas Northern Ireland's population had risen by 5.1 per cent, thus arguably NRAs had not been stabilised (DSD, 2010).

There was an increase in jobs in NRA areas (14 per cent compared to eight per cent in non-NRA areas) and a fall in benefit claims for those seeking work, but economic inactivity due to ill health remained high. There were improved education outputs although some health outcomes were not so positive, including an increase in suicide rates to double that of non-NRA areas. Crime and anti-social behaviour had both fallen, and other benefits included improvements to 'sports facilities, childcare facilities, street lighting, community centres, business units, tree planting and play parks' (DSD, 2010: 6). A subsequent composite indicators report (DSD, 2012b) confirmed this picture but noted that the gap had closed further in many areas e.g. crime, education, teenage births. The SPOD programme was evaluated separately. It had funded environmental improvements and community projects which were valued but possibly included high deadweight given the responsibilities of councils and the Housing Executive for these areas. Economic impact was low due to the small size of the SPOD areas (DSD, 2012a).

Therefore there were many lessons to be learnt from the implementation of 'People and Place'. The programme is due to end in 2015. From this date, local councils will be expected to follow the *Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework* (DSD, 2013), with a statutory requirement to report their activities to DSD. There are four policy objectives: to tackle area-based deprivation; to strengthen the competitiveness of our towns and cities; to improve linkages between areas of need and areas of opportunity; and to develop more cohesive and engaged communities (DSD, 2013: iii). The remit is wider than 'People and Place' covering both improvements to disadvantaged areas and property-based regeneration, with a new emphasis on making connections between the two. The Framework emphasises the importance of monitoring and evaluation, perhaps due to the problems experienced in the past and perhaps also because the Framework will be implemented by eleven different councils (separate implementation guidance will be produced). There is a requirement to use the outcomes-based 'Logic Model' and a set of indicators is provided, along with a list of 22 other policies or strategies that the Framework's activities should take into account is provided, including anti-poverty strategies (DSD, 2013). Some work is being done by the voluntary sector to develop outcomes-based evaluation systems appropriate for the URCDF as well as for the new Community Plans (Community Places, 2012; CENI, 2013). The Framework makes clear that finances will be constrained, and provides an annex note on potential 'innovative' sources such as Tax Increment Financing, community bonds, community infrastructure levy, community asset transfer and 'meanwhile use' (short-term use of vacant buildings before permanent replacement activity is found) (DSD, 2013: iii). The Northern Ireland government is particularly interested in encouraging community asset transfer, which is less advanced in Northern Ireland than in other UK jurisdictions (Murtagh et al, 2012).

### *Property-based regeneration*

The Northern Ireland Executive has adopted a neoliberal approach to economic development and urban regeneration (Nagle, 2009; Murtagh, 2011; O'Dowd and Komarova, 2013), and thus raised the profile of property-based regeneration. The *Ilex Urban Regeneration Company* in Derry/Londonderry is Northern Ireland's only URC. Ilex was established in 2003 to create and promote a co-ordinated regeneration of the Derry City Council area and to manage its implementation in co-operation with partners; and to secure the economic, social and physical regeneration of the ex-military sites of Ebrington and Fort George (Ilex, 2012). The refurbished Ebrington site played an important role in the 2013 City of Culture and a pedestrian Peace Bridge, opened in 2012 and funded by PEACE III, has made a considerable positive impact on the city. Expenditure during 2003-2010 totalled £6.3m capital and £15m revenue, plus £14.5m for the Peace bridge. Ilex was reviewed in 2011 and many implementation difficulties were identified (BDO, 2011).

The development of the Fort George site has been taken over by DSD from 2013 (Ilex, 2012) and the One Plan regeneration strategy for the city is jointly implemented by Ilex and the City Council (Derry City Council, 2010). It may be that Ilex will not be sustainable as a separate organization for much longer.

Belfast's most significant recent property-based regeneration project is the *Titanic Quarter* waterfront, led by a private company, Harcourt Developments. The development began in 2005 and Phase One included 475 apartments, offices, a further education college, an hotel and a new building for the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland. Phase Two will include more apartments and other mixed uses, although, due to the economic situation, the very successful 'Titanic Belfast' museum is the only planned element that has been completed to date. A successful film studio has also been developed through 'meantime use' of a derelict building. Public funders have included government departments, Belfast City Council and PEACE III. A Memorandum of Understanding with Belfast City Council in relation to funding for Titanic Belfast was intended to yield local jobs, however the results were disappointing, generally acknowledged to be a result of poor drafting of the agreement. Titanic Quarter is beginning to inspire a sizeable literature, most of which highlights its contribution to the neoliberalisation (market-led development) of the city and is critical of its inability to engage with nearby disadvantaged areas (Neill, 2011; Coyles, 2013; Ramsey, 2013; Muir, 2013; Neill *et al*, 2014). The overall development has not been evaluated.

### *EU programmes*

Two *EU Special Support for Peace and Reconciliation PEACE programmes* ran during this period: PEACE II (2000-06) and PEACE III (2007-13). PEACE IV is likely to run from 2014-2020. The strategic aim of the *PEACE II programme* was 'to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation'; a shortened version of the PEACE I aim. Five programme priorities and 34 measures included a number that were relevant to regeneration including supporting competitiveness, rural diversification, technology support, support for women's employment, the social economy, active citizenship, improving weak community infrastructure, rural areas and capacity building, tourism and rural development (SEUPB, 2000). Although the specific objectives were focused on benefitting those most affected by the conflict (rather than on social exclusion as in PEACE I), much of the cost of the conflict had been borne in disadvantaged areas.

A total of €978.5m was available, including 25 per cent match funding from other sources. A new Managing Authority, the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) was established for both Irish jurisdictions under the Good Friday Agreement. There were organisational difficulties with the programme which led to its extension from four to six years. The successful PEACE I District Partnership structure was replaced by Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs), which were responsible for the administration of Programme Priority 3 (locally based regeneration and development strategies) in Northern Ireland (around €86m); unlike the District Partnerships, LSPs had no responsibility for spending on social inclusion. LSP membership reduced civil society representation from two-thirds to half. The new governance arrangements were unpopular with community groups, who saw themselves being marginalised compared with PEACE I (Acheson and Williamson, 2007; Buchanan, 2008).

Evaluations revealed positive programme outcomes despite two main difficulties. First, the context was problematic, with the Northern Ireland Assembly suspended from 2002-2007, evidence of deepening community divisions, and a sluggish economy (PWC, 2005). LSPs felt particularly unsupported given the political vacuum (Navigate Change Consulting, 2009). Second, complex administrative processes were off-putting and may have led to spending delays (PWC, 2005). The evaluation

also suggested a more detailed assessment of the contribution of projects towards peace and reconciliation (PWC, 2005), a point that was taken up in the evaluation approach to PEACE III (NIA, 2013). Finally, greater effort was needed to involve the private sector in partnership working (PWC, 2005). It does not appear that a full ex post evaluation of PEACE II was carried out, however, a supplementary impact report (McClure Watters, 2006) provided some interim outputs for 2000-2006, including: support for almost 5,400 small businesses, resulting in the creation of almost 1,950 jobs; and 46,000 project participants, of which 25,000 were in rural areas (SEUPB press release, 24 November 2006). A separate evaluation of LSPs found they had improved partnership working and cross-community contacts, as well as achieving good programme delivery outputs. LSP members considered the partnerships to have had a positive impact on peace and reconciliation (Navigate Change Consulting, 2009). All in all, 'peace building, economic renewal and capacity building have all been positively influenced by the programme' (NIA, 2011:5).

The current *PEACE III Programme (2007-13)* is smaller than its predecessors (€225m EU funds; €333m overall) because from 2007 Northern Ireland (and the border counties of the Irish Republic) were designated as areas in transition away from Objective 1. The Operational Programme described the continuing barriers to reconciliation, in the context of a weak economy, as the programme rationale (SEUPB, 2007a). The aim remained the same as PEACE II, but focused more specifically on addressing the physical segregation of communities, with a commitment to prioritise 'areas and groups that have been affected by the conflict and experience particular problems of segregation, marginalisation and isolation' (SEUPB, 2007a: 49), both urban and rural. Unlike previous PEACE programmes, there was no template for partnership structures.

A new supplementary evaluation feature was introduced into PEACE III, the Aid for Peace model (PWC, 2007; Bush, 2009), which was adopted to more accurately assess the peacebuilding impact of an intervention through four main components: analysing the peacebuilding needs of an area, defining the peacebuilding relevance of the intervention, assessing the effects of the conflict on the intervention (i.e. the risk that the intervention will not succeed within its context) and evaluating the peacebuilding effects of the project including an assessment of project indicators (NIA, 2013). The mid-term evaluation of PEACE III reported problems with the new approach. There had been difficulty translating the new system into measurable outcomes and outputs, and some project-specific indicators had no targets. For example, two large projects to encourage shared space were regarded as having revitalised disadvantaged areas, however economic impact could not be measured as no indicators had been set, such as number of jobs created (Cartmin, 2013).

The smaller *URBAN II* programme (2002-06) ran in inner North Belfast, targeted for its inner city decline, deprivation indicators and severe community divisions (Dunlop *et al*, 2002). The aim of the programme was 'to regenerate North Belfast into a vibrant, safe and viable urban community for its people, its environment and its economy' (DSD, 2001:42), through development of physical, social and 'people' resources. Funds available totalled €17.1m, of which €10.6m was provided from the EU (DSD, 2001); the programme was underspent at €13.8m (Murtagh and Copeland, 2008). The programme was implemented by the North Belfast Partnership Board, reporting to DSD's Belfast Regeneration Office, the Department of Finance and Personnel and also to a locally based multi-agency Monitoring Committee including community representatives and politicians (DSD, 2001).

URBAN II took place at a difficult time in North Belfast. Civil unrest was acute, especially during the early period of the programme; the development of large capital projects was also adversely affected by the economic situation. Therefore the grants profile was different than expected, with a larger number of small grants (Murtagh

and Copeland, 2008) and this may have contributed to the overall programme underspend. However, benefits still included: the involvement of 115 community organisations; one large and 26 local refurbishment projects; €460,000 leverage of private funds into the area; 28 community organisations supported; 876 beneficiaries of training, counselling, guidance or employment aid, of whom 20 per cent gained employment; 11 social economy projects supported, with 20 jobs created. The community-based Monitoring Committee worked well and contributed to improved dialogue between the two communities. There was limited deadweight and displacement (Murtagh and Copeland, 2008). However, the Operational Programme acknowledged links with PEACE II, and smaller programmes (see section below) such as the North Belfast Housing Strategy, Community Empowerment Partnerships and the refurbishment of Crumlin Road Gaol all attracted different funding sources, which raises questions about the efficiency of focusing this scale of resources on a very conflicted area within a short space of time.

### *Rural programmes*

Rural development has remained heavily dependent on EU programmes. *INTERREG III (2000-06)* and *INTERREG IV (2007-13)* were programmes to support economic development in border areas, thus including some urban settlements although much of Ireland's border area is rural. The aim of INTERREG III was 'to promote sustainable integrated regional development across the eligible region...by concentrating on the strategic dimension of cross-border development which involves and benefits local communities' (DFP, 2002: 61). The approach went beyond economic development through the production of integrated local development strategies including the promotion of civic and community networking to improve social cohesion (DFP, 2002). The programme was managed by the SEUPB, spent €183m and funded 420 projects (RSM McClure Watters, 2013). Despite a two-year delay in launching, overall objectives were achieved (NIA, 2011). A case study analysis concluded that the programme had supported rural business, promoted tourism and the knowledge-based economy, upgraded the infrastructure and improved access to cross-border services such as health. Additionality was high (Panteia and CSES Strategy and Evaluation Services, 2009). The current *INTERREG IV (2007-13)* has similar intentions, with the eligible area extended to include the West Coast of Scotland. Priorities include developing a competitive economy, tourism, social cohesion and improved infrastructure (SEUPB, 2007b). The programme allocation was €256m. The mid-term evaluation noted 851 projects approved with €219m committed expenditure (RSM McClure Watters, 2013).

The *LEADER+ programme (2000-06)* has been significant as much for its working methods as for its outputs. The programme concentrated on support for private sector micro-enterprise development, with the continuation of the Local Action Groups network approach from LEADER II. This 'LEADER approach' has been mainstreamed in Axis 4 of the *Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-13*, as a capacity-building measure to encourage innovative projects. The RDP is a requirement under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, which along with DARD is the funder. The RDP is the closest approximation to a strategic approach to rural regeneration and takes forward aspects of DARD's Rural Strategy 2007-13. The RDP is constructed around four Axes, to: improve the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry; improve land management; improve the quality of life in rural areas and encourage diversification of economic activity; and implement the LEADER approach (DARD, 2013). A mid-term evaluation found that limited data existed to assess the social and economic infrastructure development axis, however projects were taking place in rural areas of multiple deprivation and, despite concerns about its efficiency, £9m of grants had been allocated via the LEADER approach. Over 5,000 people had participated in training and over £16m had been provided to the food processing sector (NISRA and

RDC, 2009). The RDP is to continue during the 2014-20 period, although a disagreement in the NI Executive about funding allocations will mean a reduction in the amount available for rural development and environmental initiatives. Under the Reform of Public Administration, local councils will play a larger part in delivering the RDP and in supporting disadvantaged rural communities more generally. However, a complete transfer of function will not take place.

### *Smaller regeneration programmes*

A number of smaller regeneration programmes were instigated during this period, some for the whole region and others for urban areas only. Some were specific and others responded to need in particular small areas. Examples include:

- 1999-2009: Health Action Zones (UK initiative), four projects in Northern Ireland. External review (not available) carried out in 2005 which recommended continued funding. Integrated into the work of the Public Health Agency in 2009.
- 2000-2012: Northern Ireland Housing Executive Housing and Regeneration Strategies, eight 4-year area-based strategies including new and improved housing plus community development (Muir, 2004).
- 2001: Sure Start (UK initiative), co-ordination of health, education and parental support services to assist the development of pre-school children. Considered effective (e.g. Education and Training Inspectorate, 2010). In 2013, 35 programmes are available in Northern Ireland, covering the top 20 per cent most disadvantaged areas measure by the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is planned to extend services to the 25 per cent most disadvantaged wards by 2015.
- 2003-09: Community Empowerment Partnerships (CEPs), North Belfast only – 13 projects £2.3m expenditure, evaluation showed patchy impact given the number of other programmes operating in the area (Murtagh *et al*, 2009).
- 2005: Regeneration of Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood Park, North Belfast – successful Gaol refurbishment as a tourist attraction but the rest of the site has been delayed due to community disagreements about location of housing. A Community Hub is in development, led by Belfast City Council and funded by Peace III (O'Dowd and Komarova, 2011; Muir, 2014).
- 2006-2015: Areas at Risk Programme – areas just outside Neighbourhood Renewal criteria to prevent further economic and social decline. 39 areas have received support with limited impact on underlying problems (DSD, 2012a).
- 2006-09: Reimaging Communities – to tackle visible signs of sectarianism and racism, with a particular emphasis on the replacement of existing paramilitary murals with more positive imagery. Led by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, £3.8m, positive outcomes identified including improved physical environment and contribution to local capacity building (Independent Research Solutions, 2009).
- 2011: Social Investment Fund - Aims to reduce poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration in targeted areas across NI (OFMDFM, 2011a). Budget £80m. Selection of target areas has been problematic and the first tranche of funding was not announced until February 2014, when £33m was allocated to 23 projects covering employment, childcare, fuel poverty, health and infrastructure (OFMDFM web site).
- 2013: Housing Led Regeneration Programme – six pilot areas will develop initiatives in conjunction with local residents to include improved housing, education and employability projects, tackling anti-social behaviour.

Many of the above programmes will connect with Northern Ireland's primary mainstream employability programme, Steps to Work (to be replaced by Steps to Success), which is mandatory for longer term Jobseekers' Allowance claimants and available on a voluntary basis to others including non-claimants. The Programme began in 2008 and there have been just over 15,000 participants, of whom 35 per cent have found employment (DEL, 2013).

### 2.2.2. *Anti-poverty initiatives 1999-2013*

After devolution, Northern Ireland's government continued a mainstreaming approach to anti-poverty work, focused on tackling social exclusion rather than simply income poverty. The over-arching programmes New Targeting Social Need (TSN), Lifetime Opportunities and Delivering Social Change have been the responsibility of OFMDFM. Rural poverty remains the responsibility of DARD and fuel poverty is led by DSD in conjunction with the Housing Executive. Many other Assembly level policies and strategies contribute towards tackling poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland. A recent review identified over ninety examples across all government departments (NIA, 2012).

In Northern Ireland, poverty levels remain high and there is still a difference in the extent of poverty between the two main communities (MacInnes *et al*, 2012). There is very little information about poverty and social exclusion in minority ethnic groups (Wallace *et al*, 2013). The economy remains weak in relation to the rest of the UK, and more dependent on the public sector. Welfare reform will have a big impact (Beatty and Fothergill, 2013) despite difference in implementation of the bedroom tax/spare room subsidy, which may only apply to new tenants. Therefore anti-poverty strategy in NI is being implemented in the context of a still divided society and a weak economy.

#### *Over-arching programmes*

New TSN was launched by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in July 1998. It reiterated the message that had appeared since 1991 about inequality between the two communities, making clear that need would be measured objectively through deprivation indicators, so that:

'while not discriminating in favour of one community and against the other, therefore, New TSN should contribute, over time, to the erosion of differentials between the communities' (New TSN Unit, 1998: 2).

The mainstreaming approach was retained and the New TSN Unit in the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister was responsible for co-ordination, with government departments required to produce 3-year Action Plans (NIA, 2001). The Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) strand identified Travellers, teenage parents, minority ethnic groups and access to services for all at risk of social exclusion, as areas for priority action (NIA, 2001). A further imperative for New TSN, and particularly PSI, was the Council of Europe's decision to require National Action Plans for Social Inclusion from all member states from 2001 (OFMDFM, 2005).

Despite some successes, an interim evaluation revealed that the 'old TSN' problems remained (Deloitte & Touche, 2003a; see also Deloitte & Touche 2003b and 2003c). There was no common definition of social need to inform departmental action plans, leading to variable interpretation of the policy direction and in particular differences about the extent to which employment should be prioritised. Some departments argued that they already prioritised disadvantaged groups or that they were constrained under the parity agreement. Consultation with non-departmental bodies and with the voluntary sector both highlighted lack of additional resources for the

programme as an impediment to its effectiveness. There were demands for a more meaningful regional strategy to address poverty and social exclusion (Deloitte & Touche, 2003a).

OFMDFM responded to the evaluation with two phases of extensive consultation. New research had found that 30 per cent of Northern Ireland's households were in poverty (defined as lacking at least three essentials) compared to 24 per cent in Great Britain, and also that differences between Protestant and Catholic communities had decreased although an unemployment differential still existed (Hillyard *et al*, 2003). Consultation documents proposed an outcomes-based approach with a new emphasis on financial exclusion and the working poor, with the overall strategic objective of improving the income and living conditions of the most disadvantaged (OFMDFM, 2004; 2005). A reduced number of targets was proposed (which still resulted in a substantial monitoring task) around three priorities: building capacity to participate in the labour market; increasing employment opportunities and removing barriers to employment; and dealing with financial hardship. Despite proven need, and the acknowledged shortcomings of New TSN, it was proposed that the mainstreaming approach would continue. Consultation revealed 'a broad consensus about the need to prioritise child poverty, maintain a focus on promoting social inclusion and the need for long-term targets with resources allocated to meet these' (OFMDFM, 2006: 3).

The current '*Lifetime Opportunities*' *Anti-Poverty and Social Exclusion Strategy* (OFMDFM, 2006) aims to work towards the elimination of poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland by 2020 and to eradicate child poverty by 2020 (both EU targets). It is structured around a number of 'challenges' (i.e. objectives), many of which are very relevant to regeneration: eliminating poverty, eliminating social exclusion, tackling area based deprivation, eliminating poverty from rural areas, a shared future, tackling inequality in the labour market, tackling health inequalities, and tackling cycles of deprivation. Four target groups are identified: early years, children and young people, working age adults and older citizens. The impact of multiple deprivation was specifically identified and the Strategy references 'People and Place' (DSD, 2003b) extensively. As with the PEACE programmes, the policy connection between better community relations and prosperity is made. There is reference to annual monitoring arrangements, however, the Monitoring Framework including baseline data did not appear until 2010 (OFMDFM, 2010). There is no evidence of annual reports, and there has been no evaluation.

Two recent small programmes to add to 'Lifetime Opportunities' are first, the 2011-15 *Social Protection Fund* of £20m a year, to be used to cushion the impact of welfare reform. Due to delays in passing the legislation for Northern Ireland, the first year's budget was used to fund a fuel poverty scheme instead. Second, OFMDFM's *Delivering Social Change* programme aims to develop a Social Strategy which will parallel the Executive's Economic Strategy. Six 'signature projects' involve education, family support and the social economy (OFMDFM web site; see also OFMDFM, 2013). It is unclear how, if at all, this programme interacts with Lifetime Opportunities or indeed with the more specific Child Poverty Strategy outlined below.

#### *Other programmes: fuel poverty, rural poverty and child poverty*

Three specific poverty-related areas also have their own strategies, even though they are included in 'Lifetime Opportunities'. Fuel poverty is a serious issue in Northern Ireland due to higher energy costs and the use of more expensive domestic heating oil rather than gas for central heating. Poor insulation also plays a part (NIA, 2009). Fuel poverty strategy is the responsibility of the Department for Social Development (DSD). The 2004 document *Ending Fuel Poverty: A Strategy for Northern Ireland* planned to end fuel poverty in vulnerable households by 2010 and

in non-vulnerable households in 2016. Various inter-departmental committees have attempted to co-ordinate action on fuel poverty over the years, for example the Fuel Poverty Task Force in 2008 which led to a review of the 2004 Strategy (NIA, 2009; Liddell *et al*, 2011). The current Strategy, *Warmer Healthier Homes: A New Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland*, has the more modest aim 'to target available resources on those vulnerable households who are most in need of help', whilst also stating that 'the eradication of fuel poverty must remain as a core goal of our efforts' through cross-departmental partnership working (DSD, 2011: 4). The Strategy also continues funding for the Warm Homes scheme for owner occupiers and private rented sector, which had been introduced in the 2004 Strategy. An important link with area-based regeneration initiatives has been made through the work of Walker *et al* (2012) who have devised a methodology for identifying clusters of households at risk of fuel poverty, and Liddell and Langdon (2013) who carried out the initial research to target households for Warm Homes grants, for those whose fuel poverty could be overlooked as they are not social housing tenants.

The 2009-11 *Rural Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Framework* aimed 'to identify where gaps exist in the fight against poverty and exclusion in rural areas, and sets out how they might be addressed through innovative, partnership led approaches with other government departments and stakeholders' (DARD, 2009: 3). Four key priorities were identified: fuel poverty, community development, rural transport and access, and childcare. There was also a programme to encourage proposals from local groups for projects to address poverty and social exclusion. The programme had a budget of £10m (DARD, 2009). Its successor, *Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework* (2012) is worth up to £16m and includes action similar to the previous period with the addition of initiatives on youth employability and entrepreneurship, health checks, and services for older people (NIE, 2012).

Child poverty remains a particular problem in Northern Ireland (Horgen, 2007; Horgen and Monteith, 2009; Horgen, 2011). *Improving Life Chances: The Child Poverty Strategy* is the response to the UK's Child Poverty Act 2010 and reiterates the target of eradication of child poverty by 2020 which also appears in 'Lifetime Opportunities'. The overall aim is 'to provide the opportunity for all our children and young people to thrive and to address the causes and consequences of disadvantage' (OFMDFM, 2011b: 10). Key policy areas include education, childcare, health, family support, housing, neighbourhoods, financial support and parental employment and skills. The Strategy covers the period 2011-14 with a progress report required in 2012; in fact to date two annual reports have been produced. During this period, child poverty rates have fallen to 21 per cent, but this is acknowledged to be due to a fall in the UK's median income rather than an increase in living standards (OFMDFM, 2013). Recent projections of relative and absolute poverty rates to the target date of 2020 have concluded that any previous gains will be reversed due to welfare reform and low wages, therefore the Child Poverty Act target will not be met (Brown *et al*, 2013).

### **2.2.3. Analysis of regeneration and anti-poverty initiatives 1999-2013**

Devolution in Northern Ireland was regarded as a positive step because it involved politicians from the two communities governing together, albeit in an enforced coalition. However, the political context during the period 1998-2013 was not always straightforward. The Assembly and Executive were suspended between 2002 and 2007, a period in which nevertheless a number of important policies were agreed included 'People and Place' (DSD, 2003b) and 'Lifetime Opportunities' (OFMDFM, 2006). Soon after the re-establishment of regional government, the global financial crisis began to impact on an already weak economy. In addition, violence and civil unrest did not completely cease although it was obviously at a much lower level than during the troubles.

In both policy areas, but particularly in regeneration, a large number of sometimes overlapping initiatives have been introduced: for example, the many programmes in North Belfast; the overlap in Derry/Londonderry between the Ilex URC and the City Council; and the place of 'Lifetime Opportunities' as an overarching anti-poverty and social exclusion strategy when separate strategies also exist for fuel poverty, rural areas and children. It might have been thought that the influence of other UK jurisdictions would have led to a more streamlined approach, however, the number of initiatives increased compared to the pre-devolution period. In regeneration, it is notable that the focus on the most disadvantaged 10 per cent (in itself, interpreted loosely) has been supplemented by programmes for areas just above this threshold (Areas at Risk) and for small areas that may have been overlooked (SPODs), thus widening areas of potential benefit should there be complaints about allocations being made disproportionately to one community. Adamson (2010: 20) noted from interviews that 'any actions on one side of the sectarian divide had to be replicated on the other' and that Assembly politicians were perceived by officials to be more interested in ensuring resources for their community rather than supporting responses to objective need.

Several regeneration evaluations during this period identified problems such as a lack of baseline data; targets, outputs or outcomes that could not be measured easily; programme delays; inefficiency and poor management (DSD, 2010; PWC, 2005; Cartmin, 2013) and in one case underspending (Murtagh and Copeland, 2008). Instances of overlapping programmes in the same target areas raise the possibility of unidentified deadweight and displacement. The need for a more focused approach to evaluation had been identified in the early 2000s (Tyler et al, 2002) but had not been adopted at that time. For example, the comprehensive approach to programme evaluation adopted by England's New Deal for Communities (NDC) could have been a model. The NDC evaluation included household questionnaires in both NDC areas and in other equivalent non-funded areas, thus strengthening the qualitative element as well as including rigorous use of quantitative data (Lawless et al, 2010). More recently, attempts to improve have been evident, for example in the PEACE III programme (although initially unsuccessful) and the Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework. The evaluation of both process and outcomes, and the impact on community cohesion, will continue to be important as regeneration transfers to the local councils in 2015. Community planning may provide a new incentive for the use of outcomes models, but it will be important to achieve a synthesis between assessment of regeneration and (wider) community planning achievements which could include local anti-poverty initiatives.

Overarching anti-poverty strategies since 1998 continued to adopt a mainstreaming approach, as did the child poverty strategy, thus making them very reliant on other departments (and, after 2015, local councils) for results. All these programmes have a strong connection with regeneration policy and strategies through the concept of social exclusion, with anti-poverty strategies continuing to include area-based multiple deprivation in their objectives or priorities.

Organisational synergy under devolution appears to have remained weak despite cross-departmental working parties, and indeed the evaluation of New TSN found many of the same implementation difficulties from TSN still remained. The recent Delivering Social Change initiative appears to be an acknowledgement that there is a need to simplify and prioritise anti-poverty work, but it is unclear how the production of a new Social Strategy will impact on existing strategies. The difference in poverty levels between the two main communities remains a concern; the continuing spatial segregation of the two communities in disadvantaged areas is not as prominent an issue in regeneration policy, although it is acknowledged.

# Conclusions

## 3.1. Regeneration initiatives over time

In Northern Ireland, all regeneration programmes since the late 1970s retained a comprehensive approach (with the exception of social housing) and a commitment to social and economic benefit, and there has been no alteration in this approach since the change of UK government in 2010. Even the Laganside UDC was a modified version without planning powers and with an increased community focus during the 1990s. The recent privately run Titanic Quarter development is the exception that proves the rule. There may be a number of reasons for this consistency. Northern Ireland's weak economy has meant that improving employment prospects has always been important; social deprivation such as poverty and poor health has been exacerbated by the troubles; and the emphasis on community development and public participation provides an implied or, later, more overt connection with the policy imperative to improve relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities. Programmes have usually been targeted on areas of multiple deprivation, although with a certain amount of leeway to allow for political concerns and without competitive bidding for programme funds. Resource allocation has always been tightly controlled by government and again this may well be in order to ensure the perception of fairness. EU and rural initiatives, which on the surface were not so carefully targeted, have in practice skewed their funds towards deprived areas. The fragmentation of initiatives identified before devolution continued thereafter, despite the introduction of a strategic urban regeneration approach through 'People and Place'. The separation of social housing regeneration programmes from the comprehensive approach has not proved problematic because the Housing Executive has run these programmes efficiently and developed good connections with other agencies and with communities. However, the restructuring of social housing will abolish the Housing Executive in its present form, and it is unclear whether the new housing management bodies will be able to continue this tradition.

Some post-devolution evaluations identified problems with measuring performance, evident in the greater focus on outcome-related evaluation. However, the connection between regeneration and community relations, especially in the EU-funded programmes, means that it is important in Northern Ireland to retain an element of process evaluation. Adamson (2010:20) concluded that there had been 'a significant lack of impact of regeneration policy in Northern Ireland'. Certainly, despite some gains, the same areas continue to feature in deprivation indicators. Given that regeneration in Northern Ireland has been as much concerned with 'people' as with 'place', it is unclear why. It may be that people who do better leave these areas; perhaps training courses are not matched to the types of jobs actually available; or, given the levels of worklessness connected with ill-health including the trauma of the troubles, perhaps not enough attention is paid to the situation of those who are not in the labour market. The issue of intractable spatial deprivation is by no means unique to Northern Ireland; rather, it is at the heart of regeneration policy and practice.

### **3.2. Anti-poverty initiatives and regeneration**

Regeneration and anti-poverty have been developed and implemented separately, within complex government structures including twelve regional level departments and a larger number of quangos than in the rest of the UK. Both before and after devolution, anti-poverty work has been the responsibility of central departments (Northern Ireland Office and OFMDFM), as befits its mainstreaming approach. However, work on rural poverty continues to be led by DARD and fuel poverty by DSD, providing potentially closer links with regeneration especially in the rural case. Urban regeneration was led by the Department of the Environment in NI before devolution and since then by the DSD; rural regeneration has been administered separately by the Department of Agriculture and post-1998 by DARD. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has also played important strategic and implementation roles over the years. OFMDFM's recent involvement in the administration of the Social Investment Fund, presented as a regeneration initiative, appears to be duplicating other targeted initiatives. In addition, EU programmes are administered by the SEUPB, with the additional involvement of the Department of Finance and Personnel, and urban regeneration (but not rural) will become the responsibility of restructured local councils in 2015. There is no sign that efficiency measures will include a reduced number of government departments.

The concepts of social exclusion and multiple deprivation have led to a clear understanding of spatial disadvantage as part of anti-poverty initiatives, dating back to TSN's commitment to focus public expenditure more closely on areas of need and identification of priority areas through deprivation indicators. Regeneration programmes such as Making Belfast Work and the Londonderry Initiative were claimed as successes for TSN, in comparison with the failure of the mainstreaming approach across government overall. New TSN carried forward this perspective. But in each case, spatial deprivation was only part of the picture, and correctly so. The 2006 Lifetime Opportunities strategy retained the dual focus on spatial disadvantage and excluded groups, as did the rural strategy, however the Child Poverty and Fuel Poverty strategies are more based on individual circumstances. A wider awareness of programmes across government that contribute to alleviating poverty has been demonstrated recently (OFMDFM, 2012; NIA, 2012). It is striking that anti-poverty initiatives have been more overt about the difference in the poverty level between Protestant and Catholic communities, again back to the start of TSN. The issue is more complex when considering social exclusion, for example due to educational underachievement in disadvantaged Protestant areas.

### **3.3. Regeneration's contribution to anti-poverty objectives**

It is possible to conclude that regeneration has contributed to reducing social exclusion, although the same pattern of spatial disadvantage persists. The emphasis on community development and projects such as childcare have focused on creating community resilience and social capital, which have helped to address social exclusion and 'getting by' in poor areas. The concepts of social exclusion and multiple deprivation have been shared between the two policy areas and regeneration policies are referred to regularly in anti-poverty strategies.

It is less clear that regeneration has contributed to the reduction of income poverty. Regeneration programmes have consistently emphasised the importance of economic development, training and education, job creation, and the social economy. The programmes themselves have also created jobs. Many regeneration programmes have produced impressive outputs relating to job creation, access to training, and business support. Examples include Making Belfast Work, the Rural Development Initiative, LEADER II, PEACE I, People and Place, and PEACE II. Yet

poverty levels in Northern Ireland remain high and the context for both regeneration and anti-poverty initiatives is becoming more difficult. The post-financial crisis economic weakness in Northern Ireland will be exacerbated further by upcoming public sector restructuring and welfare reform.

### **3.4. 'Localism' in Northern Ireland**

It is difficult to conceptualise what localism means in the Northern Ireland context. The state has reacted to the history of conflict by removing many services from local democratic control in the early 1970s, and the current Reform of Public Administration will still leave housing, social services and education in the hands of appointed boards. To illustrate the contrast, development control decisions in Northern Ireland are currently taken by local offices of the regional level Planning Service, in consultation with local councils. The power will be delegated to local councils in 2015, however strategic planning and development control decisions for economically significant applications will be retained at regional level. Uniquely within the UK and Ireland, 'planning gain' provisions do not include social or affordable housing.

There is no equivalent of England's Localism Act 2011. The idea that local councils could vary policies would be regarded as very problematic within the equality provisions of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act, which greatly influence public administration practice. Decision-making in relation to regeneration programmes continues to be affected by sectarian divisions in society, for example the selection of eligible areas and structures of participation. These divisions are the basis of political structures and can lead to accusations of unfairness in resource allocation, which can make officials cautious. On the other hand, no party is championing a cuts agenda; the clientist approach to protecting resources for one's 'community' leads to a reluctance to cut back on public services.

Local government currently has little power in Northern Ireland and it appears that new responsibilities in 2015 will be implemented within tightly controlled guidance. This has particular implications for urban regeneration, as the responsibility for implementation and local strategy will move to the councils but within the regional level Urban Regeneration and Community Development Framework. Quangos such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are also coming under closer scrutiny, and in the case of the Housing Executive this is leading to a major restructuring which will separate out management, strategic and regulatory functions. The large and well organised voluntary and community sector is influential in policy development, for example its role in the anti-poverty strategy consultation in 2004-05. There are instances of local level voluntary or community sector service delivery, such as social economy businesses. But the Coalition's 'Big Society' agenda has not gained any traction in the region. Unelected Partnership bodies have strengthened the influence of the community and voluntary sector at the expense of local councillors, but at the same time they have been able to involve groups and individuals who would avoid local politics due to its territorial nature.

Therefore policy-making and implementation in Northern Ireland could be seen as 'hollowed out', with the more powerful civil society actors in direct contact with regional level senior official and politicians and local government (with the possible exception of Belfast and Derry) seen as less influential. In general, administrative structures are more complex than the rest of the UK and decision-making can be slow. This has affected regeneration (as acknowledged by Adamson, 2010) and to a lesser extent anti-poverty work. Despite a recent move towards outcome-oriented programmes, regeneration in Northern Ireland continues with the separately funded comprehensive area-based approach that has been abandoned in England, without

becoming more collectivist and social democratic in its policies as can be seen in Scotland and Wales.

### **3.5. The future**

The question of how regeneration initiatives might better contribute to anti-poverty strategy in future is similar in Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK, albeit played out in a different context. Northern Ireland's economy remains comparatively weak within the UK and all policy continues to be implemented against the background of sectarian division and occasional low level violence. Devolved government appears stable after a shaky start, however the system of enforced coalition and territorial politics leads to slow and cautious decision-making by politicians and officials alike. Structural change after 2015 will move the majority of regeneration programmes to the local councils, whereas anti-poverty strategies will remain largely at regional level.

Addressing 'poverty' may be defined as tackling either material forms of poverty (income or deprivation) or its broader social dimensions (social exclusion) (Crisp et al., 2014). In Northern Ireland, anti-poverty strategies have always concentrated on social exclusion, including attempts to decrease income poverty through improving access to employment. Therefore regeneration has been identified consistently as an important aspect of anti-poverty work. Regeneration has involved targeted resources whereas anti-poverty strategies have been based largely on a generally ineffective 'mainstreaming' approach. With a few exceptions, regeneration initiatives consult with local people whereas it is arguable that the anti-poverty agenda has been captured by elites, meaning that it is hard to determine the kind of assistance people in poverty might actually want. The new councils have scope to incorporate anti-poverty objectives more overtly into their regeneration strategies and to include specific income poverty outcomes in their evaluation approach, along with increasing community involvement in the policy area through the community planning process. However, the complexity of Northern Ireland's public administration system may well continue to prevent effective joined up action.

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