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## **ABSTRACT**

Gail Anderson

### **HOUSING-LED REGENERATION IN EAST DURHAM: UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNANCE, POLITICS**

This research investigates housing-led regeneration in the post-industrial area of East Durham to examine whether a gap exists between policy expectation and regeneration, on-the-ground. By engaging with the themes of uneven development and stigma and marginality, the thesis argues that housing-led regeneration policies have exacerbated already existing unevenness and marginality, in their bid to regenerate areas and promote sustainability. This process is played out in the face of shifting economic and political issues. The housing and wider economic market boom of the early to mid 2000's witnessed a shift in the emphasis placed on housing as a driver to renewal in East Durham; an approach which was sharply hit by the housing market slump, credit crunch and accompanying austerity measures. These funding cuts placed a greater emphasis on the private sector to fund (amongst other things) housing. In addition a rescaling of governing structures from regional and local authority to sub-regional has, the research contends, further influenced and shaped uneven development and marginality. Through the lens of post-political theory, this thesis engages with the relationships between those involved in housing-led regeneration to examine conflict within the process, to show how consensus is managed.

Empirical data was gathered using the case study of East Durham. This involved the examination of secondary data in the form of government publications, official statistics, and media report. The data is derived from extensive, in-depth interviewing of a sample of representatives from County Durham Unitary; builders and developers; private surveyors and planners; private landlords; social housing providers; property managers; central government agents; and third sector representatives. A range of county, local and community meetings and forums were attended to provide an ethnographic insight into the process of governing and the relationships which exist within the area.

**HOUSING-LED REGENERATION IN EAST DURHAM:  
UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNANCE, POLITICS**

**Gail Anderson**

**This thesis is submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of Geography**

**Durham University**

**2015**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AAP	Area Action Partnership
ABI	Area Based Initiatives
ALMO	Arms Length Management Organisation
ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
CDHF	County Durham Housing Forum
CDP	County Durham Plan
DCC	Durham County Council
EDTF	East Durham Task Force
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EZ	Enterprise Zone
GONE	Government Offices of the North East
GOR	Government Offices for the Regions
HARP	Housing And Regeneration Partnership
HAT	Housing Action Trust
HMR	Housing Market Renewal
LDF	Local Development Framework
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
NDC	New Deal for Communities
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance

QUANGO	Quasi-Nongovernmental Organisations
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDF	Regional Development Fund
RES	Regional Economic Strategy
RHS	Regional Housing Strategy
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SCP	Sustainable Communities Plan
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
UDC	Urban Development Corporations
UTF	Urban Task Force
UWP	Urban White Paper

## **STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT**

*“The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.”*

*Gail Anderson, 2014*

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## **DEDICATION**

For Daphne Anderson, Stuart Anderson and Gareth Wilkinson who made this all possible.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

The core topic of this research is housing-led regeneration, centred on a post mining, post industrial setting. As Cameron (2006:10) indicates:

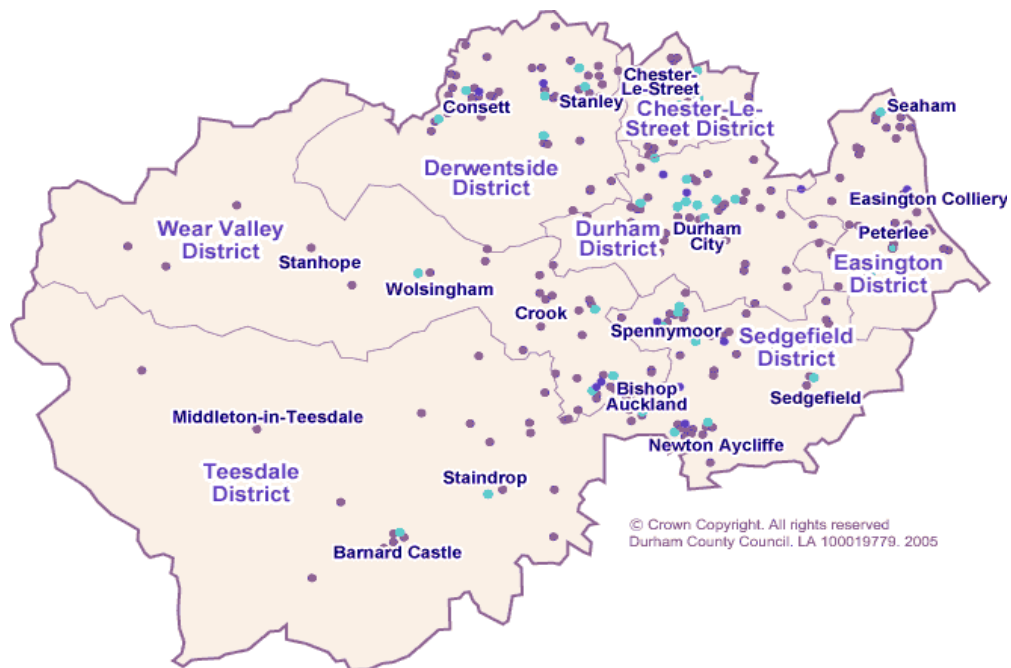
“Housing-led regeneration is not, in general, an approach that is directly concerned with the housing conditions or economic well-being of existing residents. It is an approach to regeneration which seeks to solve the problems of a locality through the introduction of a new, more affluent, population rather than directly addressing and seeking to solve the economic and social problems of existing communities and neighbourhoods.”

This definition bears the hallmark of contemporary academic and policy approaches to housing-led regeneration—namely it ignores the impact which existing stock has on communities and the renewal process, assuming that new build properties alone possess the capacity to drive regeneration. To provide a broader critique of the capacity for housing to drive regeneration, this research examines the regeneration approaches adopted with regard to both new build and existing stock. Using the case study of East Durham, and the nested case studies of the port and former mining town of Seaham and the former colliery village of Easington Colliery, this thesis tells a story about how issues of urban decline, governance, uneven development and geographical marginality, and the ‘crisis of capitalism’ (played out in market boom and slumps) have influenced and shaped settlements. More specifically the case study and conceptual frameworks of uneven development, governance and post-politics are employed to provide a central narrative to analyse the gap between policy expectation of the different types of housing intervention (new and existing stock) and their outcomes in regeneration terms in East Durham.

### **1.1 Introducing East Durham**

In 2008, an Audit Commission report examining coalfield regeneration detailed East Durham (figure 1a and 1b, below) as "perhaps the area worst affected by pit closures in the country" (Audit Commission, 2008). This impact is directly related

to the growth and development of East Durham. Due to the rich coal seams, East Durham grew from a traditionally agricultural area into one which was physically, environmentally, economically, politically and socially based—even dependent—upon the coal industry. The decline of the mining industry devastated East Durham and the decline of coal extraction, in some senses, meant the decline of the district. The problems faced by East Durham have led to, and been exacerbated by, outmigration and the loss of jobs. In response, the local authority called for the restructuring of housing provision to supply good-quality, sustainable housing which would retain the population, attract business and promote the housing market growth that appeared to be in evidence throughout the UK as a whole.



*Figure 1a: Map of County Durham with East Durham (the former Easington District)  
(Copyright: Durham County Council, 2005)*



Figure 1b: Road Map of East Durham

Consisting of a series of colliery villages and towns separated by fields, East Durham experienced post-industrial problems in a rural setting--rather appropriately described by a third sector interviewee as experiencing ‘urban deprivation with hedgerows’ (Interview HH). It is this ‘special characteristic’ of settlement patterns observed in coalfield villages (Coates and Barratt Brown, 1997) which Williamson (1982: 6) contends must be regarded as ‘constructed communities’ which

“Have to be seen as part of a moment of historical change when the special circumstances of capital investment in mining require the creation not just of labour camps, but of communities.”

The mix of housing stock in East Durham reflects the historic function of these settlements with a high proportion of terraced properties. In East Durham (along with neighbouring localities of Derwentside, Sedgfield and Wear Valley) housing stock comprises almost 50% of terraced housing, some of which is deemed to be of a ‘poor standard’ (DCC, 2011). In a bid to realign and restructure stock and bring it in line with contemporary housing need, East Durham, as part of the wider sub-regional area, has been subject to a housing-led based urban policies restructure to



harness the upward trend of housing markets and property prices. This visible trend towards market stimulation was not-- as with any phenomena—witnessed at a universal rate or evenly; and this was certainly the case for East Durham. While house building increased and property prices in the strategic centre of Seaham, for example, grew-- and have largely been sustained in the aftermath of the housing market slump-- other areas, mainly traditional colliery villages, have to some extent been overlooked by housing developers and consumers. As such, there is an appreciation by Durham County Council (2011: 15) that local authority funding is required to bridge the regeneration gap for those communities where “...investment will deliver the necessary improvements”.

### **1.2 Uneven Development: Seaham and Easington Colliery**

Uneven development is evident at all geographical scales- internationally, nationally, regionally, sub-regionally and locally. This unevenness and spatial inequality is an established feature of Capitalism, evident between and within regions (Smith, 1982; Hudson and Williams, 1989; Martin and Sunley, 1997). Commonly referred to as the ‘regional problem’, the Keynesian welfare policy approach was adopted from the 1930’s to overcome uneven development by means of explicit ‘regional policies’—strategies used to influence the location of employment and industry (Anderson, et al., 1983; Martin and Sunley, 1997). The development of cities, towns and villages has emerged unevenly, underpinned and shaped by the local socio-spatial characteristics of the area (Smith, 1984, 1996).

To understand the development of a settlement one must appreciate the intricate and involved histories which shape and influence a neighbourhood and community. In the case of County Durham, and very notably in East Durham, the arrival of the coal mining industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century shaped and changed landscapes drastically. Local geography was remade as industrial activity expanded into once agricultural areas, while the expansion of housing alongside the new employment centres provided a dramatic shift in both settlement patterns and the economic and social condition of these (establishing or expanding) neighbourhoods. However this growth did not continue; the decline of the mining

industry in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century was accompanied by urban blight and settlement decline for colliery communities. Indeed, Bennett, et al., (2001: 4) suggest “This was not just a case of localised economic decline but rather one of cultural crisis”. Indeed the influence which the demise of coal mining had upon localities was much more than just an economic issue, rather it is one also impacting socially, politically and environmentally (discussed throughout the thesis).

The contraction of the coal mining industry was, and continues to be, felt across East Durham; however the universality of the impact differs across the area. Some villages and towns ‘weathered the storm’ while others struggled to carve their own niche out in the wake of colliery retrenchment. Consequently today East Durham plays host to two distinct types of settlements: those deemed strategic which have a specialised function such as economic centres or housing hubs (as exemplified in policies such as the County Durham Plan Core Strategy, 2011) and those which are viewed more as general, smaller settlements possessing less niche specialisation. The strategic centres are those with an economic base and history other than-- but also including--mining, whereas the non-strategic villages sprung up as the mines opened and thrived across the district. It was this latter group of communities which were most obviously damaged by the demise of the coal mining industry. The former colliery village of Easington Colliery offers an example of this latter community, while the town of Seaham provides a valuable example of a strategic area in East Durham. Together Seaham and Easington Colliery offer a useful yet stark example of how uneven development is observed and has been experienced across East Durham. These settlements serve not only to provide a valuable and rich context for the thesis to illustrate the phenomena of uneven development, but also emerge frequently in the data collection observed in the local policy and expressed during the interviewees with a range of participants.

Seaham (and the neighbouring New Town of Peterlee) is deemed East Durham’s ‘strategic centre’ for employment, housing and retail. This strategic emphasis,

bestowed on the town by the former District Council and now the Unitary local authority, has helped and guided Seaham through the issues associated with industrial decline. Seaham, situated on an attractive coastline which was regenerated through local, national and European funding, was designated a "heritage coast" in 2001 (see figure 2 below).



*Figure 2: Seaham's Heritage Coastline (Copyright: Seaham Town Council, 2013)*

Today Seaham benefits from a robust housing market, a multi-million pound shopping complex (Byron Place: figure 3, below), possesses an Enterprise Zone (Spectrum Business Park, figure 4), and boasts a world famous hotel and spa (Seaham Hall). Even more recently (March 2013) Seaham was, rather unexpectedly according to local press (Northern Echo, 22-3-2013), named within The Times "30 Places to Buy a Holiday Home" (The Times supplement 21 March 2013). Placed at number 25, the inclusion of Seaham as a holiday destination is based on the enhanced housing market, and the regeneration and renewal of the coastline, marina and general enhancement of the town as a whole.



*Figure 3 (above): Seaham Byron Place Shopping Centre (Photo: See Durham)*



*Figure 4 (above): Seaham Spectrum Business Park; Enterprise Zone in East Durham (Photo: [www.estatesgazette.com](http://www.estatesgazette.com))*

Situated 6 miles south of the City of Sunderland and 13 miles east of Durham City, the town of Seaham owes much of its history to the port (Seaham Harbour) which

gave the dwelling its name. A tiny fishing hamlet at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Seaham Harbour was established by Charles Stewart (later the third marquis of Londonderry) who, after marrying Frances Anne Vane-Tempest in 1819, used his wife's wealth to buy the extensive Seaham estate (Pocock and Norris, 1990). The growth of the town resulted from the port which provided an outlet to distribute the locally mined coal to the rest of the country. Seaham Colliery-- referred to locally as 'The Nack'-- opened in 1849. At its height, in 1914, Seaham Colliery employed 3,094, dropping to its lowest rate of 493 in 1980 before combining with Vane Tempest pit in 1988 (Durham Mining Museum). Vane Tempest colliery (figure 5, below) opened in 1926, employing 1,819 at its height in 1950, and closing in 1993 (Durham Mining Museum).



*Figure 5 (above): Vane Tempest Colliery, Seaham. This land was reclaimed and redeveloped after the colliery ceased production, and now is home to East Shore Village (Copyright: east-durham.co.uk)*

Like other mining communities Seaham was affected by the closure of the pits, which employed the vast majority of the town's residents. However, a range of funding and policy schemes were used to regenerate and financially support the

town following the closure of Seaham's last remaining collieries. This included approximately £5 million from the public purse through the Single Regeneration Budget established 1994 (DCC, 2012). The East Durham Task Force (EDTF) -- a public, private and voluntary sectors partnership-- was also established to tackle local decline. A regeneration strategy dedicated to Seaham (adopted in 1994) was commissioned by the EDTF. This strategy aimed to enhance the economy and environment of Seaham, resulting in a range of capital projects including:

- the construction of a link road (the A182) to provide access to the A19;
- the relocation of offices and other land-based activities of Seaham Harbour Dock Company to a reclaimed site to the south of the town, freeing up land in the town centre for retail based redevelopment (this later became Byron Place shopping centre- see figure 3) and housing;
- the provision of business units for light industry and office space at Seaham Grange, Foxcover and Spectrum (the latter was a designated Enterprise Zone<sup>1</sup>- see figure 4);
- a range of environmental and physical improvements to the promenade via funding from the Turning the Tide project<sup>2</sup>; and
- new housing on the reclaimed Vane Tempest Colliery site (figure 5, above- now the location of East Shore Village, figure 6a and figure 6b, below) as well as the redevelopment of the housing estate at Parkside (Durham County Council, 2012).

---

<sup>1</sup> An area developed for enterprise purposes which, through the use of urban policies and incentives—such as tax breaks and infrastructure provision-- to encourage economic growth and investment from private firms.

<sup>2</sup> "Turning the Tide" is the large coastline regeneration of East Durham funded by the Millennium Commission in partnership introduced after the mines closed to restore pit heaps to grasslands and remove coal from the beaches (Durham County Council, 2002a)



*Figure 6a (above): East Shore Village, Seaham. Once the site of Vane Tempest Colliery, today a large scale housing development (Copyright: Andrew Curtis)*



*Figure 6b (above): East Shore Village, Seaham. A sculpture of Vane Tempest Colliery pays respect to the industrial heritage of the area (Copyright: Andrew Curtis)*

This programme of funding and place based investment has borne fruit, and Seaham is now one of the most successful centres within East Durham and the

wider County Durham. While some of the business units still lay dormant (a number of which have never been used) and the shopping centre, while popular, is dwarfed by neighbouring Sunderland, there has been significant recovery in the economic, social and physical structure of Seaham, evident from increased employment levels, growth in population<sup>3</sup> and housing prices (Easington District Council, 2006; UK National Statistics). Not only has the Turning the Tide project (see above) considerably enhanced the environment of the town, but the redevelopment of the former mining sites have provided it with land through which a range of different uses can be satisfied. A successful scheme of Brownfield development is evident at the new housing estate built on the former Vane Tempest Colliery site, renamed and rebranded as East Shore Village. East Shore Village (figure 6a and figure 6b, above) was created to provide a range of high quality, larger properties to both attract and retain families in the area (Easington District Council, 2008). It is this development which has been cited as a key reason why a study by the Halifax Building Society (2006) concluded that Seaham was a property 'hotspot' with the average house prices increasing by 172% in the 3 years from 2003 to 2006<sup>4</sup> (Easington District Council, 2008).

The future of Seaham is one of strategic importance. Shaped by local housing need, the County Durham Plan (the forthcoming Local Development Framework for the County) recommends Seaham as the location for the delivery of approximately 700 new homes between 2012 and 2030 (DCC, 2012). In addition the Plan suggests the development of further office and manufacturing space at Hawthorn Business Park. To continue this renewal work and create a sustainable town a Contact Centre is suggested, offering a range of Council and community functions<sup>5</sup>; an extension to the marina development; as well as a joint venture with the Homes and Communities Agency to relocate and build a new Secondary School to be used by young people from across East Durham.

---

<sup>3</sup> The population dipped from 22,130 in 1991 to 21,153 in 2001 in the period after the mines closed, however this increased again and, by 2011, the population of Seaham was 22,373.

<sup>4</sup> A period which witnessed a national housing price boom

<sup>5</sup> to include functions such as a library, a registry office, and advice on benefits and housing



Areas like Seaham have flourished in the wake of the deindustrialisation of East Durham due to a sustained renewal agenda and vision from the local authority, however other areas have been less fortunate. As stated above, these 'less fortunate' settlements tend to be made up of the villages known locally as 'the collieries': villages which grew or were established as a result of the sinking of mine shafts locally. Housing tied to mining jobs was common in these areas, and across County Durham as a whole. Mining was so significant to these communities that by 1913, one-fifth of the county's population (around 260,000 people) lived in 49,000 tied colliery houses <sup>6</sup>(Pocock and Norris, 1990). Indeed Emery (1998) highlights how:

“The workers for these industries were housed either in new settlements or in terraces around existing villages. As these new communities developed, so the features of village life appeared- the school, institute, co-op store, pub, church and chapel- some to survive, some to decay, as the years went by and the patterns of life and work changed.” (Emery, 1998, 1)

In mining terms Seaham and neighbouring village of Easington Colliery are not so dissimilar (discussed below); however the current circumstances in which these communities reside could not be more different. Easington Colliery (figure 7a and figure 7b- below) adjoins the ancient village of Easington village (figure 8, also below), situated on the east coast. Easington Village and Easington Colliery may be physically joined together but they are viewed to be very different places. The roots of Easington Village are in agriculture and the historical village grew up as a settlement around the Norman church. Easington Colliery, on the other hand, is the physical embodiment of the growth of mining in County Durham. The Easington Colliery pit was sunk in 1899, and brought with it a neighbourhood made up of shops, pubs and terraced colliery houses (figure 7a and figure 7b). Easington Colliery provided a thriving community as a settlement which grew solely to act as a mining encampment. Easington Colliery mine was one of the last to close in the

---

<sup>6</sup>Properties close to, and owned by, the mine; rented to those working in the pits for the duration of their employment. This sometimes formed a subsidised part of the mine workers wage, withdrawn when the mine employee lost his or her job or retired (and moved into Aged Miners accommodation- namely, in East Durham, 1 bedroom Bungalows).

area, ceasing production in 1993. While Easington's Colliery closed just after extraction in Seaham's Vane Tempest pit ceased production, these two areas have experienced very different subsequent development (or lack of it).



*Figure 7a: A street of houses at Easington Colliery (photo: Ken Bradshaw)*



*Figure 7b (above): Closely built, grid pattern of housing built to serve the pit at Easington Colliery, taken in 1992. (Crown copyright NMR, English Heritage. Photographer B. Skingle)*



*Figure 8 (above): Open, traditional village lay-out of Easington Village (photo: PPP Archive, Durham County Council, 2009)*

Easington Colliery lies south of Seaham's Heritage Coastline, however little is made of this fact. The former pit site has been reclaimed but rather than providing a site for development or enterprise it is simply greened over with a small park (figure 9, below) to commemorate those who lost their lives in mining disasters over the years. Little new development has taken place in Easington Colliery, and the neighbourhood is more familiar with low demand and housing demolition than new build (see, for example, Beynon, at al., 1999; Easington District Council, 2002; Easington District Council, 2007). In addition no employment came in to replace the lost mining industry and the vast majority of the businesses on Seaside Lane (the main street and once thriving shopping centre for the colliery) closed. This resulted in the community becoming less centred on the Colliery village itself to provide employment, retail and social facilities. The neighbourhood was fractured further when coal board houses (the colliery tied terraced properties which make up the colliery settlement) were sold off in bundles. These properties were often bought by people outside the area and have led to wider problems associated with absentee landlords (discussed later in the thesis). As a result Easington Colliery struggles to shake the stigma associated with industrial decline and post-mining malaise.



*Figure 9 (above): the entrance to the former pit site, Easington Colliery, in which a small commemorative garden has been erected to the miners of the colliery (photo: Ken Bradshaw)*

Easington Colliery today has a population of approximately 5,000. Low levels of earnings, low aspirations, low skill levels and poor health have created, according to Durham County Council (2010), a neighbourhood with high levels of multiple deprivation- with 18% of the population of working age claiming incapacity benefits, and the majority of houses falling within Council Tax band A (DCC, 2010 Private Sector Housing Strategy For County Durham 2011- 2015, draft). Easington Colliery, along with neighbouring mining areas of Wheatley Hill and Dawdon, is a focus for housing renewal work on existing housing stock in East Durham - identified as 'regeneration hotspots' by Durham County Council during the local government restructure in 2009 (Interview D). Interestingly these villages are not those which were marked out as 'Category D' settlements<sup>7</sup> in the 1951 Durham County Development Plan (see Chapter 2).

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<sup>7</sup> A stigmatising phrase synonymous with 'failing' villages in County Durham which were predicted to be most affected by a considerable loss of population, increased unemployment and least likely to receive any investment in the future capital.

### **1.3 From Special Areas Act to Housing-Led Regeneration: Addressing Uneven Development**

A 'discourse of decline' (Beauregard, 1993) dominated the treatment of the urban, nationally, and was tempered by a programme of regeneration and renewal. Schemes of rejuvenation were administered and received differently across the country, and of course, across districts (evident in East Durham). Some areas flourished-- at least in relative terms-- while others were believed to be left to 'wither on the vine' (discussed further in Chapter 2). The persistently uneven development of capitalism-- as shown by the significant differences experienced over a small geographical distance highlighted above-- has been tackled by a range of urban policy agendas encompassing various approaches over time (discussed in further detail shortly, in Chapter 2). Such methods include a retail-led approach (for example see Lowe, 2005; Guy, 2008), business-led approach (for example see North, et al, 2003) and- most significantly for this thesis- housing-led regeneration.

There is a long history of policies to address geographical disparities in Britain. The Special Areas Act of 1934 is widely accepted to be the first political attempt to resolve growing unemployment, economic disparities and address declining social conditions which had emerged as a result of industrial decline (Parsons, 1988). The post-war period saw housing provision and quality tackled through urban policy; initially, with a focus on face-lift schemes for war-damaged housing and, subsequently, with a rapid increase in new build properties. A growing realisation that slum clearance did not solve social and economic issues lead to the new philosophy that housing stock must be subject to a continual process of refurbishment, renovation and replacement (Berry, 1974). The New Town agenda was used to provide housing in 'garden cities' largely outside London or to tackle regional economic disparities in regions suffering economic decline and deprivation. This gave way to an urban policy agenda which focussed economic development emphasising the inner-city, deprivation and the restructuring of former industrial heartlands. Most significantly the 1963 White Paper challenged the trend of treating all areas the same, introducing 'growth zones' within the North East region. In turn, as a result of a realisation that urban problems could

not simply be tackled by an economic or physical approach, Area Based Policies were introduced as a means of addressing multi-faceted social problems. This approach, still evident in contemporary policy, culminated in the 1977 White Paper “A Policy for the Inner City” which encouraged partnership working to overcome economic decline, physical decline, concentration of poverty, and racial discrimination (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Johnstone and Whitehead, 2004).

The emphasis on an enterprise economy from 1979 onwards under the Conservative administration supported privatism, property-led renewal, targeted grants and competitive bidding. Property-led regeneration during this period gave way to housing-led regeneration in the form of Urban Development Corporation (UDC). However, these were argued to be insufficient to facilitate regeneration (Turok, 1992), with growth benefitting the highly skilled workers rather than the low paid manufacturing sector, resulting in a hugely uneven economic map (Fainstein and Campbell, 1999). Nevertheless this laid the foundations for urban policy development of the early 1990’s and 2000’s which further harnessed or exploited housing markets in periods of economic boom. Unpopular and low demand housing was addressed by targeted agendas<sup>8</sup>; however the more recent Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder programme, introduced in 2002, firmly emphasised housing as a driver for regeneration; linking modernisation to the wider regeneration agenda (Cameron, 2003, 2006; Pinnegar, 2009). This programme, Cameron (2006: 8) argued, focussed on the transformation of “...economically and socially-deprived localities through the construction of new, owner-occupied housing bringing with it a new, more affluent population”. Continuing on, and citing success in the former Durham coalfield areas specifically, Cameron (2006: 8) suggested “... housing-led regeneration involving new private development could have a positive effect on deprived and declining communities”. Indeed, private sector developments are argued to be a means of renewing ‘difficult areas’ via partnership working with local authorities, housing associations and private developers (Edgar and Taylor, 2000, 164). While the supply of new

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<sup>8</sup> Including the 1991 City Challenge, Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy introduced in 1999 and New Deal for Communities Policy

housing may have significantly increased as a result of this approach, it is questionable whether this increase adequately met people's needs due to a pre-existing undersupply of homes and an over-reliance on private sector firms who, as a means of maximizing profit margins, drove the building agenda through a drive for maximum profit margins (Smith, 2008; Allen, 2008).

Significantly, it is argued that housing-led regeneration has the capacity to both expand the availability of housing (as such it is an end in itself) or has means of facilitating wider regeneration goals (MacLennan, Munro and Lamont, 1987; Glennerster and Turner, 1993; Hausner, 1993; Edgar and Taylor, 2000). The concept behind housing as a driver to regeneration assumes that investment in the physical fabric of communities, in the shape of rejuvenating existing stock and providing new housing, can have a positive effect on the social and economic conditions of the area (Smith, 2006). In effect sustainability can be achieved

“If we can provide good quality housing for a wide range of social needs, close to the employment centres and other facilities, then we can help to regenerate our towns and cities and encourage a renaissance of urban living.” (Edgar and Taylor, 2000, 153)

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

The central purpose of this thesis is to analyse the gap between policy expectation with regard to the different types of housing intervention (new and existing stock) and their actual outcome in regeneration terms within East Durham. To realise this end, research aims and objectives will aid in steering both the research and structuring the thesis. Therefore aims for the thesis are:

- To assess the role of housing within regeneration in a post-industrial area
- To evaluate the process of governance and governing approach in housing-led regeneration

To achieve these aims this research will endeavour to address the following objectives:

- Appreciate what influences shape housing-led regeneration in marginal areas
- Examine how space and place impact upon regeneration policies and housing development
- Determine how the restructuring of governance and governing impacted upon housing-led regeneration in East Durham
- Develop an understanding of the institutional approach to governing housing driven regeneration

I believe that, by appreciating the interplay of factors which influence housing-led regeneration and related urban policy it is possible to offer an understanding of the role and processes of housing in regeneration which, by association will also highlight the flaws in the practise of this urban policy. In turn, an appreciation of the impact and influences of governance-- witnessed in structural terms through national, regional, sub-regional and local organisations as well as through formal and informal techniques embedded in Neo-liberal policy (such as partnerships)—function to offer an insight into local influence and power relationships. By combining these elements—the existence of policy influences and flaws, as well as the political influence which drives them--the research is able to focus on the rhetoric and reality of different housing-led regeneration policies to demonstrate any disparity.

### **1.5 Outline of Thesis and Chapters**

The post-industrial landscape of East Durham is one of economic restructuring; layered, blended built environments; and marginality resulting from shifting urban policy, contestation and local conflict, which has been created by uneven development and complex governing processes. It is this mosaic of complexities surrounding the main topic of housing-led regeneration which this thesis will uncover so as to appreciate the extent to which is it possible to use housing to regenerate uneven, post-industrial areas. To achieve these ends the thesis draws on a range of work. Most centrally Neil Smith's theorising of uneven development and Loic Wacquant's discussion of stigma and marginality are employed to



highlight the power of urban policy, and its capacity to create and continue social disparities, rather than resolve such issues. In addition the theories of governance and post-politics are adopted to build upon the ideas of inequality to illuminate how urban policy in general-- and housing and regeneration specifically-- is managed (see, for example, Paddison, 1997; 2009; also Mouffe, 2000; 2005). Throughout this discussion the thesis draws on wider empirical work and theoretical discussion relating to: regional deindustrialisation and regeneration (most notably that relating to the north east region and County Durham); gentrification; and the 'crisis' in the housing market.

This basic approach will inform each chapter, and below is a 'reader's guide' to the thesis as a whole. This provides not only a discussion of the content of each chapter but also the contribution of each section. The chapters are organised so as to focus on the most salient issues for housing-led regeneration in East Durham: namely uneven development; the national and local policy approaches during the periods of economic boom and slump; and the role of governance and partnerships. These themes are inter-related, and flow into and from one another to address policy expectation and effect-- discussed throughout the thesis.

*Chapter 1: Introduction;*

*Chapter 2: Housing Policy and Context: History of Urban-Housing Policy;*

Chapter 2 provides the historical context for the thesis. The chapter charts the progression and development of urban and housing policy from the 1920's, illustrating how current urban policy has resulted from changing attitudes towards a range of issues including poverty, the built environment, geographical areas and scales of governance. The main purpose of this chapter is to offer a comprehensive but concise appreciation of how current approaches to housing-led regeneration and governance have been shaped by preceding issues. This chapter sets the scene for the transition of urban and housing policy to the present day, providing context for later chapters and the empirical research as a whole.

### Chapter 3: Methods:

Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive account of the methods adopted to facilitate the data collection of this thesis; each approach is discussed in depth and its use justified in a critical manner. Adopting a Realist approach, this research uses a triangulated method which combined semi-structured interviews of key actors/sectors and participant observation at community and council meeting groups (both of which uncovered the realities of policy) with 'grey literature' (which provided contextual information and the actual policy which the local authority or central government implemented).

### Chapter 4: Discourses of Space and Place: Marginality and Uneven development:

This chapter draws on the notions of uneven development and marginality, examining how space and place impact upon regeneration policies and housing development and, in turn, create and maintain social disparities. As such, emphasis is placed on the scale of marginality and stigma, and the emerging processes of uneven development. This inequality exists within and impacts upon East Durham communities who have been influenced and shaped by wider social, political and economic practices. Ultimately this chapter addresses the extent to which communities with a more active economic base (real or perceived) are afforded higher status as strategic areas by the local authority, while erstwhile marginal areas are destined to stay as such or become more marginalized due to a lack of focussed policy attention.

### Chapter 5: Approaching Housing-Led Regeneration in East Durham:

Drawing from the ideas of unevenness and marginality set out in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 documents the changing roles of housing in regeneration to illustrate how housing-led regeneration shapes and is shaped by attitudes towards localities-- strategic 'hot spots' versus more marginalised 'cold spots'—as well as wider economic conditions. This chapter unpacks the philosophy of the policies adopted at a local and national level, showing the stark contrast between agendas

espoused during the housing market boom and those employed in the subsequent economic slump. Centrally it presents an emerging idea that a 'golden age' of housing-led regeneration existed in which the housing market price boom was capitalised upon-- even exploited-- by new build developers in the private sector as well as governing bodies or agencies who were developing and delivering urban policy. In the housing boom period (which peaked in 2007) the research highlights a proclivity for new build housing to act as a tool to drive regeneration, while existing stock was considered less significant (in these regeneration terms, at least). As a result different policy approaches were adopted in line with this emerging agenda, including an increased embedding of gentrification ideas within urban policy. In contrast, the chapter also discusses the housing slump and the significant impact this has had upon housing, urban policy and, ultimately, housing-led regeneration in all housing types.

*Chapter 6: Governing Housing Led-Regeneration: Rescaling Politics:*

Chapter 6 moves the thesis onto the political aspects of housing-led regeneration. This chapter aims to show how the recent governance and governing restructure has influenced housing-led regeneration in East Durham. This is achieved by examining the change in governance during the period of this research which witnessed a local government scale from numerous smaller local authorities in County Durham to one, over-arching Unitary Council; as well as the regional rescaling and removal of the regional government (in the form of dissolution of the Regional Development Agencies, Regional Spatial Strategy, etc). The geographical scale of this shift sits in stark contrast, jarring with the, often contentious, Localism agenda-- which is ultimately a central government imposed proclamation of greater local power with questionable authority. These structural shifts are significant, as is their impact upon geographical localities and the chapter ultimately develops a critical understanding of how a change in political focus, and associated urban policy, can function to further unevenness and local inequality.

*Chapter 7: Governing Housing Led-Regeneration: Consensus and Dissensus in Local Politics:*

Chapter 7 develops the discussion of governing and governance laid out in Chapter 6, examining the governance architecture of housing-led regeneration in East Durham, and focussing on existence of partnerships and collaborative working which has become a central—often compulsory-- aspect of Neo-liberal urban policy. Post-political debates centre on the use of such partnerships in Neo-liberal politics and so offer a perfect theoretical base for this discussion. In addition, this theory has not previously been applied to housing and regeneration so the chapter is also valuable in developing and applying post-political theory to this realm. Ultimately the chapter exposes the mechanisms of governing by critically examining the actions and attitudes of those involved locally in the housing and regeneration process to reveal the tensions which exist or emerge as part of the governing process. In addition this section also critically engages with the techniques employed to counteract conflict so as to ‘manufacture consent’, for example partnership working in its different forms.

*Chapter 8: Conclusion*

By drawing upon the empirical findings and the discussions laid out in the previous chapters, Chapter 8 addresses the research aims and objectives, thereby summarising the thesis. This chapter considers the contribution which the thesis makes to theory, policy and research, as well as directly examining the central thread of the thesis- namely the gap between policy expectation and the actual outcome in regeneration terms.

**1.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an overview of the thesis; setting out the main research topic and key themes, as well as initially presenting the case study area. The research aims, objectives and central aim have been articulated so as to guide to the thesis as a whole. The next chapter will add some context to the issue of

housing-led regeneration by examining the history and development of urban housing policy in the UK, with particular emphasis on policies affecting the County Durham Coalfields and East Durham.

## **CHAPTER 2: HOUSING POLICY AND CONTEXT: HISTORY OF URBAN-HOUSING POLICY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The birth of urban policy in the UK can be attributed to the 1930s, with slum clearance programmes derived from:

“Intolerable housing conditions in old and very old buildings in the growing cities, coupled with the wish to make “better use” of central urban land and drive the poor out of sight...” (Carmon, 1999, 145-146)

From the 1930’s urban policy has assumed a range of strategies in a bid to (re)solve urban issues (associated with uneven development, marginality and territorial stigma). These agendas have used diverse methods and approaches; with policy progressing or shifting with the election of a new government, local authority, or other governing agency, introducing new ideas or developing existing policies to manage contemporary social, economic and political concerns. These strategic ideas have combined to produce and influence consecutive urban policy agendas. This chapter, therefore, provides a discussion of policy changes and expectations, as well an assessment of the success of each agenda. This is conducted with particular reference to those policies impacting on coal mining communities, specifically- where appropriate and possible- East Durham. As such this chapter offers a culturally and geographically related record of urban policy so as to contextualize the current position and program of housing-led regeneration and provides a foundation for the thesis, but is by no means an exhaustive history of urban- housing policy.

### **2.2 Foundations of Urban Policy: Special Areas Act 1934**

After the First World War, urban conditions were compounded by the post war impoverishment of local authorities and delays in improving housing supply by coal mine owners due to concerns regarding nationalisation (Pocock and Norris, 1990). The widespread ‘free’ colliery housing or ‘rent allowance’, it is suggested,

perpetuated many of these problems. While tied housing<sup>9</sup> (owned and maintained by the mine) did reduce the responsibility felt by local authorities' to provide local housing, it also placed them at the mercy of coal mine owners who threatened to close their mine and withdraw from the locality if housing improvements were forced (Pocock and Norris, 1999)<sup>10</sup>. This essentially resulted in a lack of influence and control from the local authority over housing improvements and standards meaning stock was somewhat neglected: often overcrowded and insanitary. Nevertheless many tenants remained-- or were forced to remain-- in these properties due to the distinct lack of alternative housing or the relative high costs of council rented property (Pocock and Norris, 1990).

The economic and social problems experienced by the North East of England in this inter war period can be traced back to the expansion and subsequent decline of the region's economic base. The core regional industries of coal mining, steel and iron, heavy manufacturing and shipbuilding industries all grew during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (House, 1969). However changes to national and international markets, as well as structural adjustments, eroded these staple industries from 1914 onwards. This trend persisted, impacting most significantly during the global recession of the 1930's; while the recession impacted throughout the country, the older industrial areas (generally those in the North and West) were affected most significantly (Aldcroft, 1970). Indeed, during this period East Durham as a district struggled with slum clearance and redevelopment, and the area was seen as lacking economic diversity and provision of services and cultural amenities (Bulmer, 1978; Robinson, 1983). This regional and economic disparity signalled the trend towards uneven development which escalated from industrial shifts and decline, and continued over time, persisting today (featuring strongly in this research and discussed throughout the thesis). These regional adjustments and subsequent variations influenced the political and economic structure of Britain,

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<sup>9</sup> Housing tied to mining jobs was common in colliery areas, and across County Durham as a whole. Mining was so significant to these communities that by 1913, one-fifth of the county's population (around 260,000 people) lived in 49,000 tied colliery houses (Pocock and Norris, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> This highlights the questionable power difference between the council and mine owners and illuminates issues of local responsibility, not only in employment terms but also housing and the basic issue of welfare of the local population.

signalling a drastic need for state intervention to address the resultant chronic regional employment and economic imbalances (McCrone, 1969). Resultantly, central and local government town planning emerged as a tool to resolve the acute economic circumstances of the inter-war years (Bulmer, 1978), acting as a means to deal with issues associated with these 'industrial graveyard' areas (Branson and Heineman, 1971)<sup>11</sup>.

Town planning was also important in housing terms. The 1930 Housing Act (also known as the Greenwood Act) introduced a slum clearance programme, heralding an attempt to make "better use" of urban land and also address the appalling housing conditions evident in growing cities (Short, 1982). As a result this approach resulted in the demolition or 'boarding up' of over 250,000 dwellings (Gibson and Langstaff, 1982). The Restriction of Ribbon Development Act of 1935 was also a planning approach, used to curb uncontrolled urban expansion along road networks in the pre-war period (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006).

The most significant approach during this period, however, came with the Special Areas Act (1934). This was a crucial policy, deemed "...comprehensive and radically different from that of previous generations" (Beer, 1965, 179), which addressed employment and the economy through industrial planning (Alford, 1975). Significantly, this strategy signalled the first indication of national political concern for declining employment and deteriorating social conditions in the North East (Bulmer, 1978) and the policy proved to be a significant step towards addressing regional marginality. In line with this policy £2million was earmarked for investigators to inspect and detail experiences in the key areas of the north- east, south Wales, central Scotland and west Cumberland (Ministry of labour, 1934, cited by Bulmer, 1978). Conservative MP Captain D.E. Wallace provided the report on Durham and Tyneside, which recommended the creation of a governing body with resources to provide large scale industrial growth in the area (Bulmer, 1978). This agenda helped to even out the development process leading, as it did, to the

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<sup>11</sup> This continues today through policies such as Planning Policy Guidance and Section 106 Planning Gains, as discussed in Chapter 5.



creation of industrial estates, and with it employment, in areas deemed in most need. Team Valley in Gateshead (located just off the A1 Western Bypass) was the largest development of this type in the North East providing, by May 1939, 98 units and 2250 jobs (Bulmer, 1978)—and today employs over 20,000 people in over 700 businesses, and still offers space for development in the 50 acre land bank<sup>12</sup>.

Although the economy started to recover during the late 1930's, this revival was "...too modest and too late to undo the effects of nearly two decades of industrial change and depression" (Pocock and Norris, 1990, 73). Outmigration blighted the north east; the country increased its population by over 9% up to 1939, while County Durham's inhabitants declined by 3%. This, I contend, exacerbated regional marginality and inequality and, as Pocock and Norris (1990) argue, this outmigration helped to hide the true levels of county wide unemployment.

### **2.3 "For the working classes"?: Post war Urban Policy**

After the Second World War a range of economic, social and political concerns confronted Britain. The UK's major cities had experienced large scale damage from bombing<sup>13</sup>, and there was an unmistakable need to rebuild both the 'tattered' economy (Morgan, 1985) and damaged fabric of the cities (Atkinson and Moon, 1994). Consequently, this period heralded an era of increased awareness of urban problems associated with war damaged environments, poor housing stock, shortage of housing stock (linked to the post war 'baby boom' and shifting social expectations) and urban sprawl (Tallon, 2010).

During the post war reconstruction period urban problems-- and the policies adopted to address them-- were seen in physical terms (Atkinson and Moon,

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<sup>12</sup> UK Land Estates, team Valley <http://www.uk-land-estates.co.uk/team-valley/> accessed 29/09/2013

<sup>13</sup> Estimates suggested that 200,000 homes had been destroyed, and over 500,000 dwellings were deemed unfit for habitation (Donnison, 1967)

1994). Housing Minister, Nye Bevan, and the Keynesian economic program adopted by the government of the day, concentrated on:

“... good quality homes built by the local authorities that would be rented by people in different walks of life and of different ages in mixed communities” (Glynn, 2009, 22)

Famously the 1949 Housing Act removed the tagline ‘for the working classes’ from the description of public housing. However, rents remained restrictively high for the poorest of the population and there was little attempt made to systematically nationalise new and existing stock (Glynn, 2009). Two issues emerged as the crux of the housing problem (which are still observed today); poor quality and standard of existing stock, and not enough properties were available. Atkinson and Moon (1994: 23) argue that policy in the inter-war period involved an (ineffective) attempt to resolve issues and concerns of overcrowding and amenities in the private sector housing market:

“The solution to the housing condition problem was considered to be simple: demolish the old unsanitary or unstable dwellings and develop the sites with new housing under the ownership and management of local authorities. The solution to the housing shortage problem was similar: building new council homes on green-field sites.”

Issues of housing shortage and stock quality, while related, were tackled as separate, distinct entities in this post war period. Initially the short term resolution of housing need was targeted via temporary and quick to erect pre-fabricated houses-- some of which still exist today. Eighty percent of all homes built during this period were constructed for social housing needs; peaking in the period of 1952 and 1953 (McKay and Cox, 1979). In turn, housing quality was addressed through a program of slum clearance. This physical approach to tackling urban problems through the removal of insanitary housing was argued by Atkinson and Moon (1994) to address symptom rather than cause as the improvement of housing conditions did little to resolve the wider social issues in the 1950's. A dawning realisation emerged during this period that, aside from the modernisation

debate, there was a continuous need to refurbish, renovate and replace the housing stock (Berry, 1974). This gave way to the Housing Repairs and Rents Act (1954) which re-established the former 'slum clearance' program and encouraged the growth of high density public sector housing estates in inner city areas; built to accommodate those families whose homes had been demolished (McKay and Cox, 1979).

The New Town Act of 1946 was fundamental in addressing the issue of stock quality and housing provision during this period. The act introduced a scheme to build attractive and dynamic urban communities on either Greenfield sites-- in the tradition of Ebenezer Howard's 'Garden City' idea-- or expanded the size of already existing neighbourhoods (Jary and Jary, 1995). Fourteen New Towns were initially developed. These were mainly located around London and acted as Garden City satellite towns for the capital, while others were built in deprived areas with an eye to stimulate regional growth (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006) and equalise development: Peterlee, in East Durham, falls into this latter category. New Town settlements were governed and financed by state instituted New Town Development Corporations, with initial population sizes planned to achieve a critical density of between 25,000 and 80,000 so as to create self-contained settlements which provided housing, work and amenities in one geographical locality (Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006). Although anticipated to host a diverse social mix of residents and possess a vast array of amenities and services, critics of New Towns argue that such goals were seldom realised (Jary and Jary, 1995).

### **2.3.1 Restructuring housing provision in East Durham**

The designation of land for a New Town in East Durham-- mentioned above-- was significant. The town of Peterlee was one of the first phases of New Towns built in a deprived area, and the 7<sup>th</sup> New Town to be announced. Peterlee<sup>14</sup>, dubbed the

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<sup>14</sup> named after Peter Lee the trade unionist and county councillor born in neighbouring Trimdon Grange in 1864

'City of Mining' because of the dominance of the coal mining industry in the area, was distinctive in the New Town provision as it was developed as a means of assembling the local population from surrounding villages. The 1947 Peterlee Draft Designation Order (cited by Bulmer, 1978:231) suggested the establishment of the town provided

“...an outstanding opportunity for breaking with the unhappy tradition that miners and their families should be obliged to live in ugly over-crowded villages which cluster around the pit-heads, out of contact with other industries.”

Indeed, this was an approach which aimed to address and overcome the issues of geographical marginality which had previously been experienced within and among the distinct and separate mining villages (see Bulmer, 1978; Robinson, 1983).

In 1943 local authorities were required to review their post-war housing needs. In line with this Easington Rural District Council (as it then was) concluded that the building of new housing in the colliery villages was not sustainable, especially in neighbourhoods where the mines had closed or had a short life, and in villages deemed to be lacking amenities or experiencing poor environmental conditions (Robinson, 1983). In addition a Social Survey conducted by Rankin in 1948 highlighted housing problems in East Durham. The survey revealed that 30% of homes had no separate kitchen, 46% were without a fitted bath, 75% of properties had outdoor toilets and 33% of households were overcrowded based on the principle of one room per person (Rankin, 1948 cited by Moyes, 1969). In turn C.W. Clarke (1947:63-4) significant publication 'Farewell Squalor' provided an assessment on the post war period in the East Durham area, stating

“The density of these dwellings is over 30 to the acre which falls far short of present day standards of 12 to the acre. The people who live in the houses are victims of industrial squalor and have had to be content with this ever present ugliness rearing its ugly head as if to be in unison with the grimy pit itself, or its belching chimney or the ever present waste here as with their

accompanying poisonous effluvia. They have been bound to live and work amidst this architectural excrescence in an unplanned age; indeed, not only must they live there but strive to eek out such limited pleasures as the sordid groupings and lack of social amenities permit.”

It is through these observations in *Farewell Squalor* (1947) that C.W. Clarke (a local councillor and visionary) is cited as providing the building blocks for Peterlee (Pocock and Norris, 1990). As a consequence the Minister for Town and Country Planning designated 2,330 acres in East Durham as a site for the development, and by 1951 Peterlee was established with 214 houses completed (Moyes, 1969).

The 1951 Durham County Development Plan (revised in 1964) further strengthened the position of Peterlee in the area, placing it in a prominent position for development over other neighbourhoods and older villages (providing similarities with the current County Durham Plan- discussed in Chapter 4). The 1951 plan expressed concern over the impact on the area of the decline of coal mining, the associated shifting population structure and growth of new industrial areas. This involved the categorisation of settlements and housing of neighbourhoods based on forecasts of employment prospects and future population growth for each village or town. Villages were grouped into 4 categories ranging from ‘A’ (strategic areas possessing the capacity for substantial future capital investment) to ‘D’ (deemed unsustainable where a considerable loss of population was predicted). ‘Category D’ areas were considered most threatened by unemployment and least likely to receive any future capital investment; the phrase ‘Category D’ also became synonymous with deprivation in the former mining communities of County Durham and, by association, stigmatised these villages and mining areas. Based on this categorisation Durham County Council (1951:70) stated

“...when the existing houses become uninhabitable, they should be replaced elsewhere and that any expenditure on facilities and services in these communities which would involve public money should be limited to what

appears to be the possible future life of existing property in the community.”

Critics of the Plan argued that many of the settlements at risk were viewed simply as physical entities while the social element of the tightly knit communities “...bound together by ties of kinship, class and common origins” (Blowers, 1972, cited in Bulmer, 1978, 189) was ignored. This is also a criticism levelled at the more recent Housing Market Renewal schemes (discussed in Chapter 5). The belief that physical restructuring through the clearance of problem stock and, in some cases, whole villages could banish social and economic difficulties is a naive approach; one which places too much emphasis on the physical, and largely ignores the social aspects of urban decay. A supplement to the 1964 Durham County Development Plan: Amendment stated that ‘true village life’, i.e. agriculturally based, ‘traditional’ villages, would be protected. Such a statement is incredibly emotive, suggesting mining villages are not regarded as ‘true village’s’. Indeed, this statement marginalises industrial neighbourhoods implying that mining communities are inferior or secondary to the ‘traditional’ agricultural or pre-industrial village.

#### **2.4 Combating the ‘inner city problem’**

The period 1960-79 heralded a significant change in the approach to urban policy by addressing poverty, deprivation and wider social problems (Carmon, 1999; Tallon, 2010). Not only was ‘the urban’ a more pressing concern nationally, but it was also approached in a more informed manner with a growing awareness that social problems also needed to be addressed so urban issues could be understood and tackled accordingly. Holistic policy schemes emerged which blended the traditional physical approaches to renewal with a need to address the wider social and economic issues. Attention increasingly focussed on both the inner city (Cochrane, 2007) and the urban problems of unemployment and economic decline experienced in the old manufacturing and post-industrial areas (Hill, 2000).

During this period the decline in the staple employment of ship building, steel production and the coal industry fractured the economic bedrock of the North East. The coal industry faltered due to a slump in demand, particularly for export, which was further aggravated generally by the increased competition from the oil industry and, specifically to County Durham coalfield, the growth in Teesside's Nuclear Power stations (Pocock and Norris, 1990). Hudson (2000) suggests the period of 1963 to 1970 was one which reinforced regional economic restructuring from the previous period through government incentives, such as financial inducement in exchange for regional capital investment. The coal industry at this time may have been contracting but it was also moving eastwards to the more economic, younger, larger and more accessible pit sites (Bulmer, 1978). As a result East Durham was less affected than other areas of County Durham or other coalfields which, during the 1960's, lost half the workforce when over half the pits closed (Pocock and Norris, 1990). This was tempered by public sector investment and the location of 'new' industries in predominately New Town areas in the North East. Hudson (1976) proposed that in the Northern region 46 per cent of all new manufacturing firms were located in 8 employment areas, all of which were New Towns (including Peterlee) so as to make use of the surplus of ex-miners. indeed, East Durham benefited from the growth in production of items such as food, clothing and textiles. Nevertheless this growth in employment was highly gendered, with women accounting for approximately 50 percent of the increased employment between 1965 and 1970 (Hudson, 2000).

The urban agenda of the early 1960's (as in the post-war period) focussed on the construction of industrial estates and the creation of new towns, with an eye to locate employment and population around the more deprived neighbourhoods. In line with this approach, the 1963 White Paper bucked the urban policy trend of treating all areas the same, introducing 'growth zones' within the North East--such as Team Valley in Gateshead (Bulmer, 1978)-- and addressing the growing unevenness between and among regions. By the late 1960's central government was becoming acutely aware that Britain's urban problems could not be resolved merely by adopting a physical approach. This change in philosophy resulted in

Area Based Policies addressing multi-faceted social problems (Atkinson and Moon, 1994). The aim of these programmes was to provide circumstances in which individuals or communities could thrive via self-help, communal aid and improved targeting of local authority resources (Atkinson and Moon, 1994). This resulted in the creation of numerous small scale, locally focussed projects: in 1975 there were 3750 projects with a combined budget of £34 million (Carmon, 1999). The Urban Programme and Community Development Projects were two such small scale neighbourhood 'Area Based' scheme introduced to plug gaps in policy (Atkinson and Moon, 1994). These strategies were employed to combat social exclusion in deprived areas, and emphasised the impact which wider economic, educational and housing market changes had upon the construction of deprivation (Tallon, 2010). The Urban Programme (launched in 1968) specifically focussed on communities suffering from 'multiple deprivation' which were designated as 'areas of special need', tackled by an approach combining housing, education, welfare and health. Significantly this was also the first holistic agenda to aim to overcome problems and disadvantage in marginalised areas (Cochrane, 2007).

#### **2.4.1 A Policy for the Inner City: The 1977 Urban White Paper**

Building from the area based programmes of the late 1960's the Urban White Paper (UWP) "A Policy for the Inner City" (1977) was a seminal policy of the period. The UWP highlighted four key problems in deprived inner city areas: economic decline, physical decline, concentration of poverty, and racial discrimination (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Johnstone and Whitehead, 2004). The Urban White Paper (HMSO, 1977, 1) suggested previous agendas were flawed, stating:

"Too little attention had [previously] been paid to the economic well being and to the community life of the inner areas and the physical fabric of some parts is badly neglected or decayed."

By providing greater powers to local authorities for economic development the UWP encouraged public, private and community partnership working (sowing the seeds for successive and contemporary urban policy) to tackle the multi-faceted nature of urban problems (Tallon, 2010). This novel approach firmly laid the



foundation stones for subsequent urban policy, as the UWP symbolises the first attempt to fully engage with and address the causes of Britain's urban woes. It is argued that the UWP acknowledged the effects of previous phenomena and policies upon communities and, most significantly, accepted and highlighted the influence which "a higher concentration of poor people" would have on unemployment and low income in these neighbourhoods. In addition there was an explicit reference and growing knowledge concerning the impact which race and racial discrimination could have upon the problems of urban communities (Atkinson and Moon, 1994).

As stated above, partnerships owe their formation and development to the 1977 Urban White Paper and have been a regular element within urban policy from this date. Partnerships were configured so the public sector provided suitable conditions (such as infrastructure and planning consent) while the private sector invested in the physical building work. In practice this was not necessarily the case, as it was suggested that little consideration was given to how the private sector would be integrated into policy, especially at a time when there was a global recession (Atkinson and Moon, 1994). While the Urban White Paper embodied good intentions, positive ideas and ultimately influenced future urban strategy, it had little actual contemporary effect due to the late 1970's economic crisis and Margaret Thatcher's acquisition of power in 1979 (Tallon, 2010)- discussed later in this chapter. Even so, the seeds of change were sown and a new approach in solving urban problems was afoot.

#### **2.4.2 "Old houses into new homes"**

In housing terms, the physical renewal programme changed from emphasising clearance to promoting renovation; encouraged by the 1968 to 1974 slogan "old houses into new homes" (Atkinson and Moon, 1994). Signalling a significant shift from the physical approaches which had been the mainstay of urban policy, housing improvement grants were introduced to aid the renewal and refurbishment of private sector housing by local authorities (Cullingworth, 1999)--

much like the Group Repair programme adopted in East Durham, discussed in Chapter 5. The improvement of housing quality also resulted in resident displacement and gentrification as developers were attracted to improving housing in less affluent areas as a way of making a 'quick buck' (Herbert, 2000)- also a criticism associated with the more recent Housing Market Renewal scheme introduced during the 'New Labour' administration (see Allen, 2008; MacLeod and Johnstone, 2012). By 1974 slum clearance programmes had largely ceased and council house building had reduced significantly. The renewal of existing stock was further strengthened by the owner occupier bubble bursting and spectre of an economic crisis which dissuaded the private sector from gap funding housing provision (which is also evident in the post 2008 housing slump, as discussed in depth in Chapter 5).

### **2.5 Privatisation and the Enterprise Economy**

Margaret Thatcher's Conservative party gained power in 1979 bringing with it an urban policy agenda increasingly centred on fostering an 'entrepreneurial ethos'<sup>15</sup>. The central concept was a market driven approach which reduced the power held by local government and relied more on the private sector to promote economic growth (Fainstein and Campbell, 1999)—again observed in current urban policy, as discussed in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7--and focus on property-led regeneration agendas such as the flagship developments in the London Docklands (Pacione, 2005). However it was believed by some that these strategies were insufficient to facilitate regeneration as they provided a short term emphasis (Turok, 1992).

This period gave way to declining industrial employment in advanced capitalist countries and a movement towards newly industrialised countries (Dicken, 1992). Consequently the Neoliberal model of both Thatcher (UK) and Reagan (USA) in the 1980's was adopted to allow greater flexibility to national markets and economies

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<sup>15</sup> a concept based on the assumption that urban problems could be addressed by strategies promoting free market trade and individualist philosophy (an agenda encouraged as part of the partnership philosophy of the 1977 Urban White Paper) (Nevin, et al, 1997; Pacione, 2005).

to compete on a world stage by rolling back state systems of welfare provision, control and involvement (Regini, 1995). 'Small area' policies including Urban Development Corporations and Enterprise Zones were introduced to take advantage of local circumstances, however this also led to competition between Local Authorities who were, increasingly, vying for new forms of employment (Hudson and Williams, 1989). Those championing the Conservative 'regeneration' program believe the agenda reversed inner-city decline. Nevertheless this growth was enormously uneven; benefiting the highly skilled rather than the low paid displaced workers from the manufacturing industries (Fainstein and Campbell, 1999). As such the shifting focuses of 'breaking of the old and the construction of the new' was intricate, uneven and entrenched in the political system (A. Smith, 1997). Consequently, this gave rise to a growth in regional and social segregation, as Hudson and Williams (1989: 192) summarise

“By the mid 1980's, there were deep locational divisions within the UK, and they were more sharply etched than they had been when Mrs Thatcher became Prime Minister. The North- South divide was widened with a vengeance. Within cities, physical differences between affluent suburbs and gentrified inner-city areas on the one hand, and deprived local authority peripheral housing estates and decayed inner cities on the other, may have stayed the same. But the social difference between them grew markedly... such locational divisions are closely intertwined with those of class, ethnicity and gender...”

### **2.5.1 The QUANGO state, Partnership and Governance**

Britain in the 1980's and 1990's under Margaret Thatcher was a centrally governed political system (Duncan and Goodwin, 1988; Gamble, 1994) which-- as considered above-- increasingly marginalised local government (Imrie and Thomas, 1999). This local authority marginalisation was exacerbated by the growing power of the QUANGO (Quasi-Autonomous Nongovernmental Organisation) which assumed decision making responsibilities over a range of

different services (Hill, 2000), and the greater influence of Europe which provided further support to countries suffering from the deep recession of the early 1990's.

'QUANGOs' were substantially funded by central government and covered a range of concerns and issues. One such QUANGO structure central to Thatcherite urban policy was Urban Development Corporations (UDCs); dubbed the "...jewels in the crown of conservative urban policy" (Atkinson and Moon, 1994, 143). UDCs emphasised property-led renewal by attacking urban decay (HMSO, 1988) through private sector driven activity encouraging 'urban entrepreneurialism' (Harvey, 1987) with the aim of

"... bringing land and buildings into effective use, encouraging the development of existing and new industry and commerce, creating an attractive environment, and ensuring that housing and social facilities were available to encourage people to live and work in the area" (Tallon, 2010).

Local governance shifted with this policy as power was transferred to business leaders as the UDCs removed "... the political uncertainty and restraints of local democracy which... represents a significant hindrance to the development process and a deterrent to private investment" (House of Lords Select Committee, 1981:7). In line with this UDC's possessed a variety of powers to promote growth. Most significantly in these terms they possessed the capacity to use compulsory purchase laws to assist in land preparation and site assembly, allowing them to act essentially as "... a planning and highways authority" (Atkinson and Moon, 1994, 143).

Housing Action Trusts (HATs)-- introduced as the housing equivalent of UDCs (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006)-- were a means of carrying out housing-led regeneration in problematic local authority areas via stock transfer from council control to housing association ownership. HATs took power away from local authorities, placing it in the hands of local communities by encouraging residents to play a central role within the regeneration of their neighbourhoods (Stewart, 1995; Hull, 2006). However critics argued that the policy did not go far enough in

empowering local communities (Hull, 2006) and undermined local government by usurping a series of functions and powers (Atkinson and Moon, 1994).

The UK was highly centralised until the introduction of regional governance by the New Right governments of the 1980's and 1990's (John & Whitehead, 1997)<sup>16</sup>. This came as a result of EU funding requirements and from a belief that regional coordination was needed to address the growing variety of sub-national initiatives and agencies (John and Whitehead, 1997; Mawson and Spencer, 1997). The reintroduction of regional planning arrangements-- previously removed during the post-war period (Mawson & Spencer, 1997)—came in the form of Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) (Slocombe, 2002) and led to an increase in European intervention due to the funding opportunities they offered. Regional governing authority was introduced in 1994 with Government Offices for the Regions (GORs) which were established to oversee regional governance- with East Durham administered by Government Offices North East (GONE). Paradoxically this arrangement, rather than encouraging decentralization, was argued to strengthen the powers of central government in the regions (Mawson and Spencer, 1997) by providing regional offices through which central powers could be implemented.

The regionalisation emphasis was boosted by EU funding in the form of The European Regional Development Fund which, while established in 1975, was considerably expanded between 1987 and 1992 increasing to 14 Billion ECU (Harrop, 1992) reflecting the growing awareness of the impact which the single European market was having on declining core industries in weak regions. This increased expenditure became more focussed and planned (Atkinson and Moon, 1994) targeting underdeveloped regions, regions suffering from industrial decline, areas suffering from long term and youth unemployment, as well as rural issues such as the adoption of agricultural structures, and the development of rural areas (Harrop, 1992).

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to say regionalism was a new phenomenon for the 1980's and 1990's; in Britain complex regional administrative territory has existed since the 1940's (Hogwood, 1996).

Flagship policies adopted during this period included the City Challenge and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) -launched 1991 and 1994, respectively. City Challenge stressed the need for regeneration to meet local requirements; encouraging a wide-ranging approach incorporating housing, economic expansion, environmental enhancement and crime reduction (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006). However a lack of funding and limited time frame for delivery was criticised for restricting community consultation and forced a reliance on the old and existing community networks (Davoudi, 1995). Similarly, the Single Regeneration Budget adopted a co-ordinated approach, promoting locally situated administration and partnership working. Partnerships were so central that SRB funding could only be secured if programmes engaged with other sectors, stakeholders and local people (Tallon, 2010). From 1994 until 2000 there were six rounds of bids for the Single Regeneration Budget which resulted in the delivery of 1027 schemes-- some were in East Durham. The East Durham Regeneration Partnerships was established in 1994 to access SRB funds, securing £4.636 million in Round One to be used to be used for 24 projects in Seaham and Murton<sup>17</sup>; £4.69 million in Round Five a project in the Dawdon and Parkside areas of Seaham<sup>18</sup>; and £18.6 million in Round Six (2000) for the project Promoting Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities in County Durham. Single Regeneration Budget agenda, while adopting partnership and collaboration, and locally based governance, was criticised for using a bidding system which promoted area competition and reduced the scope of inter-area collaboration (Oatley, 1998). The SRB is also criticised by this thesis for creating unevenness and inequality (see Chapter 4).

Significantly the move towards regional policies and locally based agendas, as well as the emphasis on central government and European governing, highlights the shifting attitudes to spatial geography and the rise of multi-level governance.

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<sup>17</sup> used over a seven year period to support job creation, improve educational achievement, enhance the environment, and promote the quality of life through service provision

<sup>18</sup> focussing upon housing, environment, community based training and youth and community safety

These are issues which are discussed in greater depth with reference to East Durham throughout this thesis.

### **2.5.2 'A Nation of Homeowners' and 'The Right to Buy'**

In housing terms the UK had witnessed a large scale restructuring of tenure, resulting from previous urban policies of new build and conversion, demolition and slum clearance, and stock transfer (from local authority ownership to housing association control). One of the most significant housing policy interventions instituted under this Conservative regime was the 1980 Housing Act. This act further transformed housing arrangements by introducing the 'Right to Buy' policy which allowed most council tenants to buy their home with a considerable discount on the property's purchase price (Minton, 2009). Consequently, and significantly, this statute promoted privatisation of housing in the UK and by association housing sales increased. This approach notably changed the configuration of ownership and access to housing in the UK. The sale of local authority properties were low prior to this period as ministerial consent was required for the sale of social housing, therefore this act bucked this trend resulting in a dramatic increase in sales with the proportion of owner occupier households peaking in 1981 at 57%-- a significant raise from 23% in 1918 (Heywood, 2011). In England and Wales between 1979 and 1985 sales surpassed three quarters of a million-- equivalent to approximately three times the number sold in the previous 40 years (Dunn, at al., 1987)—this gave way to a changing housing philosophy in Britain; we had become a “nation of homeowners” (Sanders, 1990). Consequently, those renting council properties in Britain fell dramatically. 35 per cent of households at the end of the 1970s lived in council rented stock, however by 2003/4 this fell to approximately 12 per cent, with around 7 per cent renting properties from housing associations or other social housing providers, 11 per cent renting privately and the remaining 70 per cent residing in their own, owner-occupied dwellings (National Statistics 2005, cited by Smith, 2008). In sum the 'Right to Buy' agenda drastically alter the face of British housing.

## **2.6 New Labour's Local and Regional Spatial Matrix**

Tony Blair and New Labour -- a rebranded and more politically centred version of traditional Labour -- came to power in 1997 with a set of policies labelled the 'Third Way': a mix of the wide-ranging anti-poverty programmes of the post war period combined with a neo-liberal, Thatcherite economic agenda (Johnstone and Whitehead, 2004). The term 'urban renaissance' also gained prominence under New Labour (Lee, 2003; Minton, 2009); encapsulating wider notions of sustainability, social inclusion, urban governance, and environmental quality (ODPM, 2003; DETR, 2000; Hall, 2006). As Minton (2009) articulates

“...the late 1990's have been characterised as a time of 'urban renaissance'. People flooded back into Britain's towns and cities, to live, work and enjoy themselves in the new dockside and riverfront places which opened up in former industrial areas all around the country.” (Minton, 2009, 25)

From 1997 onwards there was a change in UK urban policy emphasis (Smith, 2008) from the property-led approach of the 1980's and early to mid 1990's (Imrie and Raco, 2003) to an emphasis on combating social exclusion through a more comprehensive and holistic approach to regeneration (Hastings 2003). This 'joined-up' thinking approach was regarded as necessary to comprehensively address neighbourhood issues.

Maintaining the collaborative agenda of the previous Conservative government administration, the UK continued to see the establishment of a plethora of multi-sector partnerships representing public, private, voluntary and community concerns, focussed on social inclusion, cohesion and “active citizenship” (Imrie and Raco 2003; Fuller and Geddes, 2008). The political philosophy of New Localism emerged as a means of delivering central policy goals by devolving power to local factions so as to tackle problems at a more micro level, moving away from a 'one size fits all' standardised method (Sutton, 2009). 'Citizenship' and 'participation'



became buzz words applied to agendas aimed at addressing poverty and disadvantage (Hastings, 2003), and ushering in a period of

“... renewed concern for the vitality of local communities and local democracy, highlighted by the labour government’s modernising project...”  
(Hill, 2000, 95)

There is much discussion about the relative merits of partnerships and partnership working (discussed in greater detail, and with regard to East Durham, in Chapter 7); however it is worth noting Geddes (2006: 93) discussion of the relative advantages and disadvantages of local partnerships when he highlights they

“... have the potential to enhance local democracy, help rebalance the central–local relationship and improve governance effectiveness and outcomes...”

However, he continues with a word of caution

“... the concern must be that they undermine democracy and accountability and lack the power and capacity to be effective, while limiting local policy options to those consistent with the neoliberal agenda which dominates New Labour public policy. To change this would require not (just) better local governance arrangements, but a rejection of neo-liberalism as the basis of public policy”

The emphasis on regional level governance re-established under Thatcher continued with the Labour party, becoming a valuable tool regarded as an aid for coordination and integration (IPPR, 2000; Carley et al., 2000). Indeed, on coming to power in 1997 the Labour government not only set in motion a ‘radical agenda of devolution’ by creating a Scottish Parliament, the Welsh National Assembly and a Northern Ireland Assembly (Slocombe, 2002), as well as a London Mayor (MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999), but also provided regions with greater control and power in 1998 with the formation of Regional Development Agencies (RDA’s) under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998. The RDA’s were established with the mission statement “to integrate more fully the work of national, regional

and local partners in economic development in the widest sense” (DETR, 1997). This was approached by producing a robust Regional Economic Strategy (RES); accessing national grants (such as Single Regeneration Budget) and European funding streams (ERDF); developing policies to inform the region; coordinate investment in the area; and reclaiming and preparing Brownfield land for development (Hill, 2000).<sup>19</sup>

### **2.6.1 Tackling Urban Decline: Social Exclusion Unit and Urban Task Force**

The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was established in 1997 as a means to promote inclusion through a selection of policies and programmes targeting run-down and deprived areas (Hill, 2000). Published in 1998 the SEU paper ‘Bringing Britain Together - A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal’ highlighted that approximately 4000 neighbourhoods in England were severely affected by unemployment and crime (SEU, 1998). These communities were argued to be “... no-go areas for some and no-exit zones for others”<sup>20</sup> which were “hopelessly tangled up with poor health, housing and education” (SEU, 1998, 9). The report produced a new approach to address the complex issues facing low-income areas which, through the restructuring of the Single Regeneration Budget to fund the programme, focussed on:

- Addressing the skill base as a way to overcome access to employment;
- Tackling management of housing and neighbourhoods;
- Increasing access to services (public and private); and

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<sup>19</sup> The RDA’s not only worked within their own region but also in collaboration with other regions to co-ordinate activity. The three northern RDAs (Northwest Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward and One North East) join forces on The Northern Way- a unique initiative was an urban policy tool to bring together the cities and regions of the North of England to promote a holistic sustainable economic development for the whole of the North. Priorities focussed on transport, industrial innovation and private sector investment (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090302144023/http://onenortheast.co.uk/page/leadership/thenorthernway.cfm> achieved 7/4/09).

<sup>20</sup> Which highlights a perceived stigma attached to these marginal areas—discussed in this thesis in Chapters 4 and 5)

- Providing young people with better opportunities (SEU 1998 cited by Kearns 2003)

In 1998 the Urban Task Force (UTF) was established under the chair of architect Sir Richard Rogers, with an eye to identify the causes of urban decline. The findings were outlined in the paper *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (UTF, 1999) which featured 100 recommendations for overcoming urban issues and regenerating 'run down areas' (Tallon, 2010). In addition this paper also introduced and popularised the concept 'urban renaissance', which was to become synonymous with New Labour urban policy (Tallon, 2010). The UTF recommendations led to the publication of the Urban White Paper (DETR, 2000) which set out the means by which this 'urban renaissance' could be achieved, thus providing a strong foundation for much of New Labour's subsequent urban policy. Combined the Urban Task force and Urban White Paper

"attempted to create a vision of urban living and a framework in which other initiatives and themes could be brought together" (Tallon, 2010, 80)

However, they were not without their critics. Not only did Rogers himself bemoan the lack of speed at which the 'urban renaissance' agenda was engaged (UTF, 2005), but it was also believed that disproportionate attention was placed on design over more important and broader social and economic issues (Lees, 2003; Johnstone and Whitehead, 2004), with little new policy or aims introduced (Atkinson, 2003). Hastings (2003) also suggested that neighbourhood economic concerns were "...not conceived in structural terms, rather as local micro-issues" (Hastings, 2003, 92). This is exemplified by Smith (2008: 9) who develops this argument with regard to the problems of the approach with regard to employment:

"...the focus tended to remain on individual skill development and employability, rather than the development of employment (a classic case of looking to locate the problem as a private trouble rather than a public issue)"

Established to address uneven development nationally, these agendas aimed to overcome the disparities and inequalities which Hudson and Williams (1989: 216-

7) prophesied when suggesting during the Thatcher government “It is a future of ‘more of the same’, and of unremitting divisiveness”. Dorling and Rees (2003: 1309) suggest, however, that while Margaret Thatcher’s government “...presided over a country pulling itself apart faster than before or after...” that the country continued on the same track in the following decade, with division and segregation a key feature of society in the early 2000’s.

### **2.6.2 Sustainability, Communities and Housing**

Under New Labour’s ‘urban renaissance’ housing took a more prominent role. As the recession of the early 1990s ended and the economy grew, so too did the housing market. As a result housing became a policy area receiving greater focussed attention; with new build properties coming high on the regeneration agenda. Issues of area renewal and housing market failure were raised in 2000 when the DTLR estimated 1 million homes were located in low demand areas- the highest concentration of these were in the north-west, midlands and north-east of England (DTLR, 2002; Lee and Nevin, 2003; ODPM, 2004; MacLeod and Johnston, 2012). These insights elevated housing as an urban priority, with local authorities (notably Newcastle City Council’s Going for Growth- see Cameron, 2003) moving swiftly to address housing issues (MacLeod and Johnston, 2012). Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders were consequently introduced, and played a significant role in restructuring failing markets by tackling concerns of low demand, void and vacant properties. Employed in nine areas of the North of England and the Midlands<sup>21</sup>, the agenda emerged out of a growing awareness that people living in low demand areas often had limited housing choices and by offering ‘quality’ homes-- through refurbishment, clearance and replacement-- these choices could be expanded and local housing markets could, simultaneously, be enhanced

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<sup>21</sup> Made up of: “Bridging Newcastle Gateshead” (Newcastle and Gateshead); “Gateway Hull and East Riding” (Hull and East Riding of Yorkshire); “Transform South Yorkshire” (Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster); “Urban Living” (Birmingham and Sandwell); “Renew North Staffordshire” (Stoke, Newcastle u Lyme & Staffordshire Moorlands); “Manchester Salford” (Manchester and Salford); “Newheartlands” (Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral); “Partners in Action” (Oldham and Rochdale); and “Elevate East Lancashire” (Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn, Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale)

(English Partnerships, 2008). Indeed, it was believed that the diversification and improvement of housing stock would drive renewal by tackling regional inequalities by increasing the competitiveness of the locality, reversing economic decline, and attracting skilled workers to key regeneration areas. To these ends the HMR Pathfinder adopted a combined approach which witnessed housing stock deemed unpopular, vacant, or in poor repair being subject to either refurbishment or demolition- the latter making way for new housing. In turn greater emphasis was placed on community needs, as well as partnership working to ensure local knowledge and expertise could be used to enhanced housing market intervention, contribute to the broader economy and promote the long term sustainability of communities.

While Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders as an official, central government introduced policy was only implemented in nine areas, the philosophies behind housing market renewal filtered down into local government. Indeed the former Easington District adopted such an approach to regeneration (see Chapter 5). The county wide County Durham Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2008) took considerable steps in this direction by proposing that coalfield regeneration could be achieved through a programme of housing demolition and associated market restructuring (GVA Grimley, 2008).

Seen as a tactic to slow population decline and improve house prices<sup>22</sup>, it is argue by some that any improvements should be viewed as a result of short term investment rather than the direct result of the HMR agenda (Leather, et al, 2007; Ferrari, 2007). In addition one must take into account that house price fluctuation was a national trend which increased (and subsequently decrease) according to wider national or international economic conditions- discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. There are also concerns that housing market renewal stimulates (even actively promotes) gentrification (discussed in Chapter 5 with regard to both academic debates and the findings from this research). Due to run from 2003 until 2018, HMR scheme was mothballed in March 2011 leaving schemes incomplete

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<sup>22</sup> Indeed the mean house prices doubling between 2002 and 2007, from £46,000 to £85,000. (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/housingmarketrenewal/>).

and local authorities with the task of determining how to proceed against a backdrop of economic crisis and the associated reduction in public funding (Crouch and Cocks, 2012).

Introduced in 2003, Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003) set out a holistic and long-term agenda promoting environmental and social sustainability alongside economic growth (Brownill and Carpenter, 2009) as a means to tackle the lack of affordable homes in the south and problems associated with poor housing quality, abandonment and homelessness in the North and Midlands<sup>23</sup>. The former Easington district embraced a 'sustainable communities' agenda through policies such as County Durham Coalfields Housing (2005)-- a local level interpretation of a country wide English Coalfields Regeneration Programme-- which adopted a holistic approach so as to improve the quality and number of units, employment potential, and housing choice within the county. In addition brownfield site redevelopment (with targets of 60 percent of all new homes to be built on Brownfield sites- DETR, 2000a) was promoted to facilitate sustainability and inclusivity (ODPM, 2003; Tunstall, 2003) as a means of conserving Greenfield land and reducing urban sprawl (much like the inter war policies revealed earlier in this chapter). The Sustainable Communities policy also focussed building in deprived, former industrial areas (Schulze Baing, 2009)-- arguably those in most need of regeneration-- as over 20 per cent of all recorded Brownfield sites in 2007 were catalogued to reside in the 10 most deprived areas (DETR, 2000a; Syms, 2009). In this way the policy attempted to address and counter uneven regional development by aiding the regeneration of former industrial, coal mining sites. In East Durham this leading to, for example, the development of East Shore Village (see figure 6a and figure 6b) on the former colliery site of Vane Tempest in Seaham (see figures 5) which now provides a range of larger houses in the area and enhanced the housing offer for east Durham (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).

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<sup>23</sup> In these terms it set out to counter uneven regional development

In terms of existing social rented properties stock transfer once again became a popular. The decade from 1997 saw stock transfer extended in both numbers and area, covering affluent rural locales and 'highly deprived' urban estates (Pawson, et al, 2009). Most new stock transfer was executed to tackle decaying property, cease the decline of neighbourhoods, and (in some areas) address a legacy of inadequate housing management (Pawson et al, 2009). This movement of stock occurred nationally and significantly altered the structure of British social housing provision; so much so that by 2008 local authority social housing did not exist in half of the English local authorities (Pawson, et al, 2009)<sup>24</sup>.

The biggest issue for social housing stock in the UK was the failure to achieve the Decent Homes Standard: a simple requirement that all social housing stock owned by local authorities and RSL's were at a 'very' minimum 'decent' standard by 2010 (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, 2000). Glynn (2009) proposes that in theory this seems to be an overdue counter to the cuts implemented by the New Right governments from 1979, however most authorities (including East Durham) struggled to meet this standard with no additional resources- see Chapter 5 for a more in-depth discussion.

Housing was also deemed important at a regional level with the establishment of regional housing structures and the development of strategic policies such as the Regional Housing Statements (RHS) and Regional Spatial Strategy, and through policies such as the Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) which provided guidance regional development (Slocombe, 2002). Criticisms have been levelled at these regional policies with suggestions that regional governance undermined the 'joined up' policy agenda (Murdoch & Tewdwr- Jones, 1999) specifically RPG (Vigar, et al, 2000) which was also said to achieve little except from converting national planning policy into regional figures (RTPI, 2002; Vigar et al., 2000). Possibly the most powerful criticism came from the coalition government who, on coming to power, set in motion their dissolution (discussed in Chapter 6).

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<sup>24</sup> It should be noted, however, that this was also compounded by the Right to Buy legislation of the 1980's (discussed previously in this chapter).

As the housing market slumped (see Chapter 5), the focus of housing policy shifted. For all the positives which arguably came from the housing-led regeneration agenda of the New Labour governments, the declining of the housing market from its height in 2007, and the subsequent financial crisis of 2008, did nothing for the confidence in the medium of housing to drive renewal. As Glynn (2009:320) states

“With the property bubble burst and dragging us into global recession, it might seem obvious that governments should try to restrain the drive to regard homes primarily as investments, and base their housing policy on the need for good homes. But while growing housing waiting-lists and rising repossessions are putting discussions about public housing back on the agenda, government ministers are still talking about restoring the housing market and creating new routes into ownership for those who cannot really afford it..”

To counteract the housing slump the Housing and Regeneration Act (2009) turned its attention to encouraging the delivery of new and affordable housing, infrastructure investment and decent homes provision. The policy gave local councils greater freedom and incentive to provide land for new build homes, and reform social housing regulations giving tenants greater choice over property management/stock transfer decisions. On paper and at the time of development this looked to be a useful piece of legislation which could exploit the housing market rise to promote regeneration. However, much like the 1977 White paper, the economic crisis and government change arguably took attention away from the agendas of housing and regeneration- as highlighted in Chapter 5.

The Homebuy scheme-- originally introduced in July 1998<sup>25</sup>-- was overhauled in 2009 to provide shared equity schemes on new build properties so as to stimulate

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<sup>25</sup> offering a selection of schemes from key workers to first time buyers to help households buy a property via financial assistance



the housing market, promote house building and allow prospective home owners to access smaller mortgages at a time when banks were dubious about lending. Overall, Jackson (2001:45) argued that this shared equity scheme provided

“...a strong and stable beginning from which to consider and explore possible developments and refinements”.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the key urban housing policies which were introduced nationally and regionally, and which have come to bear on East Durham and the study of housing-led regeneration. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the birth of contemporary urban policy can be attributed to the clearance programme of the 1930's. During the interwar period there was a political move from laissez faire attitudes towards the more progressive approaches of slum clearance and specific policies, such as the Special Areas Act, which set the foundations and established the subsequent and ongoing approach to urban (housing) policy. This interventionist approach by the government continued after the Second World War when war damage and the welfare of a post war population became of more concern to the Conservative administration. Stock quality and a shortage of housing stock were tackled simply by the existing Keynesian economic programme of the time. The government used existing ideas of demolition to remove, rather than address, stock quality, and new build housing was built on Greenfield sites (the form of New Towns) to tackle housing supply. An appreciation of a more complex causal undercurrent saw a shift in urban policy in the 1960's and 1970's which targeted social 'ills' as well as the physical fabric of urban areas to foster economic development. Area Based policies aimed to tackle problems with a small scale approach, while the 1977 Urban White Paper provided the watershed paper, highlighting the causes of inner city problems. Standing on the shoulders of the 1977 White Paper, but with a free market twist, the New Right introduced private sector driven policies based on partnerships and QUANGOs. This approach moved away from local government rule to a more regional delivery method (as a result of European intervention) with the aim of achieving social and economic development. Regional governance and partnership working continued with the

Blairite New Labour administration which mixed a broad anti-poverty approach with the New Rights neo-liberal economic programme (Johnstone and Whitehead, 2004). Integrated and joined up holistic approaches to regeneration which promoted community consultation were key to the New Labour government.

This chapter has both contextualised the subject of urban-housing policy and highlighted the policy based complexities and themes which have flowed through housing and urban policy. The ongoing changes in policy approach have shown how the rejuvenation of cities has been viewed and approached very differently by different and successive governments, changing emphasis as political power has shifted to different political parties and understanding the reasons for urban decline and urban problems became more important, and as different approaches to tackling uneven development were adopted. As such urban policy is dynamic and seeks to reinvigorate and manage urban areas by influencing not only investment but also consumption within cities. While some measures introduced have positive outcomes, others may have caused rather than solved problems which must be solved by more policy intervention (Pacione, 1997). Similarly housing has always played a role in simple terms-- providing basic shelter for the population. There has always been a struggle to provide an adequate amount or standard of property, while the use of housing to drive regeneration was only adopted relatively recently. Housing as a driver to regeneration can be argued to be a success when used as a policy at the height of the housing market, and in specific geographical areas. Similarly this chapter has highlighted that the use of urban policy can, and has, resulted in under development in other areas leading to unevenness at a range of geographical scales- and this is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. In addition, this chapter has examined the changes in local and regional governance, showing how central and local government change has resulted in shifting attitudes towards centralisation, regionalism and the philosophy of greater local community empowerment. Resultantly the chapter has laid the foundations for the discussion of governance and the rise of post-politics, and the post-political condition, in East Durham- evaluated in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, respectively.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter documents the methods and methodological framework for this research, and is fundamental in setting out the steps taken to achieve the aims and objectives (stated in the Introduction and in 3.3, below) and ultimately analyse the gap between expectation and reality of housing-led regeneration initiatives. As such the aim is to present the research process which endeavours to be both robust and transparent; documenting all aspects of the data collection process (Flick, 2007a). In these terms the chapter details the enquiry method with regard to

- presenting and reflecting upon the practical measures taken during the research;
- examining activities in the research field, the range of materials accessed, and how these measures affected observations, conversations and interpretations; and
- the philosophical and ethical issues informing it.

### **3.2 ESRC/ Easington District Council CASE Studentship**

This research benefitted from an Economic and Social Research Council CASE award, established in conjunction with the former District of Easington. East Durham was chosen as the CASE area due to its involved history as well as the Local Authority's desire to further understand the role of, and scope for, housing as part of the regeneration process. As discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, the history of East Durham (and County Durham as a whole) is founded on the numerous, rich coal seams in this area. The demise of coal mining hit colliery communities nationally; however the recovery has been uneven and varied across regions, counties and localities. In social, economic and political terms the experiences of East Durham make it a very relevant and interesting area to

illuminate the process of housing-led regeneration and changing governance structures. As discussed later in this chapter the links with Easington District Council (and later with Durham County Council) proved invaluable as it offered me close working links, and opportunities for further contacts, with a range of different people working in the council and with local councillors. This links also provided me with access to policy documents and meetings (such as the County Durham Housing Forum- discussed below) which may not have been possible or could have been difficult to access without the CASE studentship. Nevertheless, the government restructure in 2009 from a two tier system to a county wide Unitary Council (discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6) meant that not only was policy changed from a local to a county level but also previous policy was less accessible. This was not only due to a change in authority but also because of a shift in the CASE 'supervisor'<sup>26</sup>.

### **3.3 Research Aims and Questions**

To appreciate how and whether housing can be used to regenerate uneven, post-industrial areas, as well as revealing the main participants involved in the process, the first stage of the thesis was to transform notions of housing-led regeneration into research objectives and questions. This approach is based on the belief that by identifying 'good' research question a workable, robust research design is developed (Wisker, 2008). The data collection techniques employed (discussed in this chapter) was the means of achieving the research aims which, for this thesis, are:

- To appreciate the role of housing within regeneration in a post-industrial area
- To understand the process of governance and governing architecture in housing-led regeneration

In line with this, the research objectives are:

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<sup>26</sup> Not only were two different contacts established during the research period but there was no replacement for the second supervisor and with the Local Government Review (LGR) there was not only shift in council workers between departments but also some contacts left.

- To examine how space and place impact upon regeneration policies and housing development
- To determine how the restructuring of governance and governing has impacted upon housing-led regeneration in East Durham?
- To develop an understanding of the institutional approach to governing housing driven regeneration

### **3.4 Philosophical Foundations**

At the foundation of every research investigation lie methodological and philosophical assumptions which inform both thought and understanding. As such it is argued by Wisker (2008: 67) that:

“Methodology is the rationale and the philosophical assumptions underlying a particular study rather than a collection of methods, though the methodology leads to and informs the methods.”

The strands of methods (“...the vehicle and processed used to gather data” [Wisker, 2008, 67]), and methodology (“...the rationale supporting the choice of methods and is based on a researcher’s worldview” [Wisker, 2008, 68]) combine to aid the understanding of both *what* the research process yields and *how* it is produced (Mays, 1997). This is informed by epistemology and ontology which, in combination, form the bedrock of philosophical knowledge (Jary and Jary, 1995).

Epistemology is the construction, interpretation and representation of knowledge (Wisker, 2008, 68); a “...branch of philosophy concerned with the theory (or theories) of knowledge, which seek to inform us how we can know the world” (Jary and Jary, 1995, 201). Ontology, on the other hand, concerns itself with “... the nature of social entities” (Bryman, 2001, 16) and of ‘being in the world’ (Wisker, 2008, 67). How social reality is believed to exist is fundamental to research, directly impacting upon the practical tools employed for collecting research data. It is from this base that I start my own methodological justifications which are informed by the methodological framework of Realism.

Realism sees actors and structures as providing mutual interaction (Willig, 2001) which exceeds “...traditional dualistic treatment of society/individual, structure/agency, macro/micro” (Sanderson, 2000, 443). Interaction between social and physical space is highlighted by Soja (1980) who argues that such a socio-spatial dialectic is an ongoing two-way process which involves the creation and modification of urban zones while simultaneously it is influenced by these changes. As such this realist agenda is ongoing in the built environment, especially when examining marginality and governing structures, and so such a dualist approach is useful to help illuminate how housing and housing policy fits within the larger issue of regeneration.

Duncan and Goodwin (1988) discussing urban development, and not specifically addressing realism-- but applicable to it—argue

“We should not imagine that people are left passive as ‘Capitalism’ creates and destroys geographies around them. It is, of course, people who create and run these social and economic processes even if they do not do so in freedom from others, or in conditions of their own choosing, and with the nightmare of the past always bearing down on them. People are able to monitor and learn from their experiences and may attempt to change and control them. One way in which people do this is the attempt- a doomed attempt according to Smith- to find a ‘spatial fix’; to establish some sort of geographical stability within which they can work and live even as they work against it. Fixed capital and hard-won spatial configurations, social as well as physical, should not be abandoned or destroyed as soon as they are created. State intervention in the social economy- fixing exchange rates, labour laws, housing subsidies, welfare systems, internal security, etc.- is one major means of establishing this fix” (Duncan and Goodwin, 1988, 64-5)

As such, discourse shapes reality, and is shaped by it; people, in turn shape and are shaped by this reality (Parker, 1998; Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Madill, et al.,

2000). The ability to understand this interplay of structures and events/discourse offers the ability to appreciate both dualistic tendencies and also appreciate how the social world can change (Bhaskar, 1989). Realist perspective allows the flows of everyday interaction to be examined alongside the structures which shape and affect relations to help understand how the social world behaves and can be changed (Bhaskar, 1989). It is the people formulating and interacting with regeneration who have the ability to shape the outcome. The process of Housing-led Regeneration is one involving diverse groups- such as politicians, policy writers and implementers, house builders, housing associations, third sector organisations and community groups (who constitute home owners/ consumers). The Realist perspective supposes that the social world and individuals' knowledge regarding the social world have a dual impact upon behaviour. As such the process of regeneration via housing can only be understood by appreciating the experiences and views of those linked to it.

This is not to suggest, however, that the influence and power of all the different actors involved in housing-led regeneration (such as developers, officials, 'communities', key companies operating from the locality, and so on) is equal. Power may be experienced at different intensities, but the capacity of the individual or actor to influence or shape power cannot be ignored. Isaac (1987), drawing upon the realist tradition of Bhaskar (1975), criticises the implication that power is a constant existing and shaping everyday life, and instead suggests that power and agency are at the foundation of relationships which are socially constructed (Allen, 2003). It is the durability of such social relationships which endows groups or individuals with power rather than the structured and unflinching nature of them. Isaac (1987: 80-1) argued "... a social theory of power must explain what kind of social relations exist and how power is distributed by these relations..." As such, he continues, "... the power individuals possess has social conditions of existence, and that it is these conditions that should be the primary focus of theoretical analysis". Similarly Allen (2003: 2) highlights the different types of power which exist, stating

“A world of difference separates dominant relationships which restrict choice and close down possibilities from those which, for instance, secure assent, manipulate outcomes, impute threats or seduce through suggestion and enticement”

As such Allen (2003: 4) proposes that power does not need to be viewed in the extreme form which “moves people and mountains”, and instead can be understood as a *relational effect* which exists everywhere.

This thesis does not wish to provide a definitive account of power nor an in-depth assessment of power relationships, but instead attempts to offer an insight into the governing and governance of east Durham to highlight, as Allen (2003: 23) puts it, the “... relations which distribute capacities to some agencies but not others”. As such the realist agenda is useful as it assumes that

“...power is a causal effect which is either produced by a clearly identifiable social agency or by some anonymous social, economic or political structure. Agency and structure are both equipped with a generative capacity to affect and constrain social actions, decisions and outcomes” (Torfing, 2009, 111)

Indeed, as Dowding (2009: 50) articulates, the Realist argument suggests

“If power is seen as power-as-ability then the power of an agent is given by what he could achieve no matter what others do. What he can achieve is, of course, structured by what others can do too”

### **3.5 Data Collection Techniques**

Debates over the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative and qualitative methods led Denzin (1970) to suggest that, whenever possible, the triangulation of methods for social research should be adopted. In line with this thinking the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the research for this thesis-- the actual data collection aspect-- was achieved by adopting a multi-level, triangulated approach. Triangulation allows for



the use of a range of data collection techniques which, in turn, offers “... the best chance of achieving validity” (Jary and Jary, 1995, 698). For this thesis triangulation- geographically based on the case study area of East Durham- included interviews (with a variety of different actors involved in the process and governance of housing-led regeneration), participant observation at a selection of meeting groups (community groups, local partnership meetings as well as higher level county council meetings) and secondary data (largely grey policy literature as well as documents from different organisations). The triangulation of methods- in this instance allowing for observation, interviewing and archival research- provides the most appropriate and feasible approach for research concerned with change over time with regard to development, policy, economy, governing processes as well as the general, personal attitudes and the broader subject of housing-led regeneration. Evidently this method was used to provide data on relationships, values and beliefs, as well as offering a research product which reports and describes a community or phenomena (Agar, 1980, Angrosino, 2007).

### **3.5.1 Case Study**

The case study method was fundamental to this research not only because of the designation of an ESRC CASE studentship but also as it provided a strong method by which careful explanation and understanding could be applied to a specific geographical, political, social and economic situation (Stake, 2005), as such interaction is contextual, and does not occur in a void (Kooiman, 2003). Consequently, the case study allowed for an in-depth examination of housing and regeneration in East Durham to be centred around a local setting taking into account local experiences and, significantly;

“providing insight into the progress and contradictions of urban social change in the city under conditions of global economic pressure, the neoliberal realignment of urban governance and deepening social and spatial inequalities” (Punch, et al, 2004, 2).

Indeed, the case study method allows for the appreciation of the range of complexities at play within a phenomenon, providing insight not only into the key

research topic but also provides a deeper understanding of how, for example, local factors (be they history, levels of participation, funding provision, and so on) can impact upon or influence the development of a locality. This is specifically appropriate in terms of the examination of East Durham's uneven development and marginality (see Chapter 4) and the relative success of housing-led regeneration policies and agendas (see Chapter 5).

Within the case study of East Durham there are main areas (towns and villages) which the interviews or policy documentation regularly make reference. These key areas were useful to highlight trends and discuss occurrences of housing-led regeneration, and the governing thereof. As such, the case study of East Durham provided further nested case studies within it which proved significant in explaining the areas development and useful for illustrative purposes to highlight or explain shifts and changes. These internal case studies encompassed neighbourhoods which were both strong and weak in housing and regeneration terms; the local strategic centres (see Chapter 4) of Seaham and Peterlee, and the former colliery villages of Easington Colliery, Wheatley Hill and Dawdon provide a cross section of neighbourhoods within the district as well as being central to housing and regeneration agendas within the research area.

The fundamental strength of the case based method lies in the detail it produces. This detailed and rich information is, therefore, regarded as being case specific so the capacity for generalisations to other areas is limited. Nevertheless, while all the findings of this research are applicable directly- and specifically- to East Durham, the conclusions are valuable to other areas experiencing industrial decline, socio-economic problems and, by association, uneven development. As such other communities or local authorities in the UK, such as those in Northern England, South Wales or Scotland, could find elements of this work valuable in informing their current situation and shaping future policy so as to reduce or negate problems. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8 (section 8.6.1).

### **3.5.2 Gaining Access**

Gaining access to social situation- both research sites and participants- can prove to be a crucial yet (sometimes) difficult step in the research process (Wanat, 2008). Suggested to be a challenge prevalent since the start of the twentieth century, with the work of Boas and Malinowski (Van Maanen 1998), the process of attaining admission to research sites and participants is, of course, unique to each study (Wanat, 2008). Resultantly a range of contacts, playing different but equally valuable roles in the wider governing structures and processes within East Durham, was vital to the success of this study. While much has been written concerning the problems of gaining access for social research purposes (for example, see Wolff, 2004; Flick, 2006) I feel these issues were largely overcome due to the CASE studentship with Easington District Council, and then County Durham Unitary Council, (as discussed above) which provided me with valuable access to both local government documents and individuals (who would become potential interviewee) within the council structure.

While 'cold' emailing (detailed below) supplied me with a number of contacts who expressed an interest in the thesis, the links offered by the local authority provided most access to interviewees and meeting groups which, in turn, provided the range of contacts which the research required. This is not to assume that there were no reservations about conducting research associated with a local authority; the main concern (which was also highlighted during interviews with numerous local authority interviewees from all departments) was regarded to be 'consultation fatigue' and a worry that communities would regard me as an extension of the local authority and so the research would, potentially, be met with cynicism and despondency. However, this was certainly not the case, and the 'evidence' laid down by policy developers and council employees proved to be ill-founded. Indeed in some instances I was met with a totally opposite reality. Most notably when, after attending the Easington Colliery Steering Group, I attended the Easington Colliery Residents Association (attended by a number of Steering Group members) residents were very engaging. Not only was I referred to as 'Flower' and 'Pet' (local terms of endearment) but I was also asked to take the minutes of the meetings,

type them up and send them to the chair; I felt this showed great acceptance and trust from the group, and I was more than happy to do so. On the whole the members of community groups and meetings which I attended were incredibly welcoming and very affable, and I was soon treated as part of the group. This, I believe, was due to the relationships I had developed with 'gatekeepers' as well as my 'local credentials'.

It is important, at this point, to note my own position with regard to the research participants and research case study (McDowell, 1992). Researcher positionality, in this case, will provide a clearer understanding for the reader of the dynamics of this study with regard to my own perspective- as the researcher- in the research (England, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991; McDowell 1992;). By doing this I am setting out my own objective and subjective position so as to inform this thesis rather than taint it by personal perspectives. Therefore it is valuable to note that, while I did not grow up in, or currently reside in, East Durham, I was born and brought up in the neighbouring local authority district of Sedgefield (located in south County Durham). Consequently there was a feeling with councillors and local residents alike that I held a shared history with them, and so appreciated the history of coalmining and the area in general. Certain phrases became common place when talking to these groups, such as 'you understand' and 'you know what it's like'. While this resulted in, arguably, greater acceptance at my presence at meetings and interviews it did not help in establishing meetings as my 'localness' was not discovered until the interviews were set and I met the participant. A problem associated with the 'local affinity' assumption held by some of the respondents was that a lack of detail was sometimes given during the interview because there was a belief that I knew as much as them regarding a particular issue or term. This sometimes meant that information was withheld, not through the desire to hide detail but because of the assumption that we both 'knew'. This meant that clarification or greater detail was requested, and individuals sometimes had to be pressed on some issues. Consequently, by the end of a couple of interviews, respondents elaborating on all issues, even if the information was not needed or not relevant to the research (such as the distance of one village to another or the

quickest bus route to a certain location). This is, of course part of the interview process and was definitely as a result of my probing.

Successful relationships with 'gatekeepers'<sup>27</sup> can, and did in the case of this research, aid entry into fields of study due to the specific contacts, networks or information which they possess. Meetings came in two forms- open and closed (discussed in greater depth below). Open meetings, accessible to the general public were open to all and so required no specific personal links to gain entry. Nevertheless, establishing a good relationship with those involved with or running the group, I found, provided extra validity when joining and attending meetings which, also in turn, aided acceptance into the group and other groups by further members. Closed meetings (those accessed by invitation only) were more difficult to gain admission to, and were much more dependent on establishing a positive relationship with suitable 'gatekeepers'.

The varied nature of social research and social actors are argued to make relationships between the researcher and the gatekeeper difficult to define, variable, and largely uncontrollable (Burgess 1991; Feldman, Bell, and Berger 2003). However relationships fostered during this research were based on regular email contact and general discussion about the thesis, other related issues, none related discussions, and general pleasantries when we met at meetings. This research benefitted from the attention of two<sup>28</sup> main gatekeepers, at different entry points, who aided access to both closed and open meetings and groups. The County Durham Housing Forum- a closed setting, only accessed by heads of housing groups and higher members of strategy and housing- was achieved

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<sup>27</sup> "...individuals or groups in an organisation who regulate either access to goods and services... or the flow of information..." (Jary and Jary, 1995, 258)

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that while there were others who provided numerous contacts which were followed up through the process of snowball sampling, these two main contacts were invaluable to the research

through contact with a senior housing strategist in the council (interviewee B). Access to closed setting is arguably

“... not a matter to be taken lightly but one that involves some combination of strategic planning, hard work and dumb luck” (Van Maanen and Kolb, 1985, 11)

Indeed accessing this group was quite a coup not only because I was able to access such a private group but in addition the Housing Strategist became a ‘key informant’ proving useful insights into thesis topics a large list of further contacts for interview and highlighted the existence of the public, open community steering groups. Bryman (2001: 295) highlights the significance of Interview B’s contribution to the data collection process when he asserts

“Gaining access to public settings is beset with problems, many of which are similar in nature to access to closed settings... Sometimes, ethnographers will be able to have their paths smoothed by individuals who act as both sponsors and gatekeepers.”

Access to the open community meetings was established through interview D who was, incidentally, a snowball sample contact from interview B, and also proved to be a key contact for this research. Interviewee D (a well-respected member of the communities as well as local authority employee) helped ‘smooth’ my access into the open community groups as she was not only a respected attendee at the meetings but also a resident of East Durham. This was also aided by a good relationship which I developed with a very proactive and well respected local councillor who chaired and attended local community meetings. The access to the Steering Groups were aided by my attendance from the early stages of the group’s establishment meaning I was able to quickly become part of its fabric (see ‘participant observation’ below for an extended discussion of the issues and associated problems experienced).

### **3.5.3 Sampling**

Once the case study area and topic of the research was selected, the issue of choosing and sampling a relevant population became important. Sampling allows the researcher to choose the most suitable material, cases, and persons and/ or groups for the study (Flick, 2007b), and so determining who are the most appropriate people, and gaining access and contact with them is very important so as to afford the most informative results in the most effective way.

Due to the range of contacts already held within the Local Authority I adopted the approach of snowball sampling (“...the method of selecting a sample by starting with a small selected group of respondents and asking these for further contacts” [Jary and Jary, 1995, 599]) First I secured interviews with contacts I already had in the local authority from who I received further leads. These initial contacts consisted of the primary contact when I started the research (head of Regeneration and Partnerships at Easington District Council), and his ‘second in command’, a manager in the same department. In addition the change in council composition in 2009 involved Local Government Restructuring (LGR) which resulted in people losing jobs, or being moved to different roles within the local authority. This, interestingly, improved my range of initial contacts as it meant I also had a new, different point of contact (this time in the housing department at the newly formed Durham Unitary Council). I had a very good relationship with the first ‘gatekeeper’ and had slight reservations and concerns that someone else may not be as helpful or valuable. However, these concerns were not met as, in reality, I developed a good relationship with both contacts and as a result, I feel, the research benefitted from establishing contacts in two different departments as it offered access to a wider range of people in a greater number of areas. Snowball sampling, I feel, worked well; most respondents offered details of one or two contacts they felt would be useful for me to meet, while others proved much more valuable (see ‘gatekeepers’ above).

Alongside snowball sampling speculative 'cold' emails were sent to appropriate companies or organisations active or operating in the East Durham area. This convenience sampling method was used as a practical way of gaining access to potential interviewees who had little or no contact with previous research participants, but who could potentially provide useful insights into housing-led regeneration or governance architecture in East Durham. These speculative, 'cold' emails simply gave an idea of the research (its background and aims and objectives). This was a useful method in gaining access to more prospective interviewees, and worked well alongside the snowball sampling method.

There is much academic literature discussing the low response rates of different sampling methods, and before starting the data collection I must confess, I did expect an apathetic response rate. Nevertheless the response rate (detailed below) was considerably better than anticipated:

Snowball sampling response rate 81 %

Cold email sample response rate 55%

The greatest problem encountered in accessing interviewees via both the 'snowballing' and 'cold emailing' method was that those most appropriate to interview for the research in terms of their experience or role were not always the ones which I was able to access. This was, in the case of Snowball sampling, due to the links which previous interviewees had with people in other companies or fields of work. Whereas when emailing companies or individuals who I had no previous contact with (cold email sampling) the emails either automatically went to or were often forwarded to a Human Resources Officer who then chose the individual they felt was more appropriate. On the whole this worked well and I was directed to or and secured an interview with an appropriate individual. This was not always the case however, and on 3 occasions someone was recommended who was either new (to the area or field) or with a limited knowledge of my specific research topic. The most striking case of this incidence during this research was encountered at a



housing association. A senior manager was suggested as a useful interviewee, however only once the interview started did it become clear that she had only recently (within a few weeks) moved to the north east. This meant she was, regrettably, unable to comment on local conditions due to her lack of local knowledge. Nevertheless the interview was valuable as she was able to provide insights from the third sector and housing associations with regard to general issues in that sector, so providing a wider context to the topic.

#### **3.5.4 Interview**

The interviews for this thesis took place between December 2010 and February 2012. Semi-structured interviewing was used as a means to produce data which is 'valid', revealing and offering an insight into the experiences of the individual (Jary and Jary, 1995), and gain information which is both "...rich in detail and closer to the informants' perceived world" (Jary, et al, 1995, 537). This proved to be a very valuable interviewing method as, by encouraging a free talking, relaxed conversational style interview the respondents soon seemed to relax and open up to share their thoughts and beliefs, thus disclose their own personal beliefs and perspectives. The fluid conversational style also meant that more probing or follow up questions could be asked so as to reveal greater insights into specific topics. The interview schedule was laid out in one word, or one line prompts for me, so as to cover all the aspects relating to the important parts of the thesis but not to be too fixed in the wording or order of the questions/ topics. The interview schedule (see Appendix) explored:

- the role and general background of the interviewee;
- the interviewees views on housing-led regeneration in general;
- attitudes towards urban policy in the pre and post boom periods;
- governance and governing arrangements; and
- any other issues not discussed but felt to be of importance to the subject, geographical area or broader research.

This technique was obviously successful as at the end of many interviews the interviewees expressed how they had enjoyed the process. A housing manager articulated that discussing the topics had been “great” as it gave him an opportunity to talk about his work to someone outside of the office environment in which people were often stressed and/or complaining. He continued that it was also fascinating to discuss issues wider than his role and to allow him time to think about the wider processes of housing and regeneration. So as to make the respondents feel it was more like a conversation, I used a simple interview guide which detailed topics and subject areas which allowed for the discussion of the same themes within each interview (with the ability to adapt them according to the individual) whilst also giving the opportunity for flexibility so that the dialogue could develop in a conversational manner (Bryman, 2012).

Interviewing offered the opportunity to appreciate people’s beliefs concerning key issues of housing-led regeneration; as Jones (2004: 258) illuminates

“...to understand other persons’ constructions of reality we would do well to ask them (rather than assume we can know merely by observing their overt behaviour) and to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their terms (rather than those imposed rigidly and *a priori* by ourselves) and in a depth which addresses the richer context that is the substance of their meanings (rather than through isolated fragments squeezed onto a few lines of paper).”

As a result, the approach of interviewing professionals in housing, regeneration and policy along with those who are directly affected by such initiatives yielded a multi-angled view of the processes occurring within the research field. Interviews were conducted with members of the district council (heads and senior members within regeneration, housing, and housing specialists from the planning department); councillors (in particular those involved in regeneration campaigns and/or those who hold the housing and regeneration portfolios); housing developers; and housing intermediaries (such as East Durham Homes: the At Arms

Length Organisation). In total 35 interviews were conducted with this selection of different groups, these were distributed in the following ways:

Local Authority (Housing)	5
Local Authority (Regeneration)	4
Local Authority (Planning)	2
Councillors	5
Regional Government Representatives	1
Central Government Representatives (MP)	1
Developers	5
Housing Associations/ ALMO	4
Housing Management	3
Third Sector Organisations (non HA)	3
Private Planning Consultant	2

Interviews with councillors and local/sub-regional employees were utilised to ascertain the significance of housing in regeneration, the influences over/ reasons for specific housing interventions, and offer insights into the attitudes towards governance and its structure at this level. It will also offer an insight into how those implementing policy see the role of housing in future schemes. House builders and planners/ surveyors from independent companies provided a private sector perspective of the impacts and complexities of housing-led regeneration. Both larger housing developers and housing providers (in the form of Housing Associations) also provided an interesting, comparable view to one another and that of the council on issues of housing-led regeneration and governance- in terms of their involvement and the power relations at work. Allen (2008) provides an interesting assertion that estate agents, developers and surveyors not only react to policy, but also promote its development. As a result interviews with such housing

intermediaries<sup>29</sup> were consulted to provide a private-sector viewpoint on housing, property markets and relations with other groups involved in the housing and regeneration process (Ball and Maginn, 2005; Allen, 2008).

In broad terms developers and surveyors provided personal insights into the motivations for certain developments, offering an insight into the impact which regeneration policies and schemes have on housing markets and localities as well as comparative analysis between different local (including East Durham), regional and national trends<sup>30</sup>. They were also able to highlight the relationships which exist between the private sector and different groups- most significantly, the public sector in the form of local authorities and communities. This was valuable in shedding light on the architecture of governance, and offering a important perspective on the model of partnership working.

As mentioned previously, my 'local credentials' allowed me greater acceptance and greater freedom when talking to community groups and residents. It also benefited me in interviews with not only a good local knowledge but also an awareness of local slang for mining related words. Councillors specifically were responsive to my 'localness' in terms of a shared history and appreciation of what happened in the past. For all my local connections went in my favour, many interviewees still wanted to give some background and some local history 'for the record' so it was known their point of view.

Gillham (2000: 7-8) highlights the advantage of the interview process, asserting

“An interview makes a demand on the interviewee: it signals that it is a 'special occasion'. It is impressive how people will respond to this. Quite simply you will get more out of them because they see the interview in that light. The willingness of people to work at an interview when it is of no direct significance to them reflects the fact that people are often not

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<sup>29</sup> with the exception of estate agents who would not consent to be interviewed

<sup>30</sup> This will also be aided by the use of secondary housing market data provided by groups such as The Halifax

listened to; that their views and experiences are not treated as being of any account.”

This was true for most interviews, with some people seeming to have prepared extensively for the meeting. Others, however, seemed more reluctant to reveal views and opinions’, meaning probing was required to enhance the amount of information shared. Interview probes were used to clarify issues, expand on topics, and gain examples to illuminate interviewees’ responses. This probing was done sympathetically so as to relax the interviewee, with the aim they would talk freer and reveal more. Often those who were initially reluctant to disclose information were happier to do so as the interview progressed and a rapport was established.

Interviews were used to access the information which was ‘resistant’ to examination through participant observation, as well as giving an insight into, and greater detail or attention to, specific issues. Nevertheless participation in community, steering and closed local authority organised groups was also used to collect data about broader issues affecting residents’ attitudes, and to access information regarding County wide housing issues.

### **3.5.5 Participant Observation**

A key component in this ethnographic process was Participant Observation to produce rich data which “...simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observations, and introspection” (Denzin, 1989, 157-8). The steering groups, council forums, Area Action Partnerships and community groups formed the basis of the participant observation, and were attended between February 2011 and March 2012. Gold (1958), cited by Bryman (2001), suggests there are four key levels of participation as an ethnographer, encompassing complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. This research falls into the ‘participant as observer’ category, which assumes

“... members of the social setting are aware of the researcher’s status as a researcher. The ethnographer is engaged in regular interaction with the people and participants in their daily lives... involving an overt role-whether in open/public or private settings...” (Bryman, 2001, 299)

While this research did not collate information on a ‘daily’ basis, a depth of data was gathered by regularly attending a range of open and closed meetings, forums and groups, as well as interviewing a variety of actors from a range of settings. The overt nature of the participation allowed me to be open about the purpose of the research, and meant I could (and did) happily engage with anyone to discuss the research. I believe this combined with the regular attendance at meetings and forums meant that I was regarded as a ‘regular feature’ and allowed me to develop a good rapport with others who attended which made me very approachable meaning. It developed that members of the various groups would come over to chat to me about the research and general topics (their health issues, holiday plans, family activity, and so on) during breaks, or at the end of meetings-sometimes during the meetings depending who I was sat next to.

The main benefits of using the participant observation method was that it offered an interesting insight into the process of governing within housing/ regeneration with respect to East Durham. Also, crucially, the information it offers on key concerns and insights of the group members, allowed me to be sensitive to the attitudes and beliefs of the groups themselves, and the collective opinions on salient issues. The downside of the approach, however, is bound in the lack of generalisation which it offered.

The community, open groups attended were:

- East Durham Area Action Partnership (AAP);
- Easington Colliery Residents Association;
- Easington Colliery Steering Group;

- Wheatley Hill Steering Group; and
- Dawdon Steering Group.

In total there are 14 AAPs in County Durham which were established to work with local people to tackle issues pertaining to the local community each have a budget of £20,000 to £60,000 (depending upon the area) providing up to invest in the local area, administered in blocks of up to £5,000 for community projects which address the priorities of the local AAP (Durham County Council website<sup>31</sup>). Every AAP has a 21 strong board made up of elected members from a range of different groups including the unitary council, town or parish councils, the health service, police, fire brigade, third sector organisations, and well as the public. Meeting a minimum of six times a year the AAP discussed the progression of its action plan, as well as the progress of spending and work on service issues with local partners<sup>32</sup>. The meetings involved an open discussion by the board members with the public observed and were able to ask questions or add any information at certain points during the agenda, indicated by the AAP chair. I attended the Area Action Partnership where possible; however it was often scheduled at a time which clashed with the Wheatley Hill Steering Group and the Easington Colliery Residents Association.

The Steering Groups attended were held in regeneration areas—referred to as housing ‘cold spots’ during this research (see Chapter 4) -- of East Durham. Three of the seven regeneration areas designated in the County are located in East Durham: Easington Colliery, Dawdon and Wheatley Hill. The steering groups, while arranged by the local authority, were chaired by a group member who was elected by the steering group attendees at the beginning of the process. These groups came under the remit of the Housing Renewal team, a representative of which attended each meeting. Steering Groups differed in size, composition and the issues discussed.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.durham.gov.uk/pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=6379>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.durham.gov.uk/pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=6379>

Easington Colliery Steering Group was the first meeting attended. Held on a monthly basis in the Parish meeting room the venue was not appealing; situated in a building with closed metal shutters at the window, on a badly lit street, next to a cemetery. I was unsure whether this was the location of the meeting initially and entered with some trepidation, however the reception inside the venue was very different. The attendees were friendly and accommodating-- a very pleasant relief. A wide range of different people attended the group including: residents, all over 60 years old; an AAP representative; Easington Colliery Residents Association representative; police; housing association representative; 2 area councillors; 3 private landlords; community wardens; Empty Homes team members; and housing renewal members. Issues of absent landlords and the refurbishment of existing stock, as well as the discussion of anti-social behaviour and crime were key issues in Easington Colliery Steering Group (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7). As a consequence of attending the Easington Colliery Steering Group I was invited to attend the Easington Colliery Residents Association, of which I only managed to attend a few meetings because they clashed with the Wheatley Hill Steering Group and the AAP meetings. While a different person chaired the meeting many of the same residents attended the meeting, however fewer community stakeholders and representatives attended making it a lower key affair. The issues discussed were largely the same as at the Steering Group.

Dawdon Steering Group was held in an upstairs room (which doubled as a bar) in the Miners Welfare Social Club situated on a traditional colliery terraced street in the middle of the community. All attendees were male and appeared to be largely private sector landlords who owned property in the community and lived locally. No residents attended this meeting, save for an AAP representative who was there in his capacity as partnership agent. Issues discussed at this meeting were singular concerning the Group Repair scheme. This scheme is in its latter stages and of primary concern to the Private Landlords who attended the meetings. The group members were friendly and wanted to discuss my research after the meeting, however one member (a key local figure) took exception to my presence: he refused to acknowledge me and would not engage with me at any point. Speaking



to someone next to me, who I was talking to at the end of the group, he aggressively stated “I don’t know what she’s doing here. There’s nothing for her here. We don’t need this”. Unfortunately the conduct of this group member made me feel very uncomfortable and I did not attend any further meetings for fear of aggravating this prominent individual and concerns that the dynamics of the group may be compromised by the disdain for my attendance. Not accessing this meeting group concerned me, as I was worried I may miss something useful which could add to or enhance the data gained from the other steering groups.

The Wheatley Hill Steering Group was attended mainly by residents, of both genders and felt much more like the Easington Colliery group as there was a range of attendees included representatives from housing associations, an agent from the ALMO (Arms Length management Organisation), councillor and representatives from the Housing Renewal team. The meetings took place in a community venue; a single storey, former terraced bungalow converted into a meeting room and community base. Issues concerning Wheatley Hill related to the clearance of void or vacant properties believed to be suffering from housing market decline as well as concerns over the ‘Decent Homes Standard’.

County Durham Housing Forum was a closed meeting with access gained through a senior housing strategist (Interview B). This partnership was made up of senior housing representatives and representatives from housing associations or ALMO operating in County Durham as a whole. Meetings took place on a morning between 9:30 and 1 on a two month basis, each time at a different location so that each representative hosted the meeting in their head office, giving it the feeling of a true partnership scheme. The members sat around a large table, and I sat at the back or edge of the room so that my presence did not affect the discussion taking place.

The Housing and Regeneration Partnership (HARP) was another closed meeting involving partnership working between the local authority and local stakeholders (namely private sector housing developers). Access was denied to this group, however, on the basis that councillors, politicians and private sector representatives attended these meetings and concerns were expressed that something inappropriate may be said or recorded which would not be suitable. The HARP would have been useful to attend for me to appreciate the interplay of relationships between developers and the local authority as it would have given more depth to the governing method of the area. It would also have provided an insight for me as a third party away from the rhetoric or resentment felt and expressed by the local authorities and developers. In addition the HARP could have provided some interesting insights into how housing and regeneration are viewed by the different sectors and how they see it going forward.

### **3.6 Recording, managing and analysing data**

A digital sound/ voice recorder was used to record the interviews, these recordings were then transcribed (verbatim) so as to capture the context in which the comment was made and allow for a more thorough examination and comparison of responses, thereby removing or reducing researcher bias (Heritage, 1984). I chose a quality recorder, hoping it would be reliable throughout the interview process. There was, nonetheless, one malfunction with the recording device which occurred after moving rooms during the interview which went considerably over time. On this occasion, detailed notes were made after the interview once I realised the recording has stopped. One interviewee would not allow the use of the recorder. As a result notes were taken during the interview- with clear direct quotes written where applicable. Irrespective of the recording condition or requests by the interviewees for whether the interviews were recorded, detailed notes were made for each meeting in which I detailed notes on the interviewee, interview setting, date, any national or local events around the time of the interview and any other information considered appropriate. Notes were also taken during the attendance of groups and meetings, which were

elaborated upon in the field notebook after, allowing important issues to be documented while not drawing excessive attention to these key issues at the time of observation for fear of making those observed uncomfortable or self-conscious. These notes highlighted aspects such as the topics discussed, any interesting insights offered, the degree of consensus held on issues, who attended, and so on.

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS), in the form of NVivo, was used to analyse the notes and interviews. While the program has a wide use of functions the purpose of using NVivo for this research was simply to allow me to take the interviews, divide them up into themes ('nodes') and produce a set of quotes or data relating to specific topics or issues. As such this provided me with a tool by which to manage a wide range of information and a simple code-and-retrieve method (Bryman, 2012).

Coding the interviews focussed on the central, and basic, topics of the research which aligned with the wider findings from the research. These formed the basis of the tree map of housing-led regeneration, which provides a diagram illustrating hierarchical data. Branches on the tree map included central issues such as governance (divided into restructuring and relationships), policy (housing and regeneration), etc. Within these central topics, key themes ('nodes') emerged. These nodes were coded in against the main topics- forming branches on the trees. Therefore, 'policy' included themes such as 'HMR- pathfinder', 'HMR- non pathfinder', 'NDC', 'Easington LDF', 'County Durham Plan', etc. So as to 'cover all bases' stand alone nodes for specific locations were also used; most commonly these were Seaham and Easington Colliery, but other areas including Peterlee, Wheatley Hill and Dawdon were also coded. This most importantly allowed valuable location specific information to be captured.

Due to the interconnected nature of the research topic quotes were often coded a few times with different nodes as a particular sentence or statement referred to a

number of issues. This process—specifically the numerous codes for the same statement—meant that no information was overlooked or lost during the writing up of the thesis. On the down side this also meant there was sometimes repetition of quotes or points between chapters when constructing the final thesis. However this was overcome by keen proof reading and cross referencing of points between chapters.

While NVivo traditionalists may have liked this computer program to have been adopted in a more substantive way, I feel it was a very useful and valuable tool by which data could be examined and handled relatively easily. I believe the use of NVivo not only saved me time (as I only needed to code and recode as often as required, not needing to trawl through every interview every time I needed more data) but also the process of coding option meant that themes could be noted, from which more associated links could also be made. As such I believe the quality and rigour of the thesis is enhanced by the use of NVivo software.

### **3.7 Secondary data**

Secondary data covers a wide range of data types from official statistics and photographs to newspaper reports. This research mainly concerns itself with official documents from central, regional, sub regional and local government forms such as policy documents and Acts of Parliament. Government offices at local, regional and national levels produce a plethora of policy and statistical information covering a diverse range of issues, from crime statistics to environmental issues, with the aim to provide not only guidance for action for the public and public sector workers but also political transparency. For the purposes of this research the availability of existing material also provides a large amount of invaluable information which helped to inform, drive, influence and supplement my own data collection. Official documents from government sources not only provided me with important quantitative statistical data but were also useful as a source to provide contextual information. Existing literature on official statistics and government

policy was used to give not only a broad overview of what has happened in the past and what is currently occurring in East Durham, but also to contextualise activity and views. Local Authority, regional and national policy was used to illuminate the thesis as to the policies employed in East Durham and at which level it originated (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 5). This data informed the chapters on policy but also informed the interview questions and the emphasis and issues within the groups accessed. It gave me an enhanced knowledge of the subject, and provided an extra depth of information which allowed me to undertake the data collection in the form of interviewing and participant observation with greater confidence as I could probe and develop interviews with greater ease and more fluidly.

A great advantage of using secondary data is, in this instance a key problem with it; namely its ability to make comparisons over time. While secondary data would ordinarily allow one to explore or compare, for example, the number of planning permissions in a local authority this luxury was removed as the seven local authorities were dissolved and the overarching unitary council was introduced. With the separate ward specific areas- Easington District being one such local authority- there were statistics collected on a wide range of issues in (relatively) small localised areas. With the amalgamation of these seven authorities into one combined power there has also been a loss of the previous statistics. This has, in some instances, skewed useable data. Whereas one area may have previously been seen as suffering in terms of an issue, such as high unemployment, say, after being combined with a more affluent area the problem may have been statistically diluted. This is potentially misleading, and a point which some interviewees (largely those working in the third sector in east Durham) were keen to point out; the combination of two areas, one with high and one low crime rates (A and B respectively), for example, would dilute the high crime rate of area A, while pushing up the crime rate of area B virtually overnight. This does not mean there is a shift in real terms, only that, statistically, the information has been altered. Consequently, official statistics are only used in situations which are comparable or to illustrate a previous or historical issue, such as prices of housing for sale. In

addition, and in relation to this above point, rather than the use of secondary data always being a simple and quick process, as it is often difficult and time consuming to find the relevant and specific information required and use it for comparative purposes over time. Scott (1990) suggests there is a need to be aware of the authenticity, credibility, representativeness and the meaning of this data. As such, an awareness of bias of opinion, as well as caution concerning the representativeness of the material needs to be kept in mind when using this form of secondary data (Bryman, 2012).

### **3.8 Ethics**

Ethics have been a central concern in research since World War Two<sup>33</sup> (Wisker, 2008), with the appreciation and awareness of ethics and ethical issues have grown in significance in the context of qualitative research in recent years (Punch, 2004; Hopf, 2004; Flick, 2007b). As such, when conducting a piece of socially based research, one has to be acutely aware of the associated ethical challenges. Indeed, this research was based around the belief that “Qualitative researchers are guests in private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict.” (Stake, 2005, 459) Angrosino (2007) takes this proposition further when he suggests“... the only thing that really matters is that prospective participants recognise the researcher as a legitimate scholar who has taken the necessary ethical precautions in structuring his or her research. Their willingness to participate is thus a kind of business arrangement. The researcher relates to them strictly as a researcher.” (Angrosino, 2007, 17)

Throughout the research process ethical issues were paramount. This research followed the ESRC ethical guidelines, as well as those of Durham University and the Geography Department. In addition academic work conducted on the ethical practices of research also informed this work. The promise of anonymity and/ or confidentiality is essential in all research of this nature, and, so, consent forms

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<sup>33</sup> when unethical human research violated individuals’ human rights

were provided to all participants. This research also adhered to interviewees requests regarding anonymity or confidentiality; an example of this came from one interviewee who was changing jobs and moving into a different role in a different company and wished to be referred to by a particular title to ensure they could not be identified. Diener and Crandall (1978) suggest four such ethical considerations which should inform researchers during their data collection, and ones (along with academic guidance) which I rigidly adhered to. These are:

- “whether there is harm to participants;
- whether there is a lack of informed consent;
- whether there is an invasion of privacy;
- whether deception is involved” (Diener & Crandall, 1978, in Bryman, 2012, 479)

‘Harm to participants’ and ‘invasions of privacy’ refers to the issue of confidentiality of respondents and the information with which I was provided. This issue was overcome by assigning interviewees with a letter by which they are referred to throughout the thesis. ‘Lack of informed consent’ was not a concern for my study as the implications of the research was discussed with the interviewees and any additional concerns which the respondents had regarding this were addressed before the interview commenced. The same argument goes for ‘deception’; by keeping the respondents informed about exactly what my study was about there was no chance of any kind of deception.

The integrity of the research is paramount, and as such the promise of anonymity and privacy was essential. A carefully drafted consent form was provided to all participants to ensure that all parties have the same understanding of what the research entailed (as noted above) and what would happen to the data. Any concerns regarding the interviews (individual or group) and my participation in community activities were discussed in advance and where there seemed to be unrest or animosity either further discussion was provided or the research in that instance was stopped (see Dawdon Steering Group above). I endeavoured to be

open and upfront about the research throughout. The confidentiality of respondents and their information is vital. To respect this interview records were assigned a letter which was also used during the analysis and results discussion, and stored securely.

In addition to issues of 'harm', 'privacy', etc Flick (2007a) asserts there is a need to be mindful of the relationship between ethics and quality of research as there is not one without the other. The idea which Flick (2007a:8) proposes has very much informed my thinking during this study:

“... quality is seen as a precondition for ethically sound research. Here we may state that it is unethical to do qualitative research that has not reflected about how to ensure the quality of the research and without being sure that this piece of research will be a good example in the end. Good research is more ethically legitimate because it is worth people investing their time for taking part in it and revealing their own situation or giving an insight into their privacy. If the research is no of high quality in the end, it is unethical to make people take part or reveal their privacy. Ensuring and promoting quality of research becomes a precondition of ethical research in the version”.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

Having laid out the philosophical bedrock of the research and discussed and justified the tools which were adopted to conduct this work, the thesis now turns shifts attention to the empirical findings of the research. The following chapters (Chapters 4-7) blend empirical findings with existing academic discussions and policy rhetoric to develop and understanding of Housing-Led Regeneration in East Durham. Each chapter builds from the next to develop an argument, which is later pulled together in the thesis conclusion (Chapter 8).



## **CHAPTER 4: DISCOURSES OF SPACE AND PLACE: MARGINALITY AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.1 Introduction**

As has been previously established in this thesis, the history of County Durham is one built on coal mining and the resultant process of industrialisation resulting from the exploitation of the county's unique geography and the appeal of this to capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>34</sup>. These phenomena led to the creation of new centres of population or expansion of pre-existing hamlets, villages or towns. In East Durham- as with other areas across the globe- this exploitation of local geography by industrialists turned the former rural district into an industrial landscape. Seaham, with its already established port, grew into an important local centre, and the colliery villages formed on previously green field land, allowing mine workers to be accommodated close to the newly established mines. The growth of the mining industry built on initial historical and geographical conditions meaning the process was not equal with different villages and towns shaped more by the industrialisation process than others. As with the growth of an industry, the decline of it also impacts unequally. This is evident in East Durham and wider County Durham where the withdrawal of mining capital and subsequent deindustrialisation process created further asymmetry shaping the area in financial, physical and social terms. The deindustrialisation process and resultant conditions were tackled by the National Government and Local Authorities alike with a range of Neoliberal policy.

In East Durham deindustrialisation had a huge impact in terms of employment and housing; expressed in the urban policy of the former local authority of Easington District who regarded economic growth and housing choice "key factors in creating successful places" (Easington District Council, 2008, 4). As such economic restructuring and housing play pivotal roles in neo-liberal restructuring policy. This chapter focuses on the interplay between space and place, regeneration

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<sup>34</sup> Supporting Neil Smith's (2008:4) assertion that "[I]t is not just a question of what does capitalism do to geography but rather of what geography can do for capitalism"

policies and housing development to highlight how policy introduced in the wake of industrial decline to address the economic and social issues resulting from the fall of mining has in fact created unevenness in, and across, the district. Fundamentally this chapter charts the restructuring policies introduced initially after the withdrawal of Capitalism, providing an initial assessment on the cause and effect of subsequent uneven development—discussed further in Chapter 5. This takes into account the economic growth and housing choice regeneration philosophies adopted by the Local Authority. Economic approaches are discussed to highlight how such agendas initiated an initial divergence of development in East Durham. The debate then moves on to illuminate the impact of, and interplay between, housing driven regeneration and space/ place. This involves an assessment of Neoliberal housing and regeneration policies and wider perceptions held by those from and external to East Durham, which combine and manifests themselves physically in actual housing developments or regeneration.

#### **4.2 Geographies of Unevenness**

In general, presently, there are two distinct sets of settlements in East Durham; those deemed more economically and spatially strategic towns<sup>35</sup>, and the colliery villages. The more economically and spatially strategic towns (namely Peterlee and Seaham) developed as communities with economic and spatial functions aside from, or in addition to, mining. It is these areas which are now seen as possessing more functional and sustainable housing and employment markets, whilst also providing retail and political function<sup>36</sup>. The function of colliery villages is very different, as these communities originally developing to house mine workers. As a result these villages are seen to have lost their purpose and so have, generally, received less attention in terms of development or strategic emphasis compared to the larger settlements (an assertion discussed in greater detail in this chapter). This difference in attention- manifested in policy imposed by the local authority- has resulted in an increasingly uneven form of development across the district. The

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<sup>35</sup> see, for example, Easington District Council, 2001; Easington District Council, 2008; and Durham County Council, 2011

<sup>36</sup> in the case of Seaham

characteristics of the strategic towns of East Durham- either purpose built in the case of Peterlee or possessing extra original features such as the port at Seaham- have singled them out at different stages in the development of East Durham to date to warrant their increased attention and be deemed as possessing a greater capacity for development<sup>37</sup>. As such they became the focus for growth and policy.

Coal mining provided the area with an economic heart and provided the majority of residents in the district with employment. The closure of the mines during the 1980's and 1990's had a considerable impact upon the district in financial, physical and social terms, and fractured East Durham (Easington District Council, 2003). The loss of local, industrial jobs was accompanied by the large scale sale of mine owned terraced houses. This was done in large lots of houses (anecdotal evidence suggests 20-25 houses at a time), with private landlords the main buyers (detailed further in 4.4). There was also a dwindling population (largely a consequence of out-migrating for employment elsewhere) which, again, affected housing and resulted in void and vacant properties dotted across East Durham- and the wider County. The population fell by 8.2% (the equivalent 8,600 residents) between 1981 and 2004, (Easington District Council, 2008), with further decline of 6,000 people forecast by 2026 (ONS English Sub-Regional National population estimates, 2006). This combination of factors led to East Durham's classification as the fourth most deprived area in England (2000 Index of Multiple Deprivation cited in Easington District Council, 2002). Combined with an aging population of 20.3% in 2008 - largely composed of former mine workers- this has severe implications for employment, housing and service provision in the area (Easington District Council, 2008).

Neil Smith's (1984, 1996) concepts of equalisation and differentiation are useful in highlighting the numerous factors which come to bear on contemporary capitalism, contextualised in the case study of East Durham. The investment and withdrawal of capital through industry or property development creates and

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<sup>37</sup> The history and growth of both Seaham and Peterlee is detailed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

recreates urban economies and environments of production (Punch et al, 2004). These experiences are reflected in “local problems of job loss, displacement, poverty and a whole range of attendant urban struggles and social tensions” (Punch et al, 2004, 2). In the case of East Durham this is observed in the capital investment in the creation of mining villages and a local economy based on the mining industry which was subsequently destroyed when the coal industry withdrew. The impact of the restructuring and renewal processes introduced to tackle the decline is witnessed in the subsequent restructured environment which is:

“... a mosaic at every stage of development- parts are being built, others are at every stage of devalorization (where it’s value gradually decays), and some elements are abandoned remnants or fixed capital now rendered valueless” (Duncan and Goodwin, 1988, 63-4)

This process of differentiated development creates highly varied outcomes depending upon the local social and physical conditions. As such, while it may seem an obvious point to make, it is no less valid, that development does not occur at a universal rate or in a common manner (Smith, 2002). Similarly, as with development, inclusion or marginality are not equal. As Wacquant (2008:1-2) highlights: “...urban marginality is not everywhere woven of the same cloth, and all things considered, there is nothing surprising in that”. Wacquant (2008:2) continues:

“The generic mechanisms that produce it [urban marginality], like the specific forms it assumes, become more fully intelligible once one takes caution to embed them in a historical matrix of class, state and space characteristics of each society at a given epoch” (Wacquant, 2008, 2).

These processes and local variations impact upon development at varying scales producing uneven development which is locally and contextually based. As Massey (1993: 66) suggests: “the point is that there are real relations with real content, economic, political, cultural, between any local place and the wider world in which it is set”. In addition development in one area can impact directly on another. The

socio-spatial changes which occur in uneven patterns are underpinned by the corresponding actions which take place differently or equally depending upon the locale, and must be understood in this context (Smith, 1984, 1996). Duncan and Goodwin (1988:62) also note:

“Development in one place and time is causally linked to underdevelopment elsewhere, development in one area of life is causally linked with underdevelopment in another, and the conditions that both create and lead to further uneven development. In this way geographies can be seen as a systematic expression of the very constitution and structure of Capitalism. And both state and local states have been developed in response to the production of these social geographies” (Duncan and Goodwin, 1988, 62)

Skifter Anderson (2003) also notes the uneven impact which this emphasis on one locality can have on another arguing expensive and extensive programmes of physical renewal of some neighbourhoods into high-quality areas can lead to ‘overkill’ and the deterioration of other areas due to a lack of renewal agendas. It is this phenomena which, I contend, has had a huge impact in shaping the current condition of East Durham.

However, the impact of urban policy is not a simple model of cause and effect. Blackman (2001) uses the example of regeneration in run down areas to illustrate how similar funding or investment may result in a considerably different outcome for a deprived neighbourhood. This is surely dependent upon initial conditions in which the funding and regeneration start- which this chapter argues and details with regard to East Durham. In these terms, the levels of involvement from local and central state in development (such as the provision of tax breaks or incentives) can shape the outcome for each neighbourhood differently- temporally and spatially (Punch, et. al., 2004). Consequently, social change is both a top-down and bottom-up process influenced by wider structures and practices of society and the economy (Smith, 2010) and shaped by context, history, and local level balance between consensus and resistance (Punch, et al, 2004). These ideas are contextualised and applied to East Durham’s experience with regard to the impact which urban policy has in shaping localities economically and physically (in terms

of housing), and the subsequent creation of inequality or unevenness is discussed in the remainder of the chapter.

#### **4.3 Deindustrialisation and Economic Unevenness: Neoliberal approaches and East Durham**

As with the growth of industry, the process of deindustrialisation has an uneven impact upon different social factions and different geographical areas (Anderson, et al, 1983; Fainstein and Campbell, 1999). Former industrial areas- once economically vital- are now 'graveyards' to industrial production. Capitalist processes shaped East Durham economically, physically and socially; creating jobs, exploiting the landscape (and the thin rock above the coal seams), and expanding villages and towns close to the mines. The withdrawal of capitalism through deindustrialisation also removed the primary function of East Durham which was, in turn, accompanied by a restructuring process which created unevenness between neighbourhoods. Such localities are now

“...areas of redundant fixed capital, in the form of abandoned machinery and empty work places, where capital has been written off on a massive scale; areas of redundant workers and redundant skills... where a wealth of human experience and ability have also been written off on a large scale” (Anderson, et al, 1983, 8)

This withdrawal of capitalism resulted in the “dissolution of the traditional working class” through the “normalization of mass unemployment” which in turn “weakens them [the working classes] socially and marginalizes them politically” (Wacquant, 2008a, 116).

While the process of deindustrialisation is one of economic and capitalist action (i.e. a preference of one area or social class, for example, over another), it is impossible to ignore the actions of the state and the effect which their urban policies- introduced to tackle and overcome this decline and ultimate unevenness- have in shaping geographical space and place. To overcome the problems

associated with economic restructuring a 'renaissance' emerged delivered through a programme of policy-led physical and social regeneration from the mid 1990's to present day.

The period between the 1980's and 2010's observed a more dramatic restructuring of economic space than ever before (Wacquant, 2008; Smith, 2010); one also reflected in the experiences of East Durham. The decline of the UK mining industry (and other heavy industry) in the 1980's and 1990's was accompanied by a political shift, assumed to rectify this problem. New Right, neo-liberal philosophies were introduced as a "...re-orientation towards marketized urban policies and entrepreneurial planning" (Punch et al, 2004, 5), which would reposition power from local state to entrepreneurial and commercial public-private partnerships (Peck and Tickell, 1994; Wilks-Heeg, 1996)- this is returned to, discussed and developed further in Chapter 6. This targeted approach to urban policy influenced the survival (or otherwise) of these areas, which were in essence dependent upon the attitudes of public and private sectors to 'save' them. In effect neoliberal policy, without introducing the required level of regeneration work and offering nothing to fill the void left by heavy industry, signed the death warrant for the less strategic communities. In addition the mechanism of such policy, favouring of a 'more attractive' strategic town or village over a colliery community resulted in a greater difference and disparity in development. This is particularly evident in Seaham in East Durham which is a strategic centre that has attracted attention from the local authority and former county authority (under the two tier system), over and above the smaller villages.

These new re-orientated approaches played a significant role in creating or further compounding uneven local, regional and national conditions. Mass unemployment, regulation over 'decaying neighbourhoods' and increased stigmatisation in everyday life, Wacquant (2008:25) argues, led to the polarisation of class structure in the 1980's and 1990's, economic redundancy and social marginality:

“Unlike previous phases of economic growth, the uneven expansion of the 1980’s and 1990’s, where it occurred at all, failed to ‘lift all boats’ and resulted instead in a deepening schism between rich and poor and those stably employed in the core, skilled sectors of the economy and individuals trapped at the margins of an increasingly insecure, low-skill, service labour market, and first among them the youth of neighbourhoods of relegation.”

Wacquant (2008:37) highlights that those in power (referring to ‘the ruling classes and government elites’) have been either incapable or unwilling to address the growing disparities which have resulted in observable inequality and marginality. Linked to this, they have also failed to stem economic difficulty, ‘hopelessness’ and ‘stigma’ in these declining working-class areas (Wacquant, 2008).

For East Durham the neo-liberal renaissance was initially administered in 1993 by the East Durham Task Force (EDTF) and later by the District Council or County Council. The EDTF worked in partnership with other agencies to adopt a ‘Big Picture’ jigsaw approach to regeneration in East Durham (Easington District Council, 2003). This approach relied heavily on economic rejuvenation of Peterlee and Seaham. Both Peterlee and Seaham were significant towns in East Durham, and neither were fully dependence on the coal industry as they possessed wider economic and social functions. Therefore they were significant policy targets and regarded as strategic centres. Seaham Regeneration Strategy: Proposal (Drivers Jonas, 1993:2) highlights the contemporary issues facing Seaham, stating the decline of the industrial base had left the town experiencing numerous economic, social, environmental and political issues, including:

“high and rising unemployment; population decline; high levels of anti-social behaviour; the run down appearance of the area; and the general decline in the commercial well-being of the town, there is a considerable concern for the future”.

In Peterlee the redevelopment of the Town Centre was important, while Seaham’s renewal tackled a wide range of issues. Indeed Seaham was considered significant to the broader local authority area with Seaham playing a “role in most” of the nine



objectives established by the EDTF (Drivers Jonas, 1993). The regeneration 'role' in Seaham encompassed: coastal improvements<sup>38</sup>; the development of the link road to south Seaham<sup>39</sup>; enhancing the local 'tourism potential'; revitalising the town centre; and reclaim the former colliery site.

In East Durham, like other former industrial areas, there has been significant money invested in land reclamation on former heavy industry sites<sup>40</sup>. Central policies to achieve this land recovery during the 1990's and early 2000's were the Enterprise Zone designation and Single Regeneration Budget. While the basic philosophy of these agendas was positive, creating opportunity for growth in areas which secured funding, they also created difference at the local level.

The Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) supported a range of regeneration projects in the former District of Easington, with most funding targeting Seaham. Seaham alone received significant money from the Single Regeneration Budget (DCC, 2012), including:

- £4.636 million in Round One to be used to be used for 24 projects in Seaham and Murton support job creation, improve educational achievement, enhance the environment, and promote the quality of life through service provision;
- £4.69 million in Round Five a project in the Dawdon and Parkside areas of Seaham to focus upon housing, environment, community based training and youth and community safety; and

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<sup>38</sup> Soon followed in 1997 by the Turning The Tide agenda which cleaned up the coastline formerly "once little more than dumping grounds for the coal industry" (BBC Wear, 2009, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/wear/content/articles/2009/02/16/easington\\_miners\\_strike\\_regeneration\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wear/content/articles/2009/02/16/easington_miners_strike_regeneration_feature.shtml))

<sup>39</sup> linked with the designation of Enterprise Zone at Spectrum Business Park (see figure 4).

<sup>40</sup> Urban policy around brownfield redevelopment in former industrial areas was significant from this point on as a tool for targeting regeneration in areas which were in greatest need, and turning these former brownfield sites into zones for employment or housing- discussed further in see Chapter 5.

- £18.6 million in Round Six (2000) for the project Promoting Strong, Healthy and Safe Communities in County Durham.

However, investment was not universal, nor was it intended to be; the noteworthy SRB funding was only accessible by the named communities creating a disparity between Seaham and the less strategic/ more marginal neighbouring villages. This is not to say that funding was not available for- in the case of East Durham- 'the collieries', however the funding gained by the collieries was neither as extensive nor intensive as the SRB monies. For example, a Big Lottery Fund bid of £200,000 was awarded to the Easington Colliery and Horden Regeneration Partnership in 2005 to spend up until 2009. This grant-- designated to build community capacity; improve facilities and the environment; and improve employment and training opportunities<sup>41</sup> - was undeniably useful, yet significantly less than the millions provided to Seaham, for example. This approach to regeneration and funding allocation, the interviews highlighted, developed due to a belief- expressed by council employees- that the colliery villages were funding 'black holes' requiring significant money spending in every one of the numerous villages across the local area. Such an approach was deemed costly and unachievable due to restricted funding availability. Therefore, by focusing the limited resources on one strategic neighbourhood, it was argued that a more significant and visible change would be achieved which would then have a knock on (in theory at least) to the surrounding, smaller communities. Whether this was achieved, or even achievable, is questionable; it is evident from this research that the larger, more strategic towns which achieved funding have changed significantly, and the colliery villages have stagnated due to a lack of funding, evident in both economically buoyant and depressed times- and I shall return to this discussion again in Chapter 5.

Another piece of urban policy which assumed the approach of promoting renewal in strategic areas with the aim of a knock on effect, and which was significant in East Durham, was the Enterprise Zones (EZ) designation. In East Durham, Seaham was again the targeted for this regeneration. Most significantly it was the EZ policy which was universally accepted by interviewees from all sectors to be the key

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<sup>41</sup> <http://democracy.durham.gov.uk/mgOutsideBodyDetails.aspx?ID=441>

point from which the town's post mining growth trajectory can be plotted. Introduced as an entrepreneurial urban strategy through the Local Government Planning and Land Act (1980), EZ's originated due to the views of Geographer Peter Hall<sup>42</sup>, who was critical of the previous 'conventional' efforts adopted to reverse urban decline. Enterprise Zones, he believed, should enjoy relaxed planning, employment, welfare, pollution, health and safety, and taxation legislation<sup>43</sup> to establish an environment in which enterprise and innovation could develop (Tallon, 2010)- interestingly also very significant to Neo-liberal ideas. It was believed that this action would both renew the inner city- or locality designated as an EZ- as well as have a 'multiplier' effect on the local and wider regional economy (Atkinson and Moon, 1994).

Seaham's designation as an Enterprise Zone<sup>44</sup> (see figure 4) witnessed the development of 18 hectares of agricultural land<sup>45</sup> bought by English Partnerships from the former British Coal Board to be developed as a "...fully serviced prestige industrial estate" (Easington District Council, 2001, 174). The Enterprise Zone not only involved land development but, significantly for the town of Seaham, involved the building of a new link road between Seaham and the A19, which proved to be a very valuable—some would argue the most valuable-- piece of infrastructure joining town to the central trunk road. This road opened up the town to the wider city region making it more accessible and also had a knock on effect to other parts of the town, as a regeneration manager interviewed (CC) articulated:

"It made it more feasible for the Dock Company [which operated from the long existing port] to invest, and expand their operations. So rather than moving away they expanded and brought in a rail head facility. You've got the employment opportunity on the enterprise site and that meant the town

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<sup>42</sup> While Hall's ideas initiated and instigated the Enterprise Zone policy the final version bore little resemblance of the free-market notion envisaged by Hall

<sup>43</sup> Rates relief, whilst arguably the most attractive incentive, have been criticised for redistributing existing jobs within the local area (Massey 1982; Talbot, 1988) and favouring land owners who received higher rents or values for land designated as an Enterprise Zone site (Cadman, 1982; Erickson and Syms, 1986).

<sup>44</sup> One of the 38 Enterprise Zones which were established in total

<sup>45</sup> later this Greenfield development policy was replaced by numerous agendas which promoted the redevelopment of Brownfield land- see chapters 2 and 5 for more detail.

centre was freed up to bring in Byron Place shopping development. It was a case of chipping away at all different aspects”.

A regeneration Manager interviewed highlighted how this general overhaul of the town resulting from the Enterprise Zone designation also enhanced the negative attitudes previously held by developers’, overcoming their reluctance to build in East Durham were overcome by this piece of urban policy:

“In 1998 there was next to no private house building going on [in East Durham]. There was an image problem, and it was still very close to the closure of the mines. People were very much thinking in terms of decline and how to shore things up, and I think the private sector took a similar view to that. There was still massive outward migration and that was expected to be ongoing for some time... Then we started to assemble sites and the first phase of enterprise zones... From that we started to see speculative commercial development, and I think from that developer interest and bringing new companies in we started to get more interest in the newly cleared sites for the opportunities which existed then. It did start to snowball from there.”

Nevertheless, the success of the Seaham EZ from a business point of view to promote innovation is questionable as many business units have always been or currently stand empty; “... there is almost 250,000 sq ft of vacant accommodation currently available” (Easington District Council, 2008, 10) . The units, while aesthetically attractive with a pleasant vantage point over the North Sea (see figure 4), evidently do not provide the appropriate accommodation suitable for businesses to locate. The reason for this, according to the 2008 Regeneration Statement (Easington District, 2008: 30), was because the agenda was:

“...driven by investor rather than occupier needs- and as such there has been a lack of provision of suitable premises to meet the needs of start-up and expanding businesses...”

A significant element to this private sector driven approach of the Enterprise Zone policy was discussed by a private Planning Consultant (Interview CC) who stated sombrelly: “In terms of some of the commercial and employment uses it hasn’t been so successful”, which he blamed on the attitude entrenched in the Enterprise Zones policy which regarded these economic development areas a “...tax haven for people to build accommodation and reducing their tax liabilities”.

The move from industrial to post-industrial employment- largely comprising call centres in East Durham- may be the reason for such a glut in business units. Of the 7,000 net jobs gained between 1997 and 2007, 4,200 were in the financial sector, the majority of which were call/ contact centre based (Easington District Council, 2008). Enterprise Zones provide properties for this purpose, however the competition with Sunderland, Teesside and Newcastle for both jobs and businesses location has led to many empty units. as an aside—but a no less valuable point to be made at this point-- there is a further concern regarding the over-reliance on the call centre industry for the future of East Durham. A local councillor voiced concerns that a reliance on call centres could, in time, create an ‘all eggs in one basket’ problem similar to that witnessed with the mining industry.

Neoliberal urban policies, used to counter the decline in social and economic condition of neighbourhoods and districts have-- in the case of East Durham and other declining industrial areas-- created instability, poverty and socio-economic inequality (Esping-Anderson and Regini, 2000). State retraction, flexible labour and low paid, precarious service jobs—of which East Durham has been subjected to with the restructuring of the employment market in the wake of deindustrialisation-- spreads insecurity and poverty<sup>46</sup> (Wacquant, 2008). This is indeed evident in East Durham, and expressed through the low employment levels

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<sup>46</sup> While not directly related to this discussion, but of general interest, Wacquant calls for public policy to move from the ‘work fare’ ideas of low-wage employment and move towards the reestablishment or expansion of state services, and an appreciation that it is an ‘untenable assumption’ that the majority of adults can have their basic needs met by long term formal employment. Such a suggestion, in light of the economic trend and greater emphasis on market, private driven economies held central to Neo-Liberal agendas, seems unlikely to be adopted.

of the district: in 2006, for example, 68.8% of East Durham residents of working age were in employment (compared to the 75% regional average) with the remaining third of the group claiming Jobseekers allowance or Incapacity Benefit/ Severe Disablement Allowance (Easington District Council, 2008).

#### **4.4 housing 'hot spots' and 'cold spots' in East Durham: a case study in geographical inequality**

The decline of the collieries and closure of the mines resulted in a loss of function for some of the communities it left behind; this is especially true of those areas which owe their growth as mining 'encampments' to house the colliery workers in close proximity to their jobs. This approach exemplifies the UK Labour government approach to regeneration and economic renewal which saw the establishment of the Urban Task Force (UTF) whose report, entitled the Urban Renaissance (DETR, 1999), was introduced in a bid to overcome the housing and employment depopulation of urban spaces. The Urban Renaissance—embodied in the Urban White Paper (UWP) (DETR, 2000)—recommended attempts to “bring people back to the city” (DETR, 1999), signalling the beginning of housing being single out as a driver to renewal, as well as the enduring association between government policies and gentrification. Indeed the idea of repopulating the inner city was argued to possess the strong subtext of “...bringing the middle classes back to the city” (Davidson, 2008, see also Lees, 2003b).

In East Durham a viable housing market was an important element in aiding an area in weathering the restructuring storm, especially to the renewal of East Durham (Easington District Council, 2008), yet there are discrete and significant differences in attitudes toward localities in East Durham dependent on the perceptions of the local housing markets. Indeed East Durham is subject to local variation in these terms:

“Despite the increased buoyancy of the Easington [District] housing market... some neighbourhoods face more complex housing problems.

Across all tenures, some housing may be unpopular or obsolete, and neighbourhoods may face complex and inter-related problems of worklessness, crime, poor facilities and a poor quality environment. Some of these neighbourhoods may not be sustainable without more radical change” (Easington District Council, 2008, 39)

There are distinct area types in East Durham, polarised as ‘hot spots’ and ‘cold spots’. Housing ‘hot spots’ are defined as areas where housing development was deemed most feasible and offering a greater economic or social return, these are not currently regeneration areas but did receive funding in the period immediately after the areas post-industrial decline. As such these areas receive a private sector led approach. For example, Seaham and Peterlee are deemed ‘strategic’ areas in local urban policy, which are hot spots and regarded as attractive locations containing “...important employment centres” (Easington District Council, 2008, 20) and offering housing which was “...highest demand” (Easington District Council, 2008b, 16. Conversely ‘cold spots’ are areas with less functional housing markets—i.e. less attractive zones for both residents to live and developers to build—which are designated as ‘Regeneration Areas’ and targeted for renewal currently, which is led and funded by the Local Authority. The terms ‘hot spot’ and ‘cold spot’ were used during the interviews by individuals from all sectors. While this phrasing was not used directly in urban policy the areas referred to do conform directly to policy. The ‘hot spot’ of Seaham and ‘cold spot’ of Easington Colliery offers the starkest contrast in East Durham<sup>47</sup>, and so provide the best examples for discussing the uneven development of the district.

Neil Smith’s concept of the devalorization cycle provides a useful lens through which to examine the trajectory of development in East Durham. Capital investment in infrastructure and services (i.e. housing) can produce surplus value which in turn can be used to reinvest to expand, equally, capital can be withdrawn and moved elsewhere in a bid to exploit conditions which could provide greater profit rates (Duncan and Goodwin, 1988). As such capital investment (as noted

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<sup>47</sup> Other villages sit at different points on a continuum between these two communities.

above) can result in a visual component of a larger social, economic, and spatial restructuring of the contemporary capitalist economy (Smith and Williams, 1986) can both result in or counter decline (Smith, 1984). While this cycle of land and housing is deemed 'rational' by Smith and Lefaivre (1984), it should not be considered 'natural' due to the multitude of decision made by financial bodies, housing developers, landlords, estate agents and others who control the real estate market. In this sense it is very much a social process, with decisions made by actors and influencing/ being influenced by social structures (and this is drawn on again later in the thesis in Chapters 6 and 7). This five stage process (involving new construction, transfer to landlord control, blockbusting, redlining and abandonment) highlights how the development (or lack of development) within each neighbourhood is guided by specific decisions made by those involved in the whole process of housing and regeneration (i.e those given attention in this thesis- see Chapter 7), the economic value attached to property, physical state and ground rent prices.

This process also highlights how negative images fuse to geographical space making such associations difficult to change (Dean and Hastings, 2000), thus massively influencing local housing markets (Buys, 1997). As such the social construction of 'place' is "... one of the most multi-layered and multi-purpose words in our language" (Harvey, 1993, 4) as images of a geographical space are created and recreated by the meanings attached to different locations by different groups. Invariably the meaning of place is constructed by 'insiders' and 'outsiders' who both observe place differently and attach different meaning and context (Suttles, 1972; Entrikin, 1991) which impact upon relationships with home and space as a locality of buildings, streets and individuals. This is a very subjective and emotive topic. While East Durham may be regarded as a stigmatised area by outsiders, the views of insiders is very different; East Durham's Area Action Partnership research (Durham County Council, 2010b) suggests that 83% were satisfied with their local area as a place to live but were aware of the 'blemished' space as 77% of respondents felt they lived in some of the most deprived communities in the country (Durham County Council, 2010b). These values are



also reflected in the research for this thesis. Evidently, a neighbourhood is classified-- whether intentionally or subconsciously-- as 'good' and 'bad' areas, stigmatising zones into 'problem estates', no-go areas' and ghettos which, in turn, receive negative media attention and disproportionate discrimination from outsiders and insiders alike (Wacquant, 2008). These self-perpetuating processes influence those involved in the process (such as developers, policy writers) and can lead to negative changes and the decline of neighbourhoods, which result in changes to physical fabric of the area (in terms of buildings and open spaces), social conditions (crime, reputation and status of the area), financial circumstances (such as a gap between housing quality and rent demands) and organisational environment (break down of community resulting from failing social resources) (Skifter Anderson, 2003).

Issues of geographical stigma are played out, and somewhat tangible, in the development of post-mining brownfield development (addressed further in Chapter 5). A surplus of large swathes of previously developed in East Durham mean that many of the large scale housing developments have taken place on brownfield land. Consequently many issues associated with East Durham's regeneration relate to concerns over the reclamation and redevelopment of former industrial sites. This is a condition experienced by many former industrial areas; indeed it is suggested that "Over the past 30-40 years, urban change and deindustrialisation in advanced economies have created a legacy of vacant and derelict land that is increasingly seen as a development opportunity rather than planning problem" (Adams, et al, 2010, 75). Evidently it is a flagrant situation resulting from the scale of mining and resultant brownfield land. In East Durham it is visible that sites in 'more attractive' areas have been more likely redeveloped while less attractive areas have been reclaimed but often left, greened over and awaiting further development or a future purpose. The divergence of development is keenly displayed in housing terms with regard to Seaham's Vane Tempest colliery and Easington Colliery pits, both of which closed in 1993 (two of the latest pits to close in the Durham coalfield) and occupying a similar site on the coast. Land reclamation was subsequently carried out on both sites, however it is at this

point that the parallel development stops; the site at Easington Colliery was greened over, and has sat vacant (save for a small park which houses a memorial to those who died in the mine, see figure 9) and the larger site of the former Vane Tempest mine was developed into 600 new build properties for sale ( now known as East Shore Village, see figure 6a and 6b). These examples are now addressed in more detail.

#### **4.4.1 Easington Colliery: a 'cold spot' in East Durham**

As highlighted in the Introduction of this thesis the mining industry offers a long and involved history with regard to housing provision for colliery workers. With the demise of coal mining in East Durham, came the withdrawal of both capital and people, and problems associated with post industrial decline such as poor health, unemployment, high levels of incapacity benefit and were exacerbated by IMD classifications (discussed earlier). In East Durham this was also accompanied by the mass selling of the traditional colliery housing (see figure 7a and figure 7b) owned by the National Coal Board (NCB).

In the 1960's the National Coal Board started to withdraw from house-building, and in 1976 proceeded to sell off their stock to existing tenants or the local authority. The British Coal followed suit and after the 1984-5 miners' strike started selling stock, which gained momentum after 1985. Keen to sell stock quickly, British Coal was prepared to sell this housing to 'anyone'. The sale of cheap housing to private landlords is widely accepted to have "...created a number of housing problems in the coal districts" (Beynon, et al, 1999, 3). Indeed properties were sold in large lots at low prices-- interviews cited anecdotal evidence that colliery housing stock was sold in lots of 20 or 30 houses. The initial condition of these properties were not necessarily high as Beynon, et al (1999: 3) concluded

"... coal board housing tended to be in very poor condition and in need of modernisation and repair. Regardless of the problems caused by the sell off process the condition of the properties is poor, often dating back to the 19th century".

Nevertheless these dwellings were seen as investment opportunities, and people from around the world bought properties with an eye to rent them out and establish or extend a property portfolio. These 'absentee' landlords are blamed for causing major problems to the private housing stock in East Durham (see, for example, Durham County Council, 2011a). Believed to be unconcerned about the functionality of the area in which they own houses it is suggested that there is, or certainly was in the past, little vetting or selection of residents undertaken. Therefore it is argued that areas already experiencing problems were further disadvantaged and blighted by disconnected property owners. The absent landlords employ management agencies to supervise the properties as instructed. Some of these representatives interviewed for this research also stated that their clients were to blame<sup>48</sup>.

Smith's Devalorisation Theory argues that where some Landlords may maintain the properties the incentive to do so declines as the rent value of the property also declines. This, in turn, leads to the physical deterioration of the area and heightens the shift from owner-occupied to landlord/ rented properties. This downward spiral of devalorization creates negative images of the neighbourhood and, ultimately, dissuades institutions from investing- resulting in red lining (the active disinvestment of capital). Finally as rent prices fall landlords fail to meet their economic needs, leading to the abandonment of properties.

In Easington Colliery the motivation for (the largely absent) landlords to invest in properties was low due to a lack of employment not only in the villages, but in the district as a whole, as well as the related issue of a low economic return from these properties resulting from the area being regarded as unattractive . This has rendered the housing stock low demand. As such housing is seen as always available and, therefore, a last resort meaning it attracts "undesirable people" to Easington Colliery (Interview P). A local councillor (Interview P) proposed that

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<sup>48</sup> Concerns over welfare and living standards associated with absentee landlords in the privately rented sector lead to the introduction of the Selective Licensing scheme in 2009 (discussed in more depth in Chapter 5).

measures are required to solve the problems associated with pit closures and the mass selling of colliery housing which, it was argued, was carried out with a lack of forethought for the community. this process meant that housing and the physical fabric of the community deteriorated, leading to redlining when the majority of housing developers rejected Easington Colliery as a neighbourhood to build properties in both slump and boom housing market periods. Evidently-- and supporting Smith's theory-- this resulted in the abandonment of properties, which created numerous void and vacant dwellings, some of which were subject to demolition (see figure 10, below) as part of the housing market restructuring of East Durham.



*Figure 10: Demolition of Andrew and Alnwick Street ('B' Streets), Easington Colliery 2003. (Copyright 'Farwell Squalor' by Sally-Ann Norman)*

The high concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged tenants in one neighbourhood resulted in an increasingly stigmatised reputation for zones in East Durham. In East Durham, Easington Colliery and Dawdon were highlighted as the main areas negatively affected by the sale of these properties and regarded as 'cold spots' or Regeneration Areas experiencing low demand and targeted as a priority for private sector housing work (Easington District Council, 2002). This focus of negative reputation, in turn, stigmatises residents through association. A 'spiral of decay' is sparked as further negative images and stigmatized associations exacerbate existing problems (Wassenberg, 2004, 223). This resultant "blemish of

place” (Wacquant, 2007) has a wider impact, influencing the attitudes and actions of private operators (such as developers) as well as those of public services, who administer welfare provision and influence policing strategies (Slater, 2012).

The process, by which an area can decline relatively rapidly as a result of disinvestment, and devalorization, was highlighted by a Housing Lettings Manager when detailing the decline of the six streets of Easington Colliery known as Wembley. Wembley-- once a thriving area-- was adversely affected by the large scale sale of Coal Board properties and a subsequent lack of investment by new landlords or urban policy to support the area. The Housing Lettings Manager suggested Wembley was “the place to be”. Housing was allocated in a random, ticketed manner but, due to the status of the streets, and the larger size of the properties, it was asserted that workers would pay a month’s wage to swap properties so they could live in Wembley. Community spirit also played a large part in making the area attractive. For example the area hosted street parties in which all residents attended, most notable was when Prince Charles Princess Diana were married which took place at a time when the mines and mining industry was not regarded as thriving as it once was. However the sale of properties to private landlords had a hugely negative impact with properties sold off in blocks of 20 dressed up as ‘portfolio investments’. One landlord, the Housing Lettings Manager (Interview DD) stated, bought 40 houses with little thought of how his lack of forethought for the community would impact:

“At one point they were all empty and they were just putting people in. I think the reason for the problems is, and I’ve told him this, is because he put smack heads and idiots in. You put a smack head in a house then the people either side will move, then you put more smack heads in because no one else will live there, then you get a row of them... Literally in a weekend you move someone in and there is a spate of burglaries and in a weekend no one wants to live there. Then only his mates will move in next door or opposite so instead of having one idiot you get a whole street of them”

In Easington Colliery the oversupply of sub-standard and void housing (and associated anti-social behaviour) was tackled by the local authority with a process of selective demolition funded with a £500,000, while the same problem in Dawdon, Seaham, was approached with Single Regeneration Budget<sup>49</sup> Round 6 funding allocated for a programme of Group repair which aimed to enhance selected streets/ terraces (Easington District Council, 2002). This work has all been local authority based and funded. In theory, development has always been welcomed in the former colliery villages<sup>50</sup>, however the push to 'market' these areas is questionable (yet witnessed in Seaham, see 4.4.2). This clearance/ face lift of existing low demand stock, combined with a lack of marketing and promotion by the local authority meant that 'cold spots' were perceived to be 'risky' places by developers who were loathed to invest in new housing stock in the belief that any property built in these communities would not be regarded as attractive for sale or rent due to negative images-- and stigma-- attached to these neighbourhoods. This was noted in the interviews by private sector housing developers and builders who are dissuaded from building as they believe that most properties will not sell as no one wants to live there. When a developer (Interview K) was asked what factors persuading them to build properties in a particular area, his response was simple and based upon the attitudes of those buying the property:

“What persuades you to buy in an area?! It's the same thing. We are house sellers. If it'll sell we'll build it... and some places don't sell 'cos no one wants to live there. Simple as.”

This attitude has a significant impact on the perceived viability of an area; housing developers are much like prestigious or larger retailers (such as Marks and Spencer) who possess the capacity to shape images of problematic and stigmatised areas, giving the impression that the area is “... on an upward trajectory, their absence that it was not” (Dean and Hasting, 2000, 32; see also Hastings 2004). The views held by the private sector are also acknowledged by the former local

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<sup>49</sup> A European funded, locally administered regeneration agenda

<sup>50</sup> For example, the 2001 Local Plan for the district stated “outside the major centres, it is intended that most of the remaining housing need should be met in those villages which have a reasonable range of services and facilities [noting Easington Colliery and Wheatley Hill as two such villages]... It is important that housing land is allocated in these settlements to assist their sustainability and their economic regeneration” (Easington District, 2001, 72).

authority of Easington District Council- but little was done to tackle it<sup>51</sup> as it was highlighted that there was “...considerably less interest from the private sector” in Easington Colliery (Easington District Council, 2001). Similarly, as voiced by a housing management agent (Interview DD) Wembley is a branded and blemished place “You only get a certain type of person living up there [Wembley]. We’ve got 3 bed houses with one person in because a family isn’t prepared to live up there. It’s got a bad reputation”. Indeed, the reputation of these areas and the associated problems gave way to some rather controversial statements about the way in which the low demand collieries should be tackled; a number of interviewees joked about the best regeneration strategies for some would involve extensive demolition work, with a county councillor (Interview M) even stating “I shouldn’t say this but we should just flatten the lot, push it into the sea”.

Anecdotal stories, presented by interviewees and community groups, highlight the impact of this on wider perceptions of certain areas of East Durham, specifically Easington Colliery which was suggested to be a place where many offenders are homed (with a high profile offender being housed there during the interview period) and signs posted in prisons stating that if on release prisoners struggle to find housing they should go to Easington Colliery as they will get a home without any problem. Another story told by numerous interviewees working or living in East Durham highlighted the case of a soldier who, after leaving the army in November, was offered a property to rent in Easington Colliery however declined in favour of camping in a friends garden. The story illustrates levels of associated stigma when it emerges it was November when the ex-soldier was sleeping in a tent.

Evidently attitudes of outsiders and residents/ community activists differ, and often jar, in East Durham. Dean and Hastings (2000:13) during their research into stigmatised housing estates stated that

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<sup>51</sup> until Selective Licensing for landlords and the Group Repair Scheme was introduced in the ‘golden age and after to tackle the most ‘blighted’ streets- discussed further in Chapter 5

“...it is not appropriate to talk of *the image* of an estate. Rather there are *fractured images*, with people’s opinions differing depending on their mechanisms for interpreting the world, and their personal priorities and belief systems, as well as the experiences that they have had”

This is exemplified by the impact of media coverage on the locality, often criticised by interviewees (also see Cole and Smith, 1996; and Darner, 1989, 1992). ‘Secret Millionaire’ (a television programme aired nationally 26<sup>th</sup> August 2008) provided funding for different community projects in East Durham and was cited by many interviewees who lived or worked in the collieries as damaging reputation by focussing on the negative. A housing association representative (Interview E) said of the programme “They didn’t show the coast or the new estates, it picked the worst place then went from there.”(Interview E). Indeed, negative association emerging from media coverage by BBC Magazine (6 March 2008) of Easington Colliery as “The Whitest Place in England” with only 0.8% of residents in 2001 census from ethnic minorities (Casciani, 2008). This had a damaging effect as it suggested “bigoted attitudes” (local ward councillor: Interview D).

East Durham’s cold spot neighbourhoods share much with the high rise public housing schemes of the French Banlieue in terms of the strong class based associations. Bound up in negative associations with unemployment, depopulation and a bad reputation the streets or zones of East Durham experience similar situations to the estates on the French urban periphery which are regarded as ‘branded’ spaces and ‘blemished’ settings (Wacquant, 2008). While it could be assumed that the research for this thesis finds support for Wacquant’s ideas of stigmatised space, his assertion that “ ...the public disgrace afflicting these [stigmatised] areas devalues the sense of self of their residents and corrodes their social ties” (Wacquant, 2008, 116) is ill founded in the ‘cold spots’ of East Durham. Wacquant asserts from his research that:

“In response to spatial defamation, residents engage in strategies of mutual distancing and lateral denigration; they retreat into the private sphere of the family; and they exit from the neighbourhood (whenever they have the



option). These practices of *symbolic self-protection* set off a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby negative representations of the place end up producing in it the very cultural anomie and social atomism that these representations claim were already there” (Wacquant, 2008, 116).

Nevertheless Easington Colliery, for example, may be seen from the periphery as somewhere which people do not wish to live (highlighted by the lack of development and anecdotal story of a soldier sleeping in a friends garden in the depth of winter) the residents of the cold spots are not withdrawn, or displaying ‘symbolic self-protection’. Whereas living in the Banlieue may be deemed an “...insult... experienced as a shame...” (Wacquant, 2008, 172) this is not the case for those in East Durham. The steering groups highlighted a great sense of pride of the mining heritage and strong community spirit still pervades. Indeed, there is a definite desire by residents, third sector representatives and councillors for the villages and communities to return to the thriving economic and community which was evident previously, though it was appreciated to be a ‘slow process’.

#### **4.4.2 Seaham: a ‘hot spot’ in East Durham**

I shall now return to the theory of devalorization, to illustrate how decline in Seaham was addressed and reversed by involvement of the Local Authority. Like Easington Colliery, Seaham’s pit closed in 1993 and was one of the last mines to close in the district. Unlike Easington Colliery, however, the creation of a ‘rent gap’ in Seaham proved fundamental to its development. The price of land (brownfield, mainly freed up by the deindustrialization process) was sufficiently low to attract investment from housing developers, landlords, the local authority, and so on, who believed that investment would yield a potential profit. The development of such a rent gap generates an opportunity for both urban restructuring and gentrification, especially in abandoned industrial zones (Smith and Williams, 1986). With an abundance of land in the locality the focus on Seaham came at the price of the other post industrial areas, and while house building in East Durham rose from an average of 175 properties a year in the period between 1997/8 and 2002/3 to 382, 406 and 611 in the 2003/4, 2004/5 and 2006/7 periods, respectively (Easington

District Council, 2008) these properties and the associated housing market buoyancy was accredited to the 'good quality housing supply in Seaham providing private, self-build and social properties alongside leisure facilities (Easington District Council, 2008). Alone Seaham provided 650 homes on brownfield land at Vane Tempest/ East Shore Village, 190 new properties replaced the demolished local authority housing stock at Parkside, while 400 homes were constructed on the former combined sites of Seaham Colliery and North Dock (former Port of Seaham location). These properties not only improved the housing offer in the area, but were also accompanied by a house price increase of 173% between 2000 and 2006, offering an example of successful housing-led regeneration in new build properties. This process further crystallised Seaham's viability and promoted "...increasing developer interest..." in both the town itself and the neighbouring town of Peterlee (Easington District Council, 2008). Most significant to this process- according to interviewees for this research- was the development of East Shore Village on the former Vane Tempest colliery site in Seaham which took the first and largest scale steps towards the diversification of housing stock in East Durham (Planning Consultant: Interview CC).

Seaham's industrial decline was addressed by targeted and enduring urban policy initiated by the Local Authority who not only reclaimed land and providing the infrastructure for development, but also marketed the area so as to attract housing developers and other private sector investors to the locality. As such public resources were employed to overcome 'flat lining' through the introduction of a large scale economic and housing-led renewal strategies. While a number of strategies placed importance on Seaham, the most significant during the period of restructuring after the mines closed was the 2002-2007 County Durham Economic Strategy highlighted Seaham and Peterlee as two of the 14 major centres in the County as a whole, stressing their importance as employment centres with significant housing markets. This focussed approach was regarded by interviewees as having a positive impact on Seaham, considered to have 'turned the place around' and 'solved loads of problems'.

Fundamentally, this 'marketising' of urban policies and planning involved the neoliberal local authority 'selling the city'; rather than acting as regulator of the local market they now act as agents to the urban space through the implementation of urban renewal agendas, 'flagship projects' and financial incentives (Punch, et al, 2004; Smith 2002). A regeneration manager (Interview BB) suggested that Seaham not only offered a good location but was marketed appropriately to attract development

“[the local authority] being very positive with developers and trying to identify opportunities and selling a long term vision, and knock down any barriers they had to coming in. That was the approach that was taken... it was very successful”

Indeed, the renewal of Seaham was widely regarded as not purely a result of focussed investment and regeneration work, but also “clever marketing and a lot of positive media attention” (Planning Consultant: Interview CC) which has resulted in a strong “symbolism” for the town (Unitary Council Senior Planner: Interview L). This sits starkly against the less 'marketed' areas of the collieries; as a third sector housing association (Interview E) argued successful regeneration can have a huge impact on image, as well as perception of the capacity for future investment as such a lack of positive association is difficult to overcome. While Seaham still has its problems these are less visible because of the positive associations with the area:

“I think there are estates and the drugs problems are still there, but to look at the face of it, it's changed. And you can go anywhere and people see it as really coming up, whereas this place [Easington Colliery] has a bad reputation that counts for so much.”

The process of gentrification is evident in this focussed regeneration and marketised approach of the local authority. Simultaneously employed to attract developers to construct larger properties who achieve a higher profit and create

stock diversification and 'social mixing' attracting a new, different type of resident. This is evident also in the grey literature and interviews which highlights Seaham as offering an opportunity for executive housing. The interviewees recognised a need for housing at all levels of the housing market, especially executive homes within East Durham which are regarded as a scarce housing commodity but would hugely expand the social mix by accommodating "industrialists" (Easington District, 2001) and "top end managers in top end companies" (Interview BB) in high quality, low density housing—this is discussed in greater detail next in Chapter 5.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the experiences in East Durham with regard to space and place, providing an insight into the main dimensions of uneven development (namely stigma and marginality) in a post industrial setting. The chapter is significant as it highlights the broader impact of urban renewal policies, laying the foundation for subsequent chapters. Not only does it illustrate how policy interventions can create problems and exacerbate existing issues, but it also highlights how focussed urban policy can shape and be shaped by perceptions held by agents who influence broader economic circumstances- namely housing developers and economic investors. These attitudes towards post-industrial areas have combined to stimulate growth unevenly, emphasising strategic areas over-- and I would argue at the expense of-- the colliery villages. The following chapters build from this contextual discussion of unevenness, developing the debate over the perceived and real impact of neo-liberal policy in the regeneration of post-industrial settings. Specifically Chapter 5 focuses on the interplay between wider economic changes, housing market peaks and troughs and urban policy agendas.

By employing the nested case studies of Seaham and Easington Colliery this chapter has illustrated how the creation of capital through both the natural and built environment created inequality, establishing housing 'hot spots' and 'cold

spots'. The impact of strategic urban policies targeting specific areas for regeneration can be seen as clearly influencing the devalorization process and creating a Rent Gap. This situation was consequently exploited in the hotspot areas of Seaham, by housing developers who saw this as an opportunity to make profit. Easington Colliery provided the example of how stigma combined with a lack of (associated) funding and focussed urban policy can create or exacerbate housing cold spots. The chapter most significantly highlights how targeted neoliberal urban policy has, and does, create inequality and uneven development. In turn this is interpreted by the private sector and communities themselves, and can guide further stigmatisation. Therefore, a neighbourhood's viability is in the hands of policy makers and implementers, and so arises from government control (at different levels). This is not necessarily a criticism of regeneration, however this side effect must be at the forefront of all those working in policy development and implementation at the local authority- and beyond- so that an appropriate counter approach, also expressed through policy, can be deployed as a means to protect communities and achieving greater equality (suggestions of how this can be tackled are discussed in Chapter 8).

## **CHAPTER 5: ASSEMBLING HOUSING-LED REGENERATION IN EAST DURHAM**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4 highlighted and contextualised the development of unevenness in East Durham which became much more pronounced after the closure of the mines and retraction of the mining industry. Developing these initial themes, this chapter progresses the discourse of space and place further, by critically assessing Neo-liberal housing-led regeneration policies in the period of housing market boom and slump periods- 2006 to 2008 and post 2008, respectively. As introduced in Chapter 1 the loss of jobs and associated population decline led to the former Easington District Council supporting a restructuring of housing provision so as to supply good-quality, sustainable housing which would retain the population, attract business and promote housing market growth (Easington District Council, 2008, 4). New build housing- undertaken with the wider aim of stock diversification- was accompanied by (private and social) stock rehabilitation and in some cases demolition of housing stock was undertaken<sup>52</sup>. The approach adopted was area dependant due to micro level housing market trends- i.e. cold spots and hot spots- which formed as a result of uneven development across the district, therefore requiring locally and contextually specific strategies (Heath, 2001).

A significant novelty of this research, as developed in this chapter, is the recognition that a broader approach to housing-led regeneration is needed. As such this thesis moves away from the widely held academic and public sector approach that housing-led regeneration encompasses new build properties, to an approach which also highlights the significance of the interaction with existing stock to the renewal process- see Chapter 1 and Chapter 8 for more detail. In relation to this, this chapter also draws attention to the issue that while all housing types are approached with local urban policy<sup>53</sup> this approach differs between

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<sup>52</sup> where large tracts of housing were low demand or void

<sup>53</sup> Evident in East Durham's policy which noted that: "New housing needs to be delivered alongside investment in existing housing and housing renewal to create sustainable communities and deliver

housing type and, as such, is tackled by different departments, with dissimilar aims.

Centrally this chapter discusses the issues which influence and shape housing-led regeneration in marginal areas to provide an in-depth insight into the background and aims of these agendas. By engaging with the agenda of housing-led regeneration this chapter illustrates the impact of national policy and wider economic shifts in influencing local housing and regeneration agendas. As such, policies affecting new housing and existing stock are critically assessed in terms of the impact which they have upon tackling, perpetuating or creating uneven development<sup>54</sup>-- a considerable issue witnessed with regard to housing 'cold spot' and 'hot spot' areas of East Durham (discussed in Chapter 4). Initially these are discussed in relation to the boom time 'golden age'—the period 2006 to 2007/8—and, in turn, engaging with gentrification which is closely linked with neo-liberal renewal policies. Finally the chapter examines the recent housing slump with regard to the shifting economic conditions and its impact on housing-led regeneration to exemplify both the wider economic conditions of East Durham and the impact of housing boom and slump.

## **5.2 Housing-led regeneration: urban policy and gentrification**

From the mid-1990's property markets started to boom (Tallon, 2010) and so, when gaining power in 1997, the Labour government embraced these improving market conditions, introducing a "...turning point in urban and regeneration policy" (Lee and Nevin, 2003, 82). This period focussed on the promotion of home ownership as an end in itself (rather than a means to an end as was previously witnessed). This led to the employment of a housing driven regeneration agenda which, as noted in the introduction, aimed to:

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balanced housing markets which are successful over the medium-to- long term" (Durham County Council, 2008, 25).

<sup>54</sup> Developing the agreement of Smith's (1982: 139) that "... gentrification and urban redevelopment are the leading edge of a larger process of uneven development..."

“...solve the problems of a locality through the introduction of a new, more affluent, population rather than directly addressing and seeking to solve the economic and social problems of existing communities and neighbourhoods.” (Cameron, 2006, 10)

Set within these parameters housing-led regeneration was adopted as an agenda to diversify housing types and tenures with the aim to transform the neighbourhood much quicker, and more easily, than it would be to change the image of a community (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000; and Beekman, et al, 2001). As highlighted in Chapter 4, Urban Task Force and Urban White Paper introduced a housing and a housing driven approach to “bring people back to the city” (DETR, 1999). Building on this, subsequent policies provided the wider portfolio of third-way, housing-led regeneration strategy which were driven by two major beliefs. Firstly, a concern that a massive increase in household numbers nationally (a projection of four million over twenty five years) would lead to an escalation of development on green-field land leading to suburban sprawl (concerns felt by previous governments- see Chapter 2). Secondly, the economic function of an area can only be enhanced if the trend for out migration can be reversed (Atkinson, 2002; see also Tallon, 2010). These values were translated into a range of urban policy initiatives and programmes. This national policy was ideal for East Durham whose legacy of industrial decline meant the large tracts of brownfield land could be exploited to overcome the economic and housing conditions associated with industrial decline (detailed in Chapter 4). The wider agenda of the district was adopted to achieve:

1. diversification of tenure and size of stock through new build housing
2. improvement in the quality and condition of social housing stock
3. address the quality/ condition and problems associated with the private rented sector<sup>55</sup>.

The shifting focus of urban policy and the promotion of home ownership through housing-led regeneration (Lee and Nevin, 2003) is argued to possess the subtext of

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<sup>55</sup> As highlighted in numerous local policies; see, for example, Easington District Housing Strategy (2002), Comprehensive Spending Review (2003), Three Year Housing Strategy (2008) and both the 2006 and 2008 Regeneration Statement’s for Easington District.



promoting gentrification (Atkinson, 2002) as “a positive public policy tool” (Cameron, 2003). Contested in recent years, the term ‘gentrification’ was originally understood to involve the rejuvenation of decaying and low income areas of housing by the middle-classes in inner cities. The term developed in the 1970’s and 1980’s to encompass a broader procedure linked to spatial, economic and social restructuring (Sassen, 1991; Slater 2011). More recently increased state involvement and institutionalised gentrification has become embedded in the drive to ‘place shape’ and achieve an urban renaissance and the subsequent drive for urban regeneration and redevelopment in lower income areas (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Smith, 2002; Hackworth, 2007). This approach is argued to have created “islands of revitalisation within seas of decay” (Carmon, 2004) which are “*economically underdetermined and politically overdetermined*” (Wacquant, 2008b, 203). This is visible in East Durham where hot spots and cold spots sit starkly beside one another.

Building on the first and second phases, ‘third-wave’ gentrification<sup>56</sup> came about as a ‘return to gentrification’ in the mid-1990’s post-recession era (Tallon, 2010). This third wave approach has:

“...translated into larger, more corporate developers involved in the early stages of gentrification, and a palpable decline of community opposition<sup>57</sup>” (Hackworth and Smith, 2000, 475)

This quote illustrates how gentrification systematically became a central agenda within urban policy in late capitalist society. This is evident in the policy of housing-led regeneration which is bound up in issues of gentrification- discussed earlier and later in this chapter. Indeed, Neil Smith (2002: 446) asserts that Labour under the leadership of Tony Blair was “...the most outspoken advocate of reinventing gentrification as ‘urban regeneration’”, while Glynn (2009) suggests that a priority has been given to profitability in large scale regeneration through

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<sup>56</sup> Lees, et al (2008) go further, suggesting that the profusion of housing-led growth agendas and it’s links to the political promotion of gentrification has seen the introduction of a fourth wave of gentrification, while Tallon (2010) suggests the housing slump and credit crunch in the US and UK in late 2007 has, resultantly, slowed gentrification (discussed later in the chapter).

<sup>57</sup> Discussed further in chapter 7 with regard to Post-political theory

“government sponsored gentrification”, with growth in property prices providing a measure of successful regeneration.

### **5.2.1 The ‘Golden Age of Housing’: the new build agenda and the impact on uneven development in East Durham**

Property market boom and housing-led regeneration policies combined to promote the building of new houses to facilitate both regeneration and exploit the national trend of increasing housing prices and lucrative housing sales. Housing was strongly advocated as a tool to promote economic development, social inclusion and harmony, area renewal, and regional economic growth (Atkinson, 2002; Lee and Nevin, 2003). This period—spanning the house price rise of 2002 until 2007—was referred to during the interviews as the ‘Golden Age’. All interviewees involved in this study expressed a belief that in the pre-2008, boom period those working in housing ‘never had it so good’. It was expressed that properties could be bought cheaply for long term investment or a ‘quick profit’, exemplified by a Housing Manager (Interview DD) who enthused:

“It was Brilliant! You couldn’t not make money on a house. You could buy, sit on a house for six months, sell it and you’ve made £15,000... I know people who would buy somewhere, not put a tenant in then flog it a year later and make £20,000. Making a lot of money for doing very little...”

During the ‘golden age’ Seaham (along with Peterlee) played a significant role in both employment and housing terms (Easington District Council, 2008, 20). While housing was suggested to be required equally across the district “...highest demand is concentrated around Seaham and Peterlee” (Easington District Council, 2008b, 16)<sup>58</sup>. The prominence of Seaham was largely based on the large swathes of previously developed, brownfield land which could be exploited to provide new build housing. Initially introduced in the urban renaissance (DETR, 2000) then

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<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the prominence of Peterlee and Seaham as strategic areas in East Durham continued in the slump period and under the restructuring of local government from a two tiered to a one tiered Unitary County Council is also reflected in the recent County Durham Plan (see Chapter 6).

promoted in the Sustainable Communities Plan<sup>59</sup> (ODPM, 2003) and within the Barker Review<sup>60</sup> (Barker, 2004), brownfield development was significant to urban policy during the golden age. Brownfield development was a tool by which the urban environment could be infilled, based on the assumption that a high-density approach would change and enhance the 'social balance' of neighbourhoods through increasing populations and de-concentrating poverty and renovate poorer neighbourhoods into dynamic urban spaces (Lees, 2003; Davidson, 2008). As stated previously, the loss of the industrial base in East Durham-- and other areas-- has disadvantaged and disempowered working-class communities. In such areas there is greater value attached to the former industrial land as an important commodity than to the population as a potential pool of local, cheap employment (Punch, et al., 2004). This growing emphasis on land value is evident in the economic restructuring policies imposed upon areas affected by the collapse of mining and heavy industry.

Historically brownfield development was avoided by developers for new build properties due to a myriad of reasons<sup>61</sup>. More recently, however, regulatory and economic policies have provided incentives to counter this trend (Tallon, 2010). These brownfield policies were ideal for areas such as East Durham as it emphasised development in areas which were once industrialised but now were subject to industrial decline. These tended to be locales in greatest need of capital input and regeneration work. As such, the provision of new housing on previously developed land arguably played a considerable part in the renewal of Seaham with the creation of some localities (i.e. East Shore Village on the former pit site of Vane

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<sup>59</sup> The Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003:5) targeted brownfield land to fulfil the aim to "quality of life in our communities through increasing prosperity, reducing inequalities, more employment, better public services, better health and education, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour". By imposing a target that 60% of new dwellings be built on previously developed sites (HM Treasury, 2005) it was believed that the recycling of 'Brownfield' land for new build housing not only reduces pressure on Greenfield land, but also promote redevelopment at the heart of pre-existing urban areas.

<sup>60</sup> Concerns over housing supply prompted the Barker Review (Barker, 2004) which called for, amongst others, the acceleration of the planning process, and increased emphasis on mixed use and brownfield developments. While general housing supply was not an issue in East Durham and generally in the North East-- represented by the number of void, vacant and low demand properties-- the emphasis on the recycling of former industrial land to make use of the existing infrastructure was significant in East Durham.

<sup>61</sup> These included, amongst others, remediation costs and access issues (as highlighted by the interviewees from the development industry)

Tempest)-- yet it also created greater unevenness between neighbourhoods, as competition grew between areas in a struggle to attract developers and development. For the areas selected, the dramatic makeover of brownfield land transformed formerly unliveable urban areas into feasible living spaces for leisure and habitation (Davison and Lees, 2004). Similarly some parts of East Durham, with its swathes of brownfield land, has been transformed from industrial to residential zones, opening up the district to new and former residents alike. The relatively high proportion of ex-industrial brownfield land provided opportunity for redevelopment to satisfy the needs of the area for new, larger housing to attract or retain existing households by provide a more diverse mix of housing size, type and tenure (Easington District, 2006).

The 'golden age', and its associated housing price increase, not only made home ownership more attractive generally but also advantaged strategic areas in less expensive housing market districts. While there has always been a greater desire to live in certain post codes- largely those nearer pools of employment or in catchment areas of 'good schools'- the flourishing housing market limited choices of some buyers who were either priced out of a housing market or unable to buy due to a lack of development land in desired areas. This forced them to look further afield to find properties which were available or affordable and, similarly, provided developers with the opportunity to maximise profits by developing in other neighbourhoods near or neighbouring areas with successful housing markets. This 'leap frogging' took place in East Durham and anecdotal stories of how during the 'golden age', development in these areas was used to accommodate those house buyers who were priced out of the surrounding markets, such as Sunderland, Durham or Teesside.

The Easington District Regeneration Statement (2008:39) reflects the unevenness of property price growth across East Durham, stating that despite increased housing market buoyancy

“...some neighbourhoods face more complex housing problems. Across all tenures, some housing may be unpopular or obsolete, and neighbourhoods may face complex and inter-related problems of worklessness, crime, poor facilities and a poor quality environment. Some of these neighbourhoods may not be sustainable without more radical change”

As introduced in Chapter 4 Neil Smith’s devalorization thesis highlights how investment in one area has prompted the uneven development of the post-industrial brownfield land of East Durham. Seaham’s Vane Tempest site was redeveloped creating a new community named East Shore Village (which is by all accounts certainly a village in its own right). For East Durham the success of Seaham’s East Shore Village (see figure 6) was often discussed as a good example of the power of the housing market and, by association, the capacity for housing to encourage renewal. Providing three, four and five bedroom properties and a selection of ‘affordable’ homes on the former brownfield pit site of Vane Tempest Colliery, this development improved the districts housing offer. In turn it inspired a more buoyant market, with average house prices in Seaham increasing by 213% between 2003 and 2005- the greatest increase in Great Britain at the time (Halifax House Price Index 2005, cited in Easington District Council, 2008)<sup>62</sup>. However, this did not have a knock on effect to the rest of the district as, for example, the colliery site in Easington Colliery received no attention from developers after reclamation and, instead was left undeveloped. Even at the height of the housing market the Colliery villages were regarded as offered too small a rent gap for development so were unattractive to developers.

Within the agenda of Sustainable Communities the concept of ‘mixed communities’ was encouraged within urban policy as a means of combining tenure types on new developments so as to blur the division between for sale market and social housing (Atkinson, 2002). This process of “...generalised middle-class restructuring of place...” (Shaw, 2008, 2) is argued to create a more sustainable community; an idea

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<sup>62</sup> Whether this was the result of the approaches adopted or because of the increased price in housing nationally cannot be fully determined; however, house prices and demand on this development remain stable even in a declining housing market.

supported by interviewees from the local authority, and expressed by a regeneration manager

“I think one of the problems, and this is just a personal opinion, is that there has been effectively a mono-tenure of terraced accommodation. You don’t have the variety of housing stock and that won’t have helped the colliery. Personally I think that if you provide vacant sites then you may be able to get that mix and that could improve the overall community because you’ll have different people with different backgrounds and different skills. That will improve the overall community.” (Interview U)

While some argue that social mixing and the reinvigoration of ‘the city’ represents a veiled attempt to attract the economically active into deprived areas to act as “agents of regeneration” (Davidson, 2008), others see social mixing and tenure mixing in urban policy since the early 2000’s is also seen as possessing the capabilities of sustainability and reducing segregation (Tallon, 2010). Allen et al., (2005: 9) unfortunately found little to suggest that mixing tenure facilitated social mixing or produced “social capital or a ‘role model’ effect”.

The regeneration of former industrial brownfield land for housing purposes and to create a ‘mixed community’ also highlights an interesting academic debate concerning whether the provision of middle class housing on such sites falls within the definition of gentrification. Some suggesting it is more linked to residential rehabilitation (Lambert and Boddy, 2002; Tallon and Bromley, 2004; Boddy, 2007), while others assume it is gentrification as it involves the larger-scale (re)development of the urban for the middle-classes via new build developments on vacant land (Davidson and Lees 2005, Slater, 2006; Lees et al, 2008; MacLeod and Johnstone, 2012). The ‘opening up’ of the brownfield land by developers has constituted

“...nothing more than state-led, private-developer-built, gentrification. The physical fabric may be new and on brownfield sites but the outcome is very familiar” (Davidson and Lees, 2005, 1174)

Marketed to high earning middle classes, these expensive new build properties create a gentrified landscape and can lead to the displacement of people from nearby communities (Davidson and Lees, 2005). In these terms new build properties can be classed as 'gentrification' as the process involves middle-class resettlement into urban centres. As Slater et al (2004: 1144) highlight

“Whether gentrification is urban, suburban, or rural, new-build or the renovation of existing stock, it refers, as its gentri-suffixes attest, to nothing more or less than the class dimensions of neighbourhood change—in short, not simply changes in the housing stock, but changes in housing class”

Therefore the area based policies set into motion after the establishment of the Urban Taskforce and associated urban renaissance (see Chapter 2: History of Urban Housing Policy) possess a gentrification subtext (Atkinson, 2002) which was accepted by policy-makers as a feasible and legitimate tool for urban renewal (Davidson, 2008); so closely aligned with gentrification that it could be read from a handbook on gentrification (Lees, 2003b). Gentrification based urban policy has less associations with a middle-class invasion of Victorian terraces and the riots or displacement highlighted by Smith (1996) in Tompkins Square Park, New York. Instead it is regarded as a “panacea for both regional and social inequalities” (Davidson and Lees, 2005, 1186), the policy maker’s tool used to resolve social, economic, environmental, educational and health issues (Atkinson, 2004; Lees, 2003b). Smith (1996:39) highlights

“Gentrification is no longer about a narrow and quixotic oddity in the housing market but has become the leading residential edge of a much larger endeavour: the class remake of the central urban landscape”

Today gentrified properties are “as likely to be smart new townhouses as renovated workers cottages” (Shaw, 2002, 42), on former industrial brownfield land or in the form of rejuvenated terraced housing.

The notion of residentialisation largely rests on the idea that these Neoliberal policies and approaches did not create displacement. Displacement—a significant element of gentrification-- is not regarded as an issue for some in the UK as much

new-build development takes place on brownfield land and results in a range of positive outcomes for the community- social mixing, landscape transformation and capital reinvestment (Boddy, 2007). Indeed tenure mixing on previously developed land seems to be viewed as advantageous:

“Tenure diversification, and in particular, the building and sale of owner-occupied houses, is regarded by almost all as a positive sign, which suggests both reputation and the reality is changing” (Dean and Hastings, 2000, 11)

This research supports the gentrification thesis: East Durham’s new housing developments were targeted at a more affluent population, as a means of diversifying stock and attracting a different social mix supports the gentrification thesis. A predicted outmigration of 3% by 2021 and a housing profile which could not accommodate families resulted in plans to improve property supply, housing quality and attract 4,500 households/ 7,000 individuals (Easington District Council, 2008). Nevertheless a lack of development in the colliery villages-- with Easington Colliery specifically noted during the interviews—has resulted in a distinct lack of housing variety, and resultant inequality over housing type between towns and villages in the district.

Interviews conducted for this study indicate that, in East Durham at least, the size of the development denoted the type of population which it was aimed at. Generally a smaller development wished to retain a population, whereas a larger development on a larger site aimed to attract a new population and new community. Smaller developments were used to realign housing stock and housing offer by removing properties which were void or vacant. These were generally the only type of development which took place in colliery villages. The more substantial developments tended to be on large brownfield sites, exemplified in East Durham by the development of the former Vane Tempest mine site in Seaham, now East Shore Village. An RSL representative stated that East Shore Village was “...the ideal place to show how you can attract a certain type of person and use housing to power the regeneration of a whole place” (Interview E).



The imposition of Neo-liberal policies was accompanied by a modernised planning agenda which was:

- more market driven
- responsive to concerns regarding climate change, and
- more concerned with good design through the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) (Marshall, 2009)

Significantly planning gain<sup>63</sup> became a greater used planning resource during the housing market boom meaning that section 106 agreements, under PPG3<sup>64</sup> (DCLG, 2006; Easington District Council, 2007), were used to exploit new build developments. In East Durham, these terms included:

- “In housing development proposals of 15 or more dwellings, a provision of affordable housing will be required equivalent to 20% of the total number of dwellings proposed for the site” (Easington District Council, 2006, 4); and
- “The provision of the affordable housing dwellings will comprise either intermediate housing or housing for social rent, or a mix of the two determined by the site location and housing needs and demand information” (Easington District Council, 2006, 4)

Issues of affordability stemmed from the property price boom which has resulted in a wage/ property value mismatch. For example, property prices in Peterlee increased 173% between 2000 and 2006 (Easington regeneration Statement, 2006). This growth, teamed with the fact that 80% of residents are in Council Tax Band A (Easington District Council, 2006), has meant that the number of properties deemed ‘affordable’ to residents has fallen from 75% in 2002 to 34.7% in 2005 (Easington District Council, 2007). The Affordable Housing Strategy (2007) highlighted a shortage of affordable homes for all residents particularly citing first time buyers and young people as most affected, whereas the Housing

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<sup>63</sup> “provision by a developer to include in a proposal projects beneficial to a community in exchange for permission for a commercially promising but potentially unacceptable development” (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/planning-gain>) which take place in conjunction with Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

<sup>64</sup> replaced in 2011 with PPS3 (DCLG, 2011).

Needs Survey (2004) identified a need for larger housing to retain and attract families, and properties for Easington's burgeoning aging population.

'Affordable' housing as a planning stipulation was a contentious issue during this research; one not easily accepted by private developers who wished to maximise profit. Many developers questioned the need for affordable homes in an area like East Durham where house prices were very low in certain areas. A volume builder- when discussing a recent development on a site in East Durham- stated that a greater diversity of tenure was needed rather than 'affordable' properties, suggesting

"...it was already mono-tenure ['affordable'] around it. They needed to zoom out and think about creating a mixed community by just putting new market housing on the new site." (Interview R)

Indeed, it was suggested by one developer (Interview O) that

"Councils normally say they need a greater percentage of affordable in the more expensive areas, by definition. That doesn't stop them asking for 'affordable housing' in the most down trodden areas, however, even though that probably the last thing they need. What's needed is probably more private housing to provide a better tenure mix".

This was argued to be the case in East Durham which specified affordable housing as a planning requirement but, the majority of interviewees argued, in favour of a larger, private stock which would diversify tenure. In less prosperous, mono-tenure areas, section 106 agreements stipulating affordable homes were regarded as a 'financial burden' and 'hindrance to development'. As a result this made some schemes, especially those in housing cold spot areas, unfeasible while others (hot spot housing zones) were more palatable to during the 'golden age'. This approach, therefore, increased the gulf between cold spots and hot spots creating greater unevenness. This, in turn, created tensions between the local authority and developers as a lack of shared vision created a situation in which neither party understood the others view point (discussed in depth in Chapter 7).

### **5.2.2 Decent Homes Standard: social housing 'failing it's exams'**

Social housing, provided by local authorities (and ALMOs) or not-for-profit organisations (such as housing associations), offers an indispensable resource of low rent, secure housing (shelter.co.uk). Social housing is often the only option for those who cannot afford private rented or owner occupied properties (Glynn, 2009) and, therefore, since the 1990s, the socially rented sector has become a 'last resort' in the tenure stakes, afflicted with an image problem (Power, 1998). This is even evident politically as Glynn (2009: 25) contends that social housing has been increasingly viewed politically by both Labour and Conservative as tenure for "...those who could not afford to own their own home..." while home owner-occupation was seen as 'normal'. This widespread viewpoint has had a detrimental effect on social relations within neighbourhoods (Cattell, 2001), leading to the concentration of 'disadvantaged tenants' in 'deprived neighbourhoods' (Wassenberg, 2004). Even the term 'social housing' is regarded as a loaded term by housing associations that argue it possesses negative and stigmatised connotations (National Housing Federation North, 2000). Power and Mumford (1999) suggest that while all housing tenures can be affected by demand, this negative reputation is increasingly embedded within one specific tenure; social housing.

Urban policy has been introduced to address or overcome these issues, in the shape of Stock Transfer and the Decent Homes Standard. It was widely accepted in the interviews that since the Right To Buy agenda of the 1980's social housing has been underfunded as the money made from sales was not reinvested into more housing stock or housing repairs (Malpass, 2004; Minton, 2009). This devalorization of stock resulted in people with the financial wherewithal exiting social housing stock, while those with fewer resources remained 'stuck' with little, if any, housing option. In turn this led to a concentration of poor properties and vulnerable residents in certain communities and, by association, the amplification of social inequality (Forrest and Murie, 1986; Murie, 1997).

Within East Durham this already stigmatised housing type has been degraded by significant concerns that social housing stock is unable to meet quality guidelines-- known as the Decent Homes Standard. The Decent Homes Standard was introduced to ensure that social housing stock is maintained at an acceptable 'minimum fitness standard' level in a 'reasonable' state of repair with modern and thermal facilities (ODPM, 2002). It was adopted due to an appreciation that poor housing can negatively impact on the surrounding environment, community and the areas sustainability (ODPM, 2004). The lack of spending meant that properties required updating. In 2004 East Durham Local Authority owned stock was transferred to the specially formed Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) East Durham Homes. This shift was seen as beneficial on a number of fronts: the management reassignment was accompanied by the ALMO—a not-for-profit organisation-- securing 'additional funding' and powers to independently obtain goods and services, while the local authority (in this case, Easington District) remained landlord and sole shareholder (Glynn, 2009). The recent trend towards stock transfer is largely based on the fact that fresh funding streams can be accessed by these organisations which are argued to have associated positive impacts upon areas in social, economic and environmental terms (Clapham and Kintrea, 1987; Wilcox, 2001; DETR, 2000; Gibb, 2003; Card and Mudd, 2006; Smith, 2006; Watt, 2009).

Nevertheless, in East Durham the management transfer was not as successful as anticipated in resolving the "high failure rate for decency standards..." (Easington District Council, 2008b: 13; also see GVA Grimley, 2008) which had damaging consequences for local social housing. The failure to meet this 'minimum fitness standard' (ODPM, 2002) resulted in fears that social housing in East Durham had been seriously neglected. The failure of the ALMO to achieve the basic 2 star rating prompted a National Audit Commission Report (NAO, 2007) to suggest it had been left to 'wither on the vine'. Indeed the 2008 Regeneration Statement (2008b: 13) notes that a staggering "90 per cent of council housing currently failing to meet the Decent Homes standard" which also meant that "...some of our most vulnerable residents are living in homes that do not meet acceptable standards for warmth,

security and amenities”. The respondents interviewed for this research were keen to state that the low housing standards and stock quality were inherited from the Council when the properties were transferred, and irrespective of the rating East Durham Homes was considered a respectable ALMO providing a sound housing service. A senior Housing Strategist stated that their failure to achieve the score with the audit commission meant that East Durham Homes “failed the exams” which had a far reaching effect. Interviewees suggested that between 2007 and 2009 standards had improved dramatically however government funding was limited for this sector in response to the wider economic conditions and austerity measures, so that even tough improvements were made the ALMO was not rewarded with the promised funding. Irrespective of the management organisation working hard to foster partnerships through programmes such as the County Durham Housing Forum (discussed further in Chapter 7) this lack of funding availability will continue to severely hamper the efforts of East Durham Homes in their aim to address housing provision standards, and overcome the stigmata attached to properties deemed below the decency level.

‘Decent Homes’ emerged during this research as a heavily loaded term with negative connotations’. By definition, any homes which do not complying with the policy standards are deemed non-decent. This stigmatising association caused discontent among residents and local councillors alike, who felt deeply insulted—personally and on behalf of others-- by the suggestion that their homes were seen as lacking in some way. The Wheatley Hill Steering Group keenly highlighted the disgust of residents when friends, neighbours, or relatives homes failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard. ‘Decent Homes’ was seen less as a policy expression to describe the state of the property and the work needed to make it a more functional home, and more a slight or insult towards the residents who felt it suggested they did not look after their home adequately. This implied—it was argued -- a lack of personal pride and respect for their home. The steering groups illustrate how many regarded these homes as ‘palaces’; contending that they regularly swept their yards and cleaned their homes. One resident was indignant when talking about her sister’s home which failed to meet the decency standard but this “meant nothing” as the property was very well looked after meaning “you

could eat off the floor”. This highlights the emotional impact which reputation has on residents who feel “...angry, hurt and upset by the expressions of stigma that they live with” (Dean and Hastings, 2000, vii)-- as discussed with regard to the stigma of ‘cold spots’ which was viewed very differently by those working or living in the area compared to those external to it, see Chapter 4. In turn this highlights the contradiction between the external image of people in these properties living in a stigmatised neighbourhood amidst stereotyped problems and the internal image held by the tenants who are, in fact, rather satisfied with their house (De Decker and Pannecoucke, 2004). It is, of course, this difference in perception between insiders and outsiders which creates and maintains housing ‘hotspots’ and ‘cold spots’, as highlighted in Chapter 4, and which steering groups and community agendas (discussed in Chapter 7) try to overcome. Indeed, as Dean and Hastings (2000: viii) note “... unless a stigmatised estate can change its local image then regeneration initiatives will not succeed over the longer term”.

### **5.2.3 Private housing: dealing with a legacy in East Durham**

Generally the private rented sector in East Durham is regarded as “...predominantly restricted to older and poorer quality housing” (Easington District Council, 2008b, 8) due to the large stock of former colliery, terraced houses. Pockets of low demand and void properties are the legacy of industrial decline and the result of the large scale sale of former colliery housing by the National Coal Board to private landlords. As discussed in Chapter 4, Smith’s Devalorisation Theory can be applied to Easington Colliery to demonstrate the decline process. Briefly, the incentive for new Landlords to maintain the properties declines as the rent value of the property also declines. In an area, like the collieries where employment opportunities and housing demand are low this, evidently, leads to a lack of development and the physical deterioration of the area. This downward spiral of devalorization creates and enforces local negative images and, ultimately, leads to red lining (the active disinvestment of capital). This process had a huge impact on the development of, and the negative associations attached to, certain localities.

A Coalfield Settlement Study- undertaken to tackle housing concerns in former coalfield areas including low demand and abandonment- initiated the designation of Housing Regeneration Areas. These zones- referred to as, and epitomising, Cold Spots in this thesis- consist of certain streets in some villages across County Durham, were chosen due to concerns over housing quality and the general environment. This micro level piece of urban policy largely tackled smaller terraced or, to a lesser extent, ex-local authority housing stock experiencing from low demand. The regeneration programmes work on the premise that through an agenda of stock rejuvenation the wider issues which led to the neighbourhood decline can be absolved.

To enhance the aesthetics of the 'cold spot' areas Group Repair schemes were introduced by the former Local Authority of Easington District. Working on the assumption that more aesthetically appealing housing and areas are more attractive to potential and current tenants or homeowners, the agenda emerged from a growing realisation that some existing properties (largely 1919 terraced private rented homes) would benefit from such rejuvenation. This involves a 'face-life' of the external property including new doors; new windows; new fences; and chimney stack repair (see figures 11a and 11b, below). Within East Durham Group Repair areas were designated in Dawdon and Easington Colliery; 10 streets selected in the former and the 6 streets of Wembley chosen in the latter. Rhodes (2006) analysis of the 2001 census suggested that the strong point of the private rented sector is its adaptability, variety, and flexibility. Ironically these strengths pose the biggest problem for local government and local stakeholders who, Rhodes asserts, have difficulty obtaining overall agreement on policies affecting private rented stock – such as Group repair in East Durham. Group repair is not compulsory however, and only takes place in streets where 70% of properties will be involved in the scheme. At the time of this research Dawdon was onto its final, and tenth, street of Group Repair, while Easington Colliery's Wembley was onto the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> streets out of the 6.

In-line with other Neo-liberal agendas of partnership working, this scheme has been accompanied by the creation of steering groups, used to bring communities and stakeholders together to work through issues of concern in those areas. This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7, however it is necessary to note that the use of steering groups has opened up the agenda, making the communities feel more included in a process which is ultimately affected them. In turn this also facilitated a greater degree of success for the Group Repair agenda, from the communities at least.



*Figure 11a (above): An example of Group Repair work in Wembley, Easington Colliery: Noble Street **before** Group Repair (photo: Durham County Council)*





*Figure 11b: An example of Group Repair work in Wembley, Easington Colliery: Noble Street **after** Group Repair (Photo: Durham County Council)*

Overall the research uncovered support for Group Repair across a range of respondents. There was a general consensus that the programme was effective, providing some “absolutely fantastic examples across the county” (BB) in pre 1919 stock. As such it was regarded as a valuable policy which not only improved the aesthetics of the physical environment but also influenced the perceptions of the area making the houses and wider neighbourhood more attractive to potential and current residents. This is a subjective notion however as a lack of data on the specifics related to the scheme, i.e. empty homes, meant that it was impossible to categorically state that group repair had improved “let-ability” in the targeted areas- a point highlighted by a local authority housing specialist (Interview FF). The focus of the scheme on the physicality of the neighbourhood promoted most discontent. A local councillor who suggest that face lift programmes are “all well and good” but believe a more strategic approach is needed to “tidy up the colliery” which should focus on “bring[ing] in better housing” (Interview P). One such interviewee suggested that Group Repair focuses too much on the aesthetics of the

property, and it is this which comes at the cost of providing better facilities inside the property which would make the dwelling a more functional home. Another problem noted by a housing manager highlighted that while improving certain streets is beneficial it can lead to others 'lagging behind' which can lead to a transfer of problems from one part of a neighbourhood to another. Indeed, a social housing provider (Interview E) proposed that irrespective of improvements to housing by the third or public sector the properties in selected streets or areas of towns/ villages are subject to negative images. It was proposed by a local councillor (Interview Y) that these 'regeneration' areas were too focussed on the small scale rather than on a larger village wide approach to tackle the problem which is viewed as a neighbourhood wide, not street specific, issue. Indeed, a local councillor (Interview Y) also highlights that "There are dozens of streets needing help, so a few will be a drop in the ocean".

A further criticism- often levelled by those who also praised the Group Repair scheme- was that it was more expensive than it needed to be. This viewpoint was expressed mainly by letting agents and landlords themselves (those most affected by the cost of the policy) who believed that although a good idea, the price of the scheme and the money which the council spend or expect people to spend was higher than required. A significant problem with the scheme was the lack of necessity for landlords or home owners to sign up to the programme. With a 75-80% take up required (interview D), the scheme could go ahead with 20-25% properties remaining as they did previously, and potentially preventing the aesthetic improvement which was the central reason of the introduction of this policy agenda in the first place. However a higher take up rate for Group repair seems unlikely due to the nature of the private housing sector and the lack of governing authority which the public sector possess, as Beynon, et al., (1999: 15) highlight when they state

"Local authorities and other agencies have little power to implement housing improvements especially where private landlords are involved"

Urban policy adopted in East Durham is strongly influenced by Housing Market Renewal philosophies. It was stated that “Our approach to housing market renewal will focus on improving existing housing as well as replacing older and low demand housing with new attractive houses and neighbourhoods” (Easington District Council, 2008b, 14). There is an enduring gap in quality for the private sector, as detailed in the 2002 Housing Strategy for Easington District which states “there will continue to be a policy of targeted resources in the highest priority private sector areas”, namely in Easington Colliery and Dawdon. Such resources, it continues would be used for the involving “selective clearance of substandard housing, aimed at reducing oversupply, number of voids and antisocial behaviour; and improvement of selected terraces through group repair scheme” (Easington District Council, 2002, 26). East Durham’s declining population-- directly related to the industrial decline of the area and the associated outmigration of residents to find employment elsewhere—resulted in the Durham Coalfield Settlement Study (Jacobs Babbie, 2005) which suggested a programme of stock reduction of vacant and void housing by 2015 properties, to be replaced by new housing stock as a means to broaden housing choice and tenure.

While only nine Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders were officially designated (see Chapter 2), the philosophies of Housing Market Renewal were adopted in other local authority areas which experienced similar difficulties<sup>65</sup>. The approach of Housing Market Renewal was to physically shaping place (Allen and Crookes, 2009). This was keenly used by East Durham to improving housing mix and supply as a means to ‘reconnect’ areas to “... surrounding markets and to the renewed, vibrant city centres that lie next to many of them...” (ODPM, 2005: 51). By association, this encouraged the revitalization of neighbourhoods with stigmatized reputations (Atkinson, 2006). In addition, MacLeod and Johnston (2012:8) suggest that Housing Market Renewal was an initiative employed explicitly to simultaneously tackle marginalised areas and promote sustainable communities; this was, again, another reason why East Durham embraced a HMR based

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<sup>65</sup> While adopting the philosophies for HMR these non-government designated area were not privy to associated funding or central support.

approach. East Durham's colliery villages- like many colliery areas nationally- suffered low demand<sup>66</sup>, instigating local authority schemes to reenergize housing market through stock readjustment. The problem witnessed in the North and Midlands was highlighted in a 2002 report by Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at Birmingham University (CURS), specific to this research the study noted that 20 per cent of the north east's housing stock was classified as low demand and, consequently, at risk of market failure. At the beginning of the housing market boom the factors highlighted in the CURS report -- an oversupply of older terraced housing-- remained significant across East Durham.

Highlighted in a report to cabinet on the Durham Coalfield Housing Market (Durham County Council, 2006) it was argued that irrespective of the house clearance programme housing market failure was still an issue, and that the communities predominantly affected are the former Coalfield areas. This was accompanied by the establishment of the Durham Coalfield Housing Market Renewal Partnership which worked to develop an understanding of the issues impacting upon the area, and build on future strategic decisions (Durham County Council, 2006). With over half of the 19,000 properties in County Durham deemed at risk from market failure are in East Durham (Easington District Council, 2008), a housing market renewal urban policy approach was adopted to replace or remove the oversupply of 'poor quality' terraced properties through demolition. This was then to be replaced with new, attractive and diverse stock which would simultaneously create a sustainable housing stock, support the establishment of a sustainable community, encourage regeneration and help meet the national policy of promoting owner-occupier dwellings<sup>67</sup>. In 2008 it was noted that terraced housing makes up 45% of the stock in the district<sup>68</sup>, compared with the national average of 25%. To match this national average would mean a significant removal of 8,000 terraced properties (Easington District Three Year Housing Strategy, 2008).

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<sup>66</sup> Referred to as "boarded up properties" (Interview M).

<sup>67</sup> Expressed in a range of local policy initiatives, see Easington District Three Year Housing Strategy, 2008; Easington Colliery Area Development Framework; Dawdon Area Development Framework; and Peterlee Area Development Framework

<sup>68</sup> Approximately 19,000 properties

The spectre of housing market failure prompted a large scale uptake of policies which adopted the philosophies of housing market renewal but did not benefit from the associated Pathfinder funding. Easington District Council established private sector neighbourhood renewal areas in Easington Colliery, Dawdon and Wheatley Hill which focussed on low demand and empty properties (Easington District Council, 2008; 2008b). Demolition increasingly played a significant role in restructuring the housing offer in East Durham, and was used to tackle concerns over empty homes and void and vacant properties. This clearance policy was conducted with the aim of removing houses and greening over the land. Easington Colliery was also targeted for demolition work when all of the B streets were demolished (see figure 10) and every other street in the A streets was removed to address void properties. In Easington Colliery a number of voids highlight this issue. For all the policy attention these areas are viewed as “still a problem” and with everyone “clambering for money” required to continue demolition work during the housing market boom. The work of clearing housing deemed void or vacant is of “symbolic importance” (Dean and Hastings, 2000), and in Easington Colliery was regarded as a more successful, and appropriate approach than redeveloping the land. A local councillor (Interview M) stated that the approach adopted in Easington Colliery was reactionary and based on the 1700 void properties which were costing the local authority dearly-- £40,000 a week according to interviewee M-- and it was this which ‘forced their hand’ and started the programme of demolition.

The approach adopted in Wheatley Hill was, in theory at least, different as it was based on a long term agenda of development involving the compulsory purchase and demolition/ of the ‘Numbered Streets’ which would then be redeveloped to provide new housing, appropriate to the area. The consequent 1.4 hectares of brownfield land provide by the demolition of properties between First and Ninth Street made way for the development of a doctor's surgery and four terraced houses, and the remaining land was earmarked for 35 dwellings and an open,

green space (Easington District Council, 2001). The clearance agenda in Wheatley Hill was not received well by residents-- as voiced in the village Steering Group—who regarded these properties as ‘canny homes’ which were ‘solid’, ‘decent’ and ‘kept nice’-- highlighting their happiness with their home and neighbourhood. This is supported by Cole and Flint (2007) who disclose that

“...while many residents awaiting demolition were deeply dissatisfied with certain neighbourhood characteristics — housing conditions, inadequate transport, shops, services, crime and antisocial behaviour — a significant number were relatively happy with their home and neighbourhood.”

The local authorities’ attitude towards low demand properties, streets and communities has given way to an ongoing programme of urban policy which promotes demolition. However, and rather significant, is that the purpose and driver for this approach is not fully accepted or understood by local communities who struggle to comprehend why fully functioning and sturdy properties are demolished to either make way for another house or remove all together (discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7). This issue was raised regularly at the Wheatley Hill Steering Group, with many residents asking not only why ‘perfectly good houses’ were removed, but also what would be the short and medium impact on friends and neighbours once their home was demolished as well as the longer term ramifications on the community if no new housing was provided in place of the demolished dwellings. The ‘bricks and mortar’ approach to regeneration- criticised academically (see Chapter 2 also, for example, Power, 2007)- was argued to be inadequate by the community residents who believed it was a ‘quick fix’ approach which ignored the regeneration needs of the community- discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7).

Much attention is paid to the gentrification implications of new build housing; nevertheless policy aimed at existing housing stock can also have a similar undertone. A regeneration developer (Interview X) interviewed for this thesis stressed that the removal of existing stock does not necessarily have an effect on

its own. The fabric of existing stock is not necessarily lacking, rather it is the wider social issues which make some areas unappealing, therefore the demolition of housing and replacing low demand housing with new-build properties do not address wider social or economic issues, as “Knocking down a house and building would not solve anything if there were no further amenities. You’ve gotta look at in a wider way” (Interview X). This is a significant point which highlights the wider issues of housing as a driver to regeneration. The issue of demolition and no redevelopment was favoured by a housing Association representative who stated it was positive as it made areas more attractive by adding communal grassy areas and “opened up the place”. Other interviewees were less supportive. Nevertheless, interviewees from all sectors supported the philosophy of demolishing existing stock and replacing it with new build properties to diversify stock. Interestingly, and rather surprisingly, when discussing housing demolition and the potential displacement of a population a representative from a third sector community group in East Durham advocated the approach, stating it was a question of economic issues and suggesting that balancing the costs of new build and demolition against rejuvenation. It was believed that giving people “...a lovely garden and a garage” was more important than sustaining an existing community. When pressed on the matter and the issues of fewer houses of different types replacing the demolished homes and the associated concerns of communities and academics for displacement she was surprisingly upbeat about such a scheme, stating

“Yeah but you’ve got to look at the benefits of that. Do the benefits outweigh the negatives? Yeah, probably- both for the economics and the people” (Interview Z)

While many academics are critical of the link between gentrification and displacement (see, for example, Marcuse, 1985; Atkinson, 2000; Freeman and Braconi, 2004), and one must be careful not to assume that displacement is always the product of gentrification (Hamnett, 2003). The term ‘displacement’ was regarded as very loaded term by Local Authority representatives interviewed, whose response to being questioned over this issue triggered visible alarm. One

council interviewee became quite defensive when the term ‘displacement’ was used to discuss the impact which demolition could have on the area and current population:

“No, no! Not displacement! That sort of thing doesn’t happen. Not now anyway. We involve communities, and stakeholders, you know? No, its development, it’s a benefit; it’s not displacement or anything like that. If anything it mixes communities which is what we’re after. That’s very important; for sustainability, you know?”

### **5.3 The housing slump and funding cuts: Housing-led Regeneration in East Durham post-2008**

“The day it happened it was literally like someone had switched the lights out. You can say did you not see it coming. No!” (Interview K: housing developer)

This quote is indicative of the feelings expressed by interviewees, across all sectors regarding the housing market slump. The period of prosperity experienced during the ‘golden age’ was built on ‘revolutionary change’ in the form of technical development<sup>69</sup>, deregulation<sup>70</sup> and institutional change<sup>71</sup> (Ragan, 2005). Such factors affected global financial systems providing greater amounts of borrowing at cheaper rates, investing in a range of ‘risk and return’ ventures and sharing this risk with unfamiliar persons across the world (Ragan, 2005). Such a risk based approach, Langley (2008: 469) argues, cost the economy dearly;

“The securitization of mortgages into risk-structured financial instruments made possible extended lending. Interest-only adjustable rate mortgage products called up mortgagors who, as leveraged investors, embraced risk in a rising property market.”

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<sup>69</sup> Including the improvement of communication, computers and data handling

<sup>70</sup> Which has reduced competition between products and organizations

<sup>71</sup> Which created new financial entities, such as private equity firms and hedge funds



Evidently this period of risk based economic boom was not sustainable; in September 2008, the world's financial system slumped and the UK narrowly missed economic meltdown (Ball, 2010). The careless and inappropriate lending<sup>72</sup> led to a credit crunch, as loans were defaulted on, 'bad debt' was incurred (Ragan, 2005) and an uncertain economic future surfaced (Langley, 2008).

The housing slump and credit crunch in the US and UK has, resultantly, slowed urban policy growth (Tallon, 2010). This is exemplified by Housing Market Renewal funding, but applicable to all housing agendas, Adam Branson (writing in Planning magazine, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2011, page 21) stated that the lack of funding has made the

“... demolition versus renovation debate increasingly academic. While nobody doubts that many homes in HMR areas need serious attention, there is now barely any money available to either refurbish or demolish and rebuild them”.

Indeed in the shadow of the housing slump, the 2008 Easington District Council Regeneration Strategy (2008: 38) stated

“Currently, the global credit crunch is presenting challenges for regeneration, with a combination of reduced access to credit, uncertainty in the housing market, and a slowdown in economic activity placing pressure on a number of regeneration schemes”

The Housing Market Renewal inspired approach of East Durham experienced similar problems of Pathfinder areas. Crouch and Cocks (2012) suggest that the mothballing of the HMR Pathfinder agenda in March 2011 left schemes incomplete and local authorities with the challenging task of determining how to proceed against a backdrop of economic crisis and public funding cuts. While ambitions and targets for development and growth still remained in East Durham during the economic slump they were severely hampered by the “virtually non-existent

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<sup>72</sup>An example often used by volume developers was the provision of low interest loans for the full or greater value than the property; specifically citing the 125% mortgage provided by Northern Rock

funding” (Interview O) which was directly associated with the credit crunch and central government imposed austerity measures/ funding cuts. Both the public and private sector articulated that as the credit crunch hit the model of regeneration used during the boom period went “completely out of the window” (Interview J: Unitary Council Regeneration Manager). Consensus suggested that to facilitate housing market restructuring in a suppressed economic climate required a piecemeal approach was necessary which combined strong planning policies with community-led, holistic, bottom up approaches (Crouch and Cocks, 2012).

All housing markets were suppressed in the wake of the housing market slump, however more strategic areas and those which possess a stronger housing market continued to gain attention from the private sector. This is increasingly significant in an economic climate where public sector funding is diminished and the private sector has more power in driving development. The inability of parts of East Durham to capitalise on the housing boom in turn exacerbated the pre-existing problems of uneven development. Hot spots were popular irrespective of wider economic changes and the focus of development in these areas exacerbates the growing chasm between these strategic areas and the less attractive, more marginal ‘cold spots’. This period put greatest pressure on areas or pockets of weaker housing markets, especially those who relied greatly on gap funding (such as HMR areas and ‘cold spots of East Durham)- even in periods of a stronger economy (Interview J). This raises concerns for deprived or marginal communities in a suppressed economy and also in the future, as highlighted by a Senior Planner (Interview L)

“The money these communities relied on have gone or are cut therefore the challenge is to find the money to invest and incentivise developers. That puts these towns and villages in a difficult place to achieve sustainability in the future...That’s my biggest fear: that we will easily be able to build in areas where there is an economy and land value, in the other areas we won’t be able to build the numbers we actually require. It slows it down in those particular areas”.

This poses problems for East Durham who, irrespective of the policies to promote housing-led regeneration by the construction of new housing, demolition or rejuvenation of existing stock, still exhibits a housing stock in need of urban policy led attention. The locality is argued to still require extensive work, as highlighted by Durham County Council (2010a: 29), who suggest properties remain “...dominated by terraced housing...the urban environment is poor. [and] There is an abundant supply of previously developed land and buildings”.

### **5.3.1 New build housing**

It is assumed that bailouts and wider government and financial intervention averted a more severe crisis (Dolphin, 2009). Nevertheless the housing market decline resulted in the lowest level of housing building since 1945 (Minton, 2009), and placed greater pressure on new build developments. In turn this process called into question the capacity for housing to drive regeneration during a recession, suggesting that new build schemes—and developers, by association—are too dependent on the wider economy and so are affected worst by an economic down turn (Parkinson, 2009). Indeed, a housing developer (Interview X) stated the effect was almost instant “I’d say when the economic situation hit the mortgage market more or less stalled”. This phenomena was observed most markedly in more marginal areas which experienced weaker economic conditions (Dolphin, 2009; Parkinson, et al., 2009; Lees, 2009)- notably from this research, areas such as East Durham. Such a problem highlights the potential for future uneven development which would splinter communities around hot and cold spots.

The large volume building developers interviewed for this research suggested that the lack of building in East Durham-- due to historically poor housing markets and the lack of available credit to those living in these areas—is exacerbated during periods of economic slump. This acts to further dissuade building work as properties are even less likely to sell in a period of stricter restrictions on mortgage providers who are wary of the ability of borrowers to repay finance in the future (Knox and Pinch, 2010). Therefore the risk of building in low demand or

'cold spot' areas was regarded as significantly more risky. Conversely Seaham and Peterlee remain more viable economic centres in East Durham possessing 'feasible housing markets' and, so, providing a reasonable level of assurance of a financial return for developers. This was indeed borne out in the interviews. A private planning consultant (Interview AA) highlighted that in a suppressed economic climate house builders are "very risk averse" meaning they go for "easy wins and safe bets". This, it was argued, involves

"...focussing at the top end of the market where people are buying with cash or upsizing. They are going to the successful locations like Durham City, Ponteland [near Newcastle], you know the really good locations... they want things that are 100% certain" (Interview AA).

This again exacerbates inequality and unevenness and further marginalised communities which are not regarded as 'safe bets'. The attitudes of developers are summed up by Knox and Pinch (2010: 133) who suggest

"Like other entrepreneurs, developers seek to minimize risk. In terms of residential development, this conservative approach generally translates into housing for clearly established markets in which there is demonstrated spending power."

Funding restrictions and 'austerity' measures, imposed by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government- which came to power in May 2010 in the wake of the housing market crash and in the midst of a recession- impacted keenly on the local authority. Local Government Review (LGR) which examined local authority spending across the country, and initiated departmental alignment, service spending cuts and measures such as redundancies or staff relocation within councils. As part of the 'cuts agenda' Durham Unitary council oversaw the Housing function subsumed by the Economic Development department, as well as a relatively widespread raft of redundancies or deployment into different departments (exacerbated by the move from separate local authorities to a single unitary council, discussed in Chapter 6).

Along with cuts came a shift in emphasis to a private driven approach, as reflected in the emergence of a major urban policy agenda, the County Durham Plan. This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6, however the prominence which it bestows on the wider attitude of the private sector and its impact on the role of housing in regeneration in recession times must be briefly noted. The policy places greatest development in key strategic sites across County Durham, and chiefly Durham City. This resulted mainly due to a lack of finances and, as a planning officer (Interview G) stated, a need to be reactive and place an emphasis on what the private sector wants and focussing future development in areas where developers want to build. Ultimately this policy and the importance attached to it and the private sector by the Unitary Authority will play on existing inequality and further exacerbate problems of uneven development in a time when interviewees asserted that regeneration has disappeared from the political agenda (Interview J). The interviews suggested that policy agendas used to overcome uneven development and economic difference- namely public and private sector gap funding- had been relied on far too much and that the removal of them (due to funding cuts) had a significant impact on deprived areas. Again these broader cuts led to a housing and regeneration approach which is “...dependent on whether the private sector is interested in participating in investing in this area” (DCC, 2011, 17). This, again, impacts most on cold spot areas which are overlooked in favour of strategic centres (as discussed in Chapter 4).

### **5.3.2 Existing stock**

Within County Durham, and in the aftermath of a national housing market slump, existing housing stock is argued to play “a significant role in the economic regeneration of an area” (Durham County Council, 2011, 7). I contend that in this period, when new build housing was seen as more risky, existing stock became a more prominent target for housing-led regeneration especially in cold spot areas. Interviewees from all sectors highlighted that the housing market slump emphasised refurbishment and ‘face-lift’ programmes. Such programmes are

costly, however, which is difficult to align in a period of funding cuts. There is however continued, but limited, group repair, accompanied by an appreciation that funding must be made available-- “more extensive work to regenerate these communities is needed and therefore the Council must secure finance and recommit to clearance for those areas of housing where neither private nor public investment will deliver the necessary improvements” (Durham County Council, 2011, 15).

A significant concern with existing stock in the recession period came in the form of the impact of absentee/ ‘bad’ private landlords and their effect on welfare and living standards. This gave way to the Selective Licensing scheme, launched in selected villages across County Durham in 2009 to tackle problems associated with absent landlords. Durham County Council (2011: 8) notes the “essential contribution” which private rented stock provides in addressing housing while simultaneously highlighting the negative impact which poor housing management has on neighbourhoods. In East Durham the Wembley area of Easington Colliery was included in the 5 year scheme which aimed to regulate who lived in the licensed areas by enforcing a vetting process for prospective tenants. This vetting process involves the County Council conducting investigations into previous offences, criminal records and misdemeanours which potential residents may have committed. Wembley was selected due to the high volume of private rented properties, owned by absent landlords and the impact which a lack of vetting has on the community—i.e anti-social behaviour and associated issues of stigma and marginality—detailed previously in Chapter 4. The programme provided local authorities with legal powers to prosecute landlords who did not comply with the vetting process.

The success of the scheme is questionable with uptake of Selective Licensing relatively low. This limited signing up rate has jeopardised the scheme’s integrity and, I argue, the council’s credibility in promoting such targeted urban policy in a period of economic instability. Indeed, interviewees largely felt unable to comment

on the impact of the policy on local regeneration due to this issue. Even the Unitary Council highlighted the need for “further work” to ensure the “efficacy” of Selective Licensing (Durham County Council, 2011). A further limit Selective Licensing was highlighted by landlords and managers of private rented housing who condemned the vetting process for being slow, taking up to a month for some tenant references to be returned by the council. The lumbering process means that people are not allocated housing in Licensed areas as the programme assumes that until people are vetted they are automatically a potentially bad tenant. As such landlords are “...ruling the good one out because of the delay, which isn’t the purpose of the scheme” (Interview T). In turn the speed of processing references forced some landlords to take risks and housing non-vetted tenants; thus going against the agreement and potentially exposing them to a situation in which they could face a council imposed fine. The threat of prosecution was, however, academic, as highlighted by numerous interviewees who criticised the lack of enforcement of Selective Licensing by the local authority. A lack of sign up suggests the scheme has little, if any, ability to influence social problems therefore bringing into question the ability and authority of the local authority to promote and enforce local urban policy. The attitudes felt by interviewees is summed up by a local ward councillor (Interview Y) who noted the stark difference between expectation and reality of the scheme, stating “...it’s not been the panacea that we’d hoped it was going to be...”

The vetting element, employed to essentially weed out undesirables, is entrenched in the Selective Licensing agenda and has strong gentrification undertones. Adopted to ‘improve’ the wider social conditions of an area by imposing regulation on the type of resident living there so as to remove ‘bad’ tenants is nothing more than social engineering. Interviewees did not necessarily see it in those terms, It was largely argued that “softer approaches were ineffective” meaning a harder line was, while not ideal, a ‘necessary evil’ (Interview E). Nevertheless, the lack of enforcement by the council functioned to remove much of the negative associations which such a policy could possess, but the philosophy underpinning it suggests a radical turn in urban policy.

The issues and concerns associated with social housing stock also continued in the economic slump period, with the Decent Homes Standard affected by the funding cuts. East Durham Homes ALMO managed to raise the housing standard and reach the decent homes benchmark, however the funding previously available was no longer accessible in the same way. As a local councillor stated

“...we did get there [meeting the required standard] ... [and] we understood that by reaching that level we would then automatically receive £170 million in funding to enable us to tackle the decent homes problem. That changed under the new coalition government, who set out new criteria and said ‘for you to access this funding you have to demonstrate how you’ll use it, etc’. So while we did raise the bar we feel like we’ve been penalised.”  
(Interview N)

A bid deemed ‘robust’ by the councillor, was submitted and £70million-- of the £107 million required-- was allocated. While this was regarded as positive, the success of the programme was questioned as a reduced budget was associated with reduced improvements. Not all social housing has been negatively impacted upon, however. A number of the RSL’s interviewed stated the recession, housing slump, and austerity measures had been beneficial as “those who have lost homes would want to move in [to social housing]”. This meant that less homes were empty and greater resources were made available.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has considered East Durham’s approach to tackling locally specific housing need and issues through targeted urban policy, highlighting how wider economic conditions as well as the attitudes of governing bodies and the private sector influence the renewal process. The chapter has highlighted how housing-led regeneration is tackled by adopting core national policies<sup>73</sup>, combined with smaller

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<sup>73</sup> such as Sustainable Communities Plan and Housing Market Renewal



scale approaches. The traditional housing-led regeneration approach focuses on new build properties; however the significant contribution of this chapter is in both providing and applying a wider definition which also includes existing stock. By doing so housing-led regeneration is an approach which can, and is, powerful and adopted during periods of both economic boom and slump.

In turn the chapter illustrates how wider economic conditions encourage and amplify the schism between housing hot spots and cold spots. The location of new build properties are at the whim of the private sector who, through investment in certain localities (hot spots) due to the supply and demand driven nature of their business, shape the influence and perceived importance of different areas. The power of the private sector becomes greater in periods of economic slump when governmental austerity hampers gap funding making it in short supply. As such the location of new housing provision- and the positive regeneration properties associated with this process- is dependent upon the discrimination of those with available finances. With the private sector chasing profit, this results in building in housing market hot spots, which has a detrimental impact upon the cold spots in need of renewal, as is reflected in the policy of the local authority. This private sector driven approach evidently impacts most on marginal communities, which in turn further contributes to uneven development within wider communities.

Existing stock continues to be a concern in East Durham. Irrespective of the economic climate, existing stock is an essential policy issue which can stimulate regeneration, especially when targeted at areas of marginality- i.e. housing cold spots. Nevertheless, periods of economic slump are accompanied by a reduction in public spending which make housing and regeneration through investment a difficult prospect- evident in Group Repair which, while considered successful, has a question mark hanging over the future of the scheme. Therefore attention is paid to enforcement policy—such as Selective Licensing—which, while introduced with the aim to overcome deep rooted physical, social and economic conditions, may in

fact be potentially damaging; exacerbating inequality and unevenness or promoting gentrification.

During this period of economic change and associated policy flux there were also political shifts at the local, regional and national levels. As an intrinsic part of neo-liberal policy, governing and governance changes impact upon housing and regeneration agendas. As such the following chapters offer flesh to the bones of this chapter, to highlight the mutual and relative influence which governing, economic conditions and urban policy come to bare on uneven development and marginal neighbourhoods and, ultimately, the success, or otherwise, of housing-led regeneration.

## **CHAPTER 6: GOVERNING HOUSING LED-REGENERATION: RESCALING POLITICS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter builds on the previous chapters discussion of urban policy agendas employed in boom and slump periods, by addressing the political aspect of housing-led regeneration. Complex changes to the governing structures during the period of this research has witnessed a moved from both a local and regional scale to a sub-regional level (with the formation of the Unitary Council in County Durham and the Local Enterprise Partnerships, respectively). By engaging with the Uneven Development debate this chapter will examine the process of political restructuring to ascertain how policy implementation has impacted upon pre existing hot spot and cold spot areas; and how the governmental reshuffle has reacted to the wider economic flux- discussed in Chapter 5- which has intensified governmental pressures as a result of funding cuts and austerity measures. By critically examining the changes in (regional and local) governing structures and regimes and, through the use of grey literature and interview data, this analysis will expose how adjustment in power and control have shaped and been shaped by neo-liberal approaches to housing and regeneration—which ultimately has a broader impact upon the success of these regeneration agendas.

### **6.2 Rescaling Governance**

Governance<sup>74</sup> and governing<sup>75</sup> are argued to be unstable and changing, shifting with every different phase of political administration and new policy intervention (Fuller and Geddes, 2008). Therefore the process of governing and the practice of governance are “... concerned with the processes that create the conditions for

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<sup>74</sup> the “...interaction of multiplicity of governing and each other influencing actors” (Kooiman and Van Vliet, 1993, 64) which involves a blurring of the boundaries between the state, the market and civil society(Geddes, 1997; Rhodes, 2000)

<sup>75</sup> which Kooiman (2003: 4) suggests to be “... the totality of interactions, in which public as well as private actors participate, aimed at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities; attending to the institutions as contexts for these governing interactions; and establishing a normative foundation for all those activities.”

ordered rule and collective action within the political realm” (Stoker, 2004b, 22). As discussed previously, the election of New Labour in 1997 witnessed a change in approach to governance and governing; largely a power shift from managerialism and the managerial elite to urban entrepreneurialism<sup>76</sup> and ‘the community itself’ (Harvey, 1989; Diamond, 2004). Spatial scales of governing are variable, and are continually “redefined, contested, and restructured” (Swyngedouw, 1997, 141) involving the transfer of power upwards, downwards and sideways (Jessop, 1997). Indeed, changes to urban policy have brought with them changes to the focus and scale of urban governance<sup>77</sup>, as well as a shift to and from different interest groups, stakeholders and partnership working (an essential element of the post-political condition). The scope of governance has also extended and expanded, and now has a “... direct and often fundamental effect” on the social aspects in addition to the physical morphology of cities which was previously the central emphasis (Knox and Pinch, 2010). The UK Coalition government which took power in 2010 removed the regional scales of governing and repositioned the role of the state in urban policy through the localism agenda which has an enduring emphasis on social and spatial equity (Baker, et al, 2013; Deas, 2013). The shifting neo-liberal governance, Allmendinger and Haughton (2012) argue, is strongly underpinned by the post-political aim to ‘carefully choreograph’ consensus through partnership working—discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7.

### **6.3 Abolishing regional governing**

Under New Labour, the UK experienced an asymmetric system of economic governance which initiated the devolution of Wales and Scotland and the decentralisation of some authority in England, including the establishment of Regional Development Agencies (Pacione 1997; Bentley, et al., 2011). By contrast

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<sup>76</sup> Harvey (1989: 3) observes “... urban governance has become increasingly preoccupied with the exploration of new ways in which to foster and encourage local development and employment growth. Such an entrepreneurial stance contrasts with the managerial practices of earlier decades which primarily focussed on the local provision of services, facilities and benefits to urban populations.”

<sup>77</sup> see Chapter 2 for a discussion on how issues of governance have changed and developed over time, and how the shifting prominence of partnership working and community involvement has been used as a means of encouraging urban renewal

the Conservative- Liberal Democrat coalition government (who came to power in May 2010) attached little worth to regional powers and consequently abolished a range of regional governing structures and strategies—most notably, Regional Development Agencies, regional Housing Boards<sup>78</sup> and the regional government offices<sup>79</sup>, as well as the Regional Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy. This sweeping away of regional governance was regarded by the respondents' for this research as having a substantial impact on the region. The loss of region wide agencies and policies were regarded as resulting in the loss of a wider regeneration/ economic growth framework for the region. The most notable losses during this period were regarded as the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and Regional Development Agency (RDA).

The removal of the Regional Spatial Strategy—formerly responsible for designating issues such as how many houses were built in the region—meant that planning regulation was no longer a regional concern. Resultantly, developers (in particular) found the planning process to be both difficult to navigate and lacking in adequate detail as to strategic housing provision; combining to make delivery problematic. A developer for a national firm, working in the north east regional office, mused over concerns that a lack of policy and overarching authority means that there is no strategic moderator to 'police' the planning process. Therefore the process will heavily rely on planning appeals which end up being expensive and time consuming with much less certainty than was previously afforded.

The loss of the Regional Development Agencies (RDA)—disbanded in March 2012—was lamented by all sectors interviewed for this thesis. Regarded as 'flabby' and 'over bureaucratic', many private and public sector representatives nevertheless regarded the RDA as a considerable asset especially when accessing funding. Developers voiced universal concerns regarding the impact which the removal of the RDAs would have on housing-led regeneration. A central concern was the issue of remediation of brownfield 'regeneration' sites, previously undertaken and owned by the RDAs but transferred to the Homes and

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<sup>78</sup> North East Housing Board in the north east

<sup>79</sup> Government Offices North East (GONE) in the north east

Communities Agency or Local Authorities. Coinciding with widespread funding cuts-- as a result of austerity measures-- there were concerns that future house building activity and employment prospects in the region could be seriously hampered. The RDA's were replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP), established with an eye to encourage economic growth and private sector employment through planning, housing, transport, local infrastructure, enterprise and a shift towards low carbon (Cable and Pickles, 2010).

LEPs-- considered to play a vital, and 'worthy', function in rebalancing the local economy—are argued to have moved away from an over dependence on the financial industry or over reliance on certain parts of the country, such as the South East (Johnson and Schmuecker, 2010; Haskins, 2012). The aim is also to forge closer working relations between the private and public sector however this is at odds with the reality of the agenda which, it is argued by public and third sector interviewees, embodies a private driven scheme. It was believed that businesses involved in the LEP will promote their own personal agenda which could ultimately drive strategy and focus development in ways beneficial to certain organisations and at the detriment of the wider sub-region. This jarred with the public focussed, inclusive and wide ranging nature of the former RDAs.

Most significantly an emphasis on private sector as driving the agenda could significantly impact upon regeneration work in 'cold spot' areas. As stated above, private sector interest focuses on the more strategic areas which are regarded as possessing greater functionality. Therefore there is a risk of developing a strategy which consciously targets development in one area over another which could potentially be damaging for long term sustainability of cold spot areas and advance uneven growth and development, evident from previous market-orientated economics (Knox and Pinch, 2010). Further issues regarding uneven growth and marginality were voiced by Bentley, et al., (2011) and Shaw and Robinson (2012) who believe the new regional structure would fracture and fragment regions into 'small territorial units'. This is of specific concern in the North East where the region has been divided up into two LEPs, both competing for the same, limited resources. Respondents for this research echoed these concerns with regard to the

Regional Growth Fund<sup>80</sup> (RGF) suggesting the LEPs would cause a damaging amount of rivalry within the region, which would ultimately harm the vitality, viability and growth of the region.

#### **6.4 Birth of the Unitary Council and the Death of the District**

On 1 April 2009 the seven district local authorities and the County Council which made up County Durham's two tier governing system were amalgamated. In their place a new, overarching governing structure was established in the shape of Durham Unitary Council. Consequently, the local authority governing East Durham (Easington District) disbanded, and the majority of decision making powers and public service provision- including the function of housing and regeneration- passed to the new authority. Notable for this research is the fact that the housing function not only moved from Local Authority to Unitary Council control, but was also subsumed by Economic Development (a department which already held the functions of regeneration and planning). In theory this could potentially aid housing in a sluggish economy as by pairing it with an economic function it may result in a closer alignment and more joined up thinking and approach. Certainly, the respondents interviewed for this research (specifically those working in local government) expressed a belief that, while housing and regeneration previously enjoyed a close working relationship, this departmental reshuffle would be enhanced the attention and emphasis placed upon housing. Nevertheless respondents working in the housing sector were worried that housing could be overlooked or marginalised in favour of other functions within the umbrella of Economic Development.

The restructuring of County Durham's governing authority has (re)moved influence from each local district, centralising power in Durham city which now covers the county as a whole under one sub-regional, unitary authority. This has

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<sup>80</sup> providing £2.6 billion to support and fund ventures encouraging private sector investment to generate economic development and produce sustainable employment across England between 2011 and 2016 ([www.gov.co.uk](http://www.gov.co.uk) accessed 20 January 2013)

resulted in the development of a county wide agenda, rather than the previous sub-county level which placed each district in charge of agendas such as housing and regeneration. Durham City now not only represents the centre of power but also the focal point of the county. The amalgamation of the smaller district authorities into one larger power was believed to disadvantage the less economically dependent authorities- such as East Durham- which now have no local authority to 'fight their corner'. A volume builder (Interview R) expressed a concern that East Durham would be viewed as the "poor relation to Durham city" because of their less strategic significance and in relative terms possess less "political weight". Resultantly greater pressure was placed on local councillors, the third sector and civil society to 'plug the gap' left by the restructuring. A local ward councillor (Interview Y) involved in this research contended there is greater pressure on elected representatives to ensure that communities are not overlooked and marginalised:

"we've got to make sure that people like me get to all the meetings and make sure I make myself accessible to the community so they don't feel it's a remote [Unitary] council. At the end of the day there are 23,000 people working there so it's easy to be lost in the system... I have to fight their [local community] corner and make sure what they want to have done, as long as it's reasonable, can get done".

The shift in governing scales was regarded as positive for developers as the housing and planning was now one, unified policy covering the county as a whole. This new 'easy ride' resulted from the city region nature of housing developments and economic activity which happened at a higher geographical space than the previous local authorities. Now, unbounded by local authority lines, this shift made consultation easier as a consistency in approach was achieved (Interview L: Senior Planning Manager). However, while regarded as beneficial the loss of local authority areas meant the loss of hot and cold spot areas which developers exploited where possible. The former structure offered greater flexibility which, in



areas such as East Durham, would 'bend' planning policy due to an eagerness for economic growth and house building to diverse stock.

There were significant concerns, voiced by local politicians and third sector representatives interviewed for this thesis, that certain geographical areas, specifically 'cold spots', be overlooked in favour of larger, more strategic areas; most notably Durham City. This new political structure, by adoption a 'county wide holistic agenda' (Interview N: Councillor) would, by definition, possess the capacity to ignore or overlook the less strategic, more marginal areas. Such an approach could potentially creating or exacerbating inequality. This is exemplified in the Durham County Council draft Private Sector Housing Strategy 2011- 2015 (2011: 14) which expresses:

“Seaham is the gateway to Durham’s coast and its growth and revitalisation, based around the regeneration of the town centre and the redevelopment of former colliery sites, is an emerging success story. Peterlee is a former new town and is a significant residential and employment base within the County halfway along the coast between Hartlepool and Sunderland”

Meanwhile the former colliery villages are given significantly less strategic emphasis for both housing and regeneration, and merely function to support the growth and sustainability of the strategic centres- a policy approach very reminiscent of those discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The County Durham Plan, discussed next, provides an illustrative tool to show how the local shift in political structures have, can or may influence housing-led regeneration. This policy also further highlights the potential for distinction of place leading to polarisation and the manufacture of uneven development.

#### **6.4.1 County Durham Plan: restructured governing or future Unevenness?**

The County Durham Plan (CDP) represents the county’s Development Framework and provides a “... statutory planning policy documents which focus on land-use development and protection set within the context of social, economic and

environmental trends and considerations”<sup>81</sup>. This county wide piece of urban policy is informed by the (SHLAA) and documents the number, size and location of development across the county’s neighbourhoods, villages, towns and cities. Deemed controversial by local authority actor, the CDP places considerable emphasis on Durham City as the centre for development, with key areas in each former district taking secondary emphasis, and other (much fewer) developments spread across other villages or hamlets. Durham city is regarded as a “driver for economic growth”, believed to be key to the viability of the county as a sub-regional ‘hub’. Housing emphasis is on Durham City to an extent it has not previously been possible due to its historical and green field constraints prohibiting development. The basis of the approach was summed up by a senior Housing Strategist (Interview B) who stated

“...you can put a lot of money into somewhere which is very needy but that money disappears and you end up with an area still needy and the market area still has not grown at all. So the theory that you put money where the greatest need is currently out of favour and the theory in ascendency is to put money in areas where there is a private market, which investors want to put money. Such as here, in Durham City.”

by promoting development in key areas it is argued that the “county’s distinctive multi-centred settlement pattern will have [by 2030] formed the backbone for new development” (Durham County Council, 2008a, 12). In East Durham, Seaham (which functions as ‘the gateway to Durham’s Heritage Coast’) and while Peterlee (which offers “...vibrant, regionally important, industrial and manufacturing base...”) continue to provide the strategic basis (Durham County Council, 2008a, 13). The general consensus from the research was that focussing on key, strategic areas over cold spot areas suggested a lack of confidence in the villages which, in turn, made them less attractive to developers and private investors. In essence this agenda repeats previous urban policy approaches which created or exacerbated pre-existing uneven development within districts and the county. It is largely

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<sup>81</sup> Durham County Council website <http://www.durham.gov.uk/pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=599> accessed 22/8/2013

feared that this agenda would marginalised already marginal areas, while more viable communities would continue to grow as their strategic importance continues to be enhanced by the local authority. This was also my biggest concern regarding local authority restructuring, especially as the County Durham Plan continues the local private development agenda which is reflected in much of the policy which has created or promoted uneven development, as discussed so far in this thesis. While the majority of those employed in the public sector were keen to point out that sustainability was key, and that no communities- large or small- would be overlooked, a senior planner for the local authority (Interview L) did voice concerns that cold spots could be marginalised

“My fear is that somewhere like Easington Colliery in the future- where there is no land value, government subsidy, money for affordable housing- there are some difficult issues to sort out and I’m not clear what the picture will be and how we can help those communities from a housing sense”.

While the rhetoric suggests a continued emphasis on all communities, considerable debates emerged from communities during consultation and promotion of the Plan. Largely regarded by the planning department as “a tough sell”, those living in Durham City raised concerns over a breach of the historic integrity of the city, while less strategic areas worried they were being overlooked. A planner from the Unitary Council (Interview G), citing East Durham as an example, stated

“I think in places like Easington [district] where Peterlee and Seaham were major players, now all of a sudden they are marginalised because the agenda has moved to Durham City”

The central concern for me is that the County Durham Plan is laying the way for further and future reduction of capacity for ‘less important’ areas which, in turn, may lead to greater difference and unevenness in neighbourhoods. While not directly condemning any villages, like the Category D villages of the 1950s (discussed in detail in Chapter 2), the broader approach and less attention and investment in areas deemed less sustainable may be exacerbating uneven

development so much so that it is essentially signing the death warrant for ‘cold spots’, by denying them any potential future function.

### **6.5 Localism: Community Empowerment Rhetoric or Practical Restructuring Policy?**

Much like ‘integration’ and ‘joined up solutions for joined up problems’ became the mantra for New Labour’s urban policy agenda (Slocombe, 2002), ‘Decentralisation’ and ‘Localism’ became buzzwords synonymous with the Coalition administration. Localism emerged as a contentious issue during the research which was undertaken in the infancy of the localism agenda. The Coalition Government’s Localism Act (2012) aimed to decentralise power from central government to local communities so that “... power, money and knowledge” could be devolved to local elected representatives, local third sector groups and neighbourhoods themselves<sup>82</sup> (DCLG, 2010). In turn this transfers control of decision making to residents, businesses and local authorities who can shape their own neighbourhood (DCLG, 2012<sup>83</sup>), and includes a greater emphasis on local and community planning and development, involving the delivery of housing and regeneration. This ‘decentralisation’ approach encourages the strengthening of ‘the local’ based on the premise that through community empowerment and collective working neighbourhoods are not only strengthened in terms of community spirit but also strengthened in governing power terms as this signals a move away from the state which is both too large and too controlling (Mellor, et al., 2010). Deas (2013) argues that Localism has repositioned the role of the state in urban policy. It is suggested that the Coalition governments move to decentralisation has been a significant impact on policy delivery and formulation, which sits alongside the New Labour emphasis on social and spatial equity. As a result, in rhetoric at least, greater emphasis for control and responsibility is transferred to the private and the voluntary sector (akin to the private sector driven partnerships embraced by the New Right), as well as communities themselves. This raises questions regarding the ‘hollowing out of the state’ and the true extent of power transfer (discussed later).

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<sup>82</sup> perceived to be “...those best placed to find the best solutions to local needs” (DCLG, 2010, 2)

<sup>83</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/localgovernment/2126291>

In general terms, Localism is promoted as offering freedom from central interference, as well as possessing the ability to positively impact upon local outcomes and reflect local identity (Pratchett, 2004). This apparently 'historic' act is believed to reverse over a century of "...centralisation, returning power back to citizens, communities and local groups to manage their own affairs... [by] breaking up the monopoly of Whitehall" (DCLG, 6 April 2012<sup>84</sup>). Nevertheless, in many ways this maintains or develops the community consultation ethos heralded by New Labour (and which is a central element of the Post-political condition<sup>0</sup> discussed in Chapter 7) which made community involvement an integral element of the political system and is argued to have impacted very positively upon disadvantaged communities (Baker, et al, 2013; Deas, 2013; Davies, 2008; Punch et al, 2004; also see Chapter 2 of this thesis). Accompanied by the removal of regional governance structures and regionally based targets (discussed above), there is a belief that local community needs can be realised away from the pressures of wider target setting (DCLG, 2011). Indeed Pugalys and Townsend (2013) argue that the modes of spatial development have significantly altered since the rescaling of politics witnessed by the abolition of regional governance machinery, which has given way to an emphasis of power at a local level. This is most evident in the interface between planning and economic development where local planning authorities have relinquished some of their 'top-down' powers in favour of the 'bottom-up' neighbourhood plans.

The respondents for this research were largely positive regarding the philosophy engendered by localism (the practicalities were a different issue, however). Mainly there was an appreciation of the principles of genuine community empowerment. The reality of the agenda raises questions regarding the extent to which power would be truly devolved. Depending upon delivery, this could have two different effects. At one extreme, if power was truly devolved to the local scale away from central government, this shift from government to governance (MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999) would denationalise the state and 'hollowing out' the nation state

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<sup>84</sup> <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/localgovernment/2126291>

(Jessop, 1997; 2004 also see Macleod and Goodwin, 1999 for an in depth discussion of the debates surrounding this conception). On the other hand, if the rhetoric holds no weight then communities and those working within neighbourhoods could become disillusioned<sup>85</sup>. The concern that communities may feel discouraged if reality and rhetoric do not match is a longstanding issue, and was highlighted in the late 1960's as "empty and frustrating for the powerless" (Arnstein, 1969). Third sector representatives interviewed for this study stated that if communities' do not feel empowered and/ or responsible for their own futures then Localism would fail, and could serve to hamper other or further community work. Davies and Pill (2011: 2212) contend this could hollow out neighbourhood governance and "signify a retreat from or rescaling of the more interventionist and inclusive variants of neo-liberal governance." More recently Curtis (2011) has characterised this agenda as 'guided localism'; suggesting that while the proposals may provide the opportunity for greater local independence, the circumstances in which localism has to operate makes achieving these goals difficult. This suggestion of a tokenistic power transfer aligns with the view held by those adhering to the post-political condition (discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7) which argues that the shift of power to local, small scale is used as a pacifying technique which involves debate but ultimately does not undermine the power of the state. Indeed this thesis also highlighted concerns that Localism involves a shift from customised neighbourhood schemes towards a centrally imposed, static model which entails greater community commitment and debate but ultimately less power through the existence of fewer resources.

Economic preoccupations were voiced by the majority of respondents interviewed for this research, with many assuming that Localism was a money saving exercise. A local councillor (Interview M) believed that this was a way for the government to reduce "...pressure from public sector borrowing, and give the money to their cronies", while a representative working for a local regeneration charity feared that the third sector would have to step in to compensate for the change in governing which would ultimately have economic ramification:

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<sup>85</sup> Experienced with other policies, and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7

“I’ll have to wait and see how much devolvement there is to local government, and how much of that devolvement comes to local communities. We are a voluntary organisation, we are a charity, we don’t have the money to prop up areas and [provide the financial support which] Durham [Unitary Council] should be doing... I like the idea of it but it’ll depend upon the local authority and how much they devolve to the public sector. Some areas could really miss out... I’m worried this [East Durham] could be one.”

Mellor, et al. (2010) also contend that budget cuts and imposed spending reductions of approximately 19% across government departments between 2010 and 2014 are responsible for the policy agenda. Local government structures, weakened by the recent funding reductions and administrative restructuring, have been replaced with Community participation which is argued to be “... central to cost-effective strategies for regeneration in urban, industrialized contexts” (Craig and Mayo, 1993, 2), while greater citizen control could save money as residents time, expertise and material resources will be provided for free (Mellor, et al., 2010).

On the whole, a strong background of community working and neighbourhood cohesions was believed to be essential for communities to capitalise on the Localism agenda. This is specifically applicable to Schedule 9 of the Localism Bill (2010) which promotes the engagement of communities in decision making through the development of neighbourhood plans by parish and town councils and local community groups. This aspect was warmly, however concerns were voiced over the practicalities of the neighbourhood plans, the level of involvement by communities and the extent to which the council would be compromised by trying to ‘juggle’ strategic agendas and neighbourhood plans. Similarly, Anthony Fyson (writing in Planning Magazine, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2011, page 17), suggests the need for local initiatives and local democracy to assimilate as much as possible as it is wrong to assume that neighbourhood plans can gain legitimacy through a referendum, highlighting that conflict and tensions will likely arise out of the process

“With self-interested groups devising plans for their own ends and squaring potential residents as they go along, there is little hope for fair outcome for disadvantaged groups [and arguably communities]. Local interest will often be in conflict, which is the very problem that elected councils disinterestedly administering the rules can usually resolve without too much rancour and prejudice” (this issue of consensus and dissensus is discussed further in Chapter 7).

Likewise, the practicalities of these plans were stressed by a Senior Planner (Interview L) who noted

“In Durham we have 245 settlements so if we have to work with each to provide a neighbourhood plan then that’d take a lot of time and effort at that level... Some have town or parish council and it is those who will have an advantage over those who don’t. Some have very strong community groups, others don’t. Some are deprived while others are well off and articulate. I can see lots of inconsistencies coming. The government have said it’ll be pro-development, and it’ll be interesting to see how that comes out”.

There were further concerns expressed during this research regarding how East Durham’s communities would cope with the pressures of such micro level governing with particular regard to the shifting and transient nature of residents in some villages. This is illustrated by the attitude of a housing strategist within the Unitary Council (Interview B) who questioned whether the ‘social infrastructure’ was in place in the district to cope with such a shift in governance:

“I think the disadvantage that East Durham has got is that despite its strong heritage of having strong community activity, it hasn’t necessarily had that strong social infrastructure that can manage change, and if anything there is too much of the dependency culture which will not stand itself in a particularly good position to take advantage of localism. It’s going to be the articulate, empowered communities who know what they want and how to get it who will win out in Localism, without there being strong facilitation



and enabling from 'others'- professionals or other community organisation- who can work with the community".

A local authority planner (Interview L) further highlighted the problems associated with transient communities, suggesting that short term goals may be chosen by such neighbourhoods it was suggested this would ultimately jar with the longer term planning adopted by local authorities; most notably the County Durham Plan. Planning consultants and local authority planners alike expressed the potential for conflict, as one consultant noted

"What happens if the plan allocates land for development, how does the local forum take that if they don't agree with it? There is a potential for conflict. I'm not certain how that'll pan out. In some villages there will be an anti-development lobby but then the local authority may think there is a need for development. It'll be interesting to see how that plays out."

Concerns over a flood of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) disquiet was voiced by developers and council workers alike in this research (discussed further in Chapter 7). There was an overriding belief that localism would be used to block both development and 'progress' in some areas; as expressed by a private sector developer

"Neighbourhood planning and community consultation sounds fantastic, but no one wants you [as a developer], you're spoiling their view. You are putting traffic on their roads." (Interview K)

Indeed, as a senior planner articulate, the NIMBY attitude serves to create major opposition:

"My concern is that it becomes a NIMBY agenda and it's the same people involved...Maybe I'm too sceptical and I'm doing the community a disservice but ive worked in planning at a lot of different levels and you can't get away from it, there are NIMBY's out there" (Interview J).

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the impact of recent governance and governing restructure upon housing-led regeneration. During the period of research East Durham has witnessed a shift from local authority to unitary power; a move from regionalism to sub regionalism; and the introduction of a centrally guided localism agenda. In all this has resulted in an emphasis on sub regional governance which has adopted a private-sector driven emphasis-- as witnessed in the introduction of the LEP as a governing body and through local urban policy such as the County Durham Plan. Significantly this shift and its associated funding changes have emerged at a time of a wider economic slump which has served to create uneven development by placing greater emphasis on larger, more strategic (hot spot) areas. These hot spots have gained attention due to the pre-existing, trusted markets which are perceived to offer a better yield for future investment; and this has been reflected in the urban policy which has subsequently developed. While the rhetoric of this shift-- and associated agenda-- is that all communities are viewed equally, it is evident that marginal areas have continued to receive less attention compared to the strategic hotspots. This is not a case of sour grapes, but serves to highlight a more significant concern and risk that cold spot areas can and do become further marginalised as a result of governing changes and associated policy and funding (the latter tied to the private driven aspect of the agenda). This has an impact on the type of housing-led regeneration agendas adopted and, ultimately, their success in real terms. Consequently, it is evident that this shift in governance has exacerbated pre-existing conditions of uneven development. The Localism agenda cuts against the trend for sub-regional governing, and private sector driven policy. The decentralisation of power from Central government to neighbourhoods, in theory, increases local powers, allowing communities to act as stakeholders with the power to control the direction of local development. However this jars with concerns that, in reality, community planning may be ineffective for a range of reasons, most notably the micro which is incongruent with other governing scales, the limited funding and the questionable capacity (this is picked up again and debated further in Chapter 7).

This chapter has investigated the impact of the shifting scale and associated emphasis which comes with governing reshuffles to highlight how conflict and discontent has emerged. The following chapter continues the discussion of governing housing-led regeneration within East Durham by focussing on Post-Political theory to illustrate how local partnership working is employed in Neoliberal urban policy to construct consensus and management conflict.

## **CHAPTER 7: GOVERNING HOUSING LED-REGENERATION: CONSENSUS AND DISSENSUS IN LOCAL POLITICS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapter 6 investigated the recent shift in political scales, highlighting a greater emphasis on sub-regional working which resulted from the reconfiguration and removal of previous governing structures, and the central government's push for Localism. This chapter builds from the previous chapters, engaging with the range of partnerships and relationships (casual and formal) which have developed as an intrinsic part of urban policy and have been affected by the recent political changes. As such this chapter develops a critical understanding of the institutional approach to governing housing driven regeneration in urban policy in general and East Durham in particular. As Shrestha (2010:1) illuminates

“...the notion of *'government'* as the single decision making authority has been replaced by multi - scale, polycentric *'governance'* models taking into account the fact that a large number of stakeholders in different institutional settings contribute to policy and management of a resource”

Therefore it is important to take into account not only the actions of the state but also those of partners, communities, stakeholders and other interested parties in the process of housing-led regeneration, to appreciate how all actors influence and shape the process. This chapter is invaluable in providing an insight into how different groups embrace or 'buy-in' to policies, which has a wider impact upon the successful implementation of housing-led regeneration aims . For this research this was achieved by combining empirical data-- in the form of interviews and my participation in local and sub regional housing and renewal groups-- with policy and literature from the groups and organisations involved in collaborative working in East Durham.

As highlighted in the previous chapter the process of housing-led regeneration-how it is both expressed in policy terms and consumed by developers, communities and stakeholders—is subject to conflict as a result of the different perspectives which each group possesses. This chapter will examine in depth both conflict (dissensus) and consensus which exists in collaborative working

techniques and governing processes. This will be achieved by critically engaging with the Neo-liberal techniques for governing which are an intrinsic part of urban policy; namely partnership working and collaborative practices. Due to the weight attached to partnerships as part of Neo-liberal urban policy and the focus of Post-political theory on this same topic this framework fits perfectly with the wider aims of the thesis. As such it also provides a valuable lens through which to examine both formal and informal governing techniques to unpack the architecture of governing.

### **7.2 Emergence and prominence of Partnerships and Collaboration**

Governance goes beyond government, and the shifting emphasis from government to governance is an integral part of modern, neo-liberal society. This shift comes with an assumption that, when undertaken at the local level, it will enhance a neighbourhoods “character and fortunes” (Goodwin and Painter, 1996). Governance refers to the relationships between formally elected local agencies and agents, as well as a range of non-elected groups or individuals from the non-political field (including the voluntary, private and community sectors). The interaction of these diverse actors- each with differing aims, views and agendas – can, and often does, produce obvious or discrete conflict and consensus around the different issues and concerns (Kooiman, 2003). Similarly housing and regeneration involves the interaction of various agencies and mediators, with differing opinions about management and delivery, which ultimately shapes and constrains the built environment (Knox and Pinch, 2010), and creates a complex and layered process of interaction.

As with other forms of urban policy, the different configurations for governing have emerged or developed as the policy emphasis of the central government political party has changed (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of this shifting attention to governing and governance). During the 1980’s the USA and UK governmental administrations ushered in the establishment of public-private cooperation in the form of partnerships as a means to facilitate economic development and place shaping (Knox and Pinch, 2010). New Labour built significantly from this agenda

(as highlighted in Chapter 2), encouraging local and neighbourhood scaled agendas and promoting community participation and collaboration networks as a means of harnessing the skills of public, private, community and voluntary sectors to produce and sustain neighbourhood renewal strategies (McCarthy, 2007). Partnership working soon became embedded in policy-- evident in Area Based Initiatives which were used to address a range of urban issues<sup>86</sup> (Imrie and Raco 2003; Fuller and Geddes, 2008)--and since 1997 has been regarded as a standard procedure (Perrons, 2000; Klijn & Skelcher, 2007) and often a precondition for funding.

The promotion of partnerships has evidently resulted in a multitude of collaboration, consultation and fostering of relationships between and within the private sector, public sector, communities, local stakeholders and the third sector. This has created new formal and informal institutional and governance arrangements which act outside and beyond the state can emerge (Swyngedouw, 2007). This has also resulted in the privatisation or semi-privatisation of a range of organizations-- including volunteer, community, non-profit, private firms, QUANGOs, development organizations and corporations-- who, due to these public-private partnerships, now perform many of the functions which had previously been assumed by locally elected authorities (Purcell, 2008). In these terms, independent and interdependent actors (from private/ market and civil society) work alongside the national or local state, at different geographical scales (Hajer, 2003), to play a greater role in policy-making and decision-making (Swyngedouw, 2007). This, Lemke (2002:50) argues, has not resulted in a loss of state power but, instead;

“...a displacement from formal to informal techniques of government and the appearance of new actors on the scene of government (e.g. NGOs), that indicate fundamental transformations in statehood and a renewed relation between state and civil society actors”.

This has, in turn, created a complex mosaic of neighbourhood governance structures' which link local and state agencies (Paddison, 2009).

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<sup>86</sup> including education, housing, health, crime and the environment

Local conditions differ and so the size and approach of each collaboration is unique. The nuances of these relationships are perceived to be advantageous as their flexibility means they are able to:

- draw on local knowledge;
- promote equality;
- counteract local market failure;
- improve local democracy by enhancing governing efficiency and outcomes;
- boost community capacity;
- improve external perceptions of neighbourhoods;
- link policy to wider strategies by aligning ‘central-local’ interests; and
- encourage local policy integration (Dean and Hastings, 2000; Rowe and Devanney, 2003; McCarthy, 2007; Geddes, 2006).

These benefits are tempered with concerns that collaboration weakens local democracy and accountability in favour of private companies who carry out and engage in centrally imposed agenda setting (Geddes, 2006; Glynn, 2009) which functions to damage the process and “hollow-out” neighbourhood governance (Davies and Pill, 2011). Further it is suggested that the sheer range of public, quasi-public and private organisations which criss cross the UK often confused communities over accountability and who is in charge of local governing (Weir, 1996). The network of interlocking partnerships’ are also argued to create an “uncivil society composed of bureaucracy rather than democratically accountable bodies” (Hirst, 2000, 20-1) which are incompatible and irreconcilable with the goals of governance and call into question partnerships and collaborative working (Rowe and Devanney, 2003; Brownill and Carpenter, 2009).

### **7.3 Partnerships and the Post-Political Condition**

It is through the new urban agenda of partnerships that social power relations have been restructured (Lemke, 2002) and a new set of technologies of power have emerged (Dean, 1999) which render individuals responsible for their own actions and subject to state-imposed regulations producing 'calculating individuals' within 'calculable spaces' incorporated into 'calculative regimes' (Miller 1992). This is played out in the partnership/ collaboration arena through the manufacture of consent and 'consensus politics' (Paddison, 2009) which employs 'inclusive thought' as a means to remove conflict by 'carefully choreographing', rather than fully resolving, the issue. The Post-political condition is, therefore, bound up in these consensual techniques of governing, and the urban Neo-liberal political practise which drives the ongoing process of construction and contestation (Mouffe, 2005, Paddison, 2009). Resultantly, these pacifying, tokenistic transfers of power in the form of partnerships and collaboration act as 'the techniques of consensual persuasion' (Paddison, 2009) which, rather than undermining the power or authority of the state (Fung and Wright, 2003), are used to "...maintain the 'steering' role of political institutions..." (Pierre, 2000). Indeed, these governing structures are not free formed but instead based on an "...urban police order [which] vitally revolves around a consensual arrangement in which all those that are named and counted can take part, can participate" (Swyngedouw, 2007, 9). This apparently inclusive technique is open only to those who have a voice and who are named (Swyngedouw, 2007). This symbolic approach is arguably seen in the form of the Localism agenda and the local governing processes (such as the AAP) as well as the existence and promotion of forums and steering groups (in the case of East Durham) and other consultative techniques operating at differing spatial scales (Mouffe, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2007).

In theory partnerships are a tool for developing consensus. In practise, collaborative structures may possess a relatively successful design, however these relationships are not always as uncomplicated anticipated. Indeed, the multitude of actors coming together, combined with the differing physical, economic and social agendas which affect and influence each group can, and do, lead to conflict (Hill, 2000). This is expressed at numerous geographical scales-- neighbourhood, local, regional and national and supranational scale (Stoker, 2004b)— and with



numerous issues which further adds to the complexity of the situation. It is, therefore, unsurprising for such networks of governance to be conflicting. Nevertheless conflict within governance-- what Rancière (2010: 38) terms 'dissensus'-- is the "essence of politics". This should not to be viewed as simply a conflict of personal values, but instead is the condition in which there is dispute regarding "... what is given and about the frame within which we sense something is given" (Rancière, 2010, 69). In these terms, for decision making and governing to be 'properly' democratic it must involve political wrangling and vigorous debate. These antagonistic relationships are innate in human relations, rooted in the drive for social order and resulting from ongoing decision making which involves making choices between different, often conflicting, alternatives which often antagonises one side-- often those excluded from the process-- and reveals the limitations of consensus (Mouffe, 2000; 2005). Therefore, it is essential to have dissensus and conflicting situations for the democratic decision making process to be 'proper' (Mouffe, 2005), as this shows that "those who are not equally included in the existing socio-political order, demand their 'right to equality'..." (Swyngedouw, 2009, 606).

Obvious tension and antagonism, while considered valuable, is nevertheless regarded as damaging to Neo-Liberal politics and the political condition. Therefore urban policy acts to conflicting relationships in which little or no common ground exists, to an agonistic relationship where parties may be conflicting 'adversaries' but the relationship functions with each appreciating one another's viewpoint (Mouffe, 2005). The drive for a legitimised, agonistic relationship has been criticised as an institutionalised governmental technique which has limited debate and, therefore, organized the 'foreclosure' of the 'properly political'. In all these techniques have reduced governing processes, making them no more than a form of social administration (Mouffe, 2005).

The post-political condition, as outlined in this section, will be discussed and directly applied to the governing of housing and regeneration in the case study

area of East Durham. This is informed by the interviews and participant observation at local partnerships and collaborative discussion groups recorded during the thesis fieldwork, and applied to the range of relationships which exist between each group.

#### **7.4 Unitary Council and developers: partnerships and forums**

The relationship between the Unitary Council and private sector developers is significant in this research. Not only are housing developers and regeneration agencies the groups which drive the housing market rather than follow it (Allen, 2008) but they are also those who create the physical urban environment by this construction (Developers) and policy (Town Planners) (Byrne, 2001). Evidently, the differing power which each group exhibits in driving and shaping the urban form can create tensions when these two groups express a difference in vision--visible in the relationship between private and public sectors. Developers and local difference is predicated in the difference in goal between the public and private sector and played out in the field of planning regulation and consent. The local authority is a public sector organisation aiming for 'best value' and 'best practise' which fits in with wider strategic policies. Conversely, developers are private organisations, motivated by profit and driven to satisfy the shareholders investment. A regeneration developer interviewed (Interview X) explained that a local councillor told him he was not interested in what a housing scheme entailed but rather that it was cost effective; the councillor reportedly stated "Don't give me efficient, give me cheap". This was suggested to be indicative of the current situation, and highlighted as causing frustration as it hampered action. Evidently there are tensions at play when trying to combine this private versus public interface. These include: governability and flexibility; cooperation and competition; competitiveness, social inclusion and sustainability; and, openness and closure (Brownill and Carpenter, 2009). Nevertheless such tensions are constantly challenging both planners and developers which help to make one another aware of each other's perspective, creating mutual understanding of one another's perspective. What Mouffe (2005) terms Agonism.

Referring to Foucault's concept of Governmentality, Paddison (2009: 9) highlights that it is through the apparatus of governing other agencies that power is exercised by the local authority, specifically evident through "... it's technical expertise and the skills of the professionals employed by the (local) state...". This raises questions as to how successful collaborative working could be when there is an assumption of power on the side of the Local Authority to govern other relationships. However, the recent economic downturn and introduction of austerity measures have led to tensions regarding a lack of resources or funding for the public sector to aid collaborative agenda, meaning there is a greater reliance on the private sector.

The fundamental difference in attitudes is expressed in the quotes below. On the one side the local authority proposed that developers needed to appreciate and follow the council's agenda, as expressed by a local councillor:

"There isn't enough money to go around. And clearly the recession and the market have affected this. So developers have to realise that to get anywhere they have to come to us."

This sits starkly against the views expressed by a volume builder who stated that the public sector needs to be more understanding of the pressures on the private sector

"...they [local authority] need to understand we're in it for profit. We answer to shareholders. We compete for finance on a global market. The only way you'll get developers in to marginal locations is if they allow us a little bit more money, but the system says it won't allow us any money."  
(Interview K)

The mismatch in attitudes, the private sector feel, are created by mistrust: the local authority, they feel, believing their attitudes and ideas are not taken into account as they are seen as possessing an ulterior motive:

"Yeah, we are sometimes self interested, not all the time. We aren't seen as perceived as having a role or a social conscience, to them they see us as

nothing more than building homes and making profit. But I think we're more than that. At least let us have the debate..." (Interview R)

The public/ private tension is further expressed in time of austerity as developers felt frustrated by the approach adopted by some local authorities with regard 'land banking'. This was done in the hope that land prices would increase in the near future and provide the public sector with greater resources. Such a philosophy was acknowledged by the private sector, however it was criticised as it was believed to reduce development, hamper housing delivery and prevent a quicker economic recovery.

This, in turn, raised concerns from the developers interviewed that the local authority was detached from reality and lacked an understanding of the 'real world'. Academic literature suggests that the developers' role is to interpret and read the 'market' and its demands (Robson, 1975), whereas the planners and local authorities 'educate' developers as to 'correct' planning layout in line with policy (Gracey, 1973). Tensions emerge from opposing aims, and this was borne out in the interviews when criticisms were levelled that local authorities (specifically planners) hold an idealistic notion of what the built environment should ideally be, and wish to achieve a consensus around their own view of perfection. The aim to achieve such a consensus is criticised for creating tension and conflict, due to, as Sennett (1970:98) summarises "Planner's sights are on the urban 'whole' instead; they are dreaming of a beautiful city where people fit together in peace and harmony." Forester (2003: 385) suggests that planners may fail to "...attend to the pressing emotional and communicative dimensions of local land-use conflicts" if they get caught up with data and policy. It is indeed this view point which developers adopt, feeling that "policy, policy, policy" (Interview K) took precedence.

The lack of real world application was further voiced by respondents from the house building sector who suggested the public sector lacked a full and proper understanding of economic markets. This emerging issue came from some

developers (Interviews R, K, and O) who believed there was a lack of awareness from the public sector regarding the practicalities of house building, specifically development economics and profit margins. Interview K highlighted

“We spend ages doing presentations to local authorities explaining how the housing market works in really simplistic terms. We take it down to a level that a GCSE student would understand. This is how it works so that’s how we react. It’s terrifying that they don’t understand it. It’s a fundamental misunderstanding. The public sector has a serious problem.”

He continued, specifically discussing the attitudes of those higher in the local authorities, stating

“So you get, for example, a head of policy in a metropolitan council in the north east thinking we make 86% profit on a new house. So that is a head of policy, a senior officer. So what does someone fresh out of university think you’re making?!”

The planning system and regulations were on the whole criticised as an overly difficult and time consuming practice not least because of community involvement and the requirement for ecology, traffic and archaeology reports. It was generally suggested that planning ‘had its place’; beyond that-- as one respondent (Volume developer: Interview O) suggested-- it “...stops or slows the process. It’s not conducive to development. If there is a chance of stopping or slowing it then that will prevail”. Understandably developers largely felt frustrated by the unflinching, slow and non-reactive policy processes and procedures of the local authority. The majority of developers interviewed believing that such a philosophy is entrenched in the thinking and general approach of the public sector, which led one developer (Interview X) to suggest ‘their job was to do nothing’. However this is countered by Purcell (2008) -- noted earlier in this chapter-- as well as the interviews from the local authority who assumes that this considered process is valuable to democracy as it promotes accountability and encourages better representation.

Conversely, few issues were highlighted by the Local Authority employees interviewed regarding tensions between themselves and the building industry. Of course there was awareness that the definitive distinction in the approach of the public and private sectors which put strain on relationships, but (in the opinion of many Local Authority representatives) this was not a great concern to either camp. Indeed, a senior housing strategist (Interview B) stated that while contact between the council and developers was not on a daily or weekly basis the connections were argued to be significant enough to foster a functional and trusting relationship. A senior housing manager (Interview A) discussed the importance of contact between developers and the local authority, noting that collaboration was important to maximise the projects undertaken and achieve mutual satisfaction of both camps:

“... It’s important to have them [developers] involved in the debate. And because the builders have been involved from the start they will build there. Because they’ve been able to say ‘that will work for us, that will work in the market’. Rather than us say ‘there is a crappy piece of land, build there’, where it won’t work. They understand the market, and we do as well but from different perspectives, and if we can find a common ground then that is where regeneration will work.”

The interview data suggests a one sided conflict between council officials and developers felt from the developers’ side and acknowledged by the public sector but only in terms of less damaging tension. This may be as a result of the agenda which the local authority adopted to foster a consensual relationship between the private and public sector in terms of housing and regeneration, through the creation of the County Durham Housing And Regeneration Partnership (HARP). The HARP concentrates on the delivery of new housing, providing a setting in which private house builders and the Unitary Council can discuss pertinent issues. Unfortunately due to the nature of the HARP- involvement of private sector agencies, politicians, and other representatives- I was unable to gain access to these closed, invite-only, meetings, meaning I was unable to witness, first hand, the

interactions and relationships of these groups. Speaking of the HARP, a regeneration manager within the unitary council argued that the governance structure in the county is set up to access and take advantage of housing developers' insights:

“It is a mechanism which I would use to consult. You've got house builder represented in different groups, and you'd use them to take soundings, see what their views are or commission bespoke surveys. It all depends what you are seeking to address” (Interview J)

A senior housing strategist suggests that this governing form is managed in a 'pretty ad hoc' manner stating:

“The private sector by virtue of what it is isn't a place which is 'governed' [by the public sector]. We can influence and work in partnership but it's not a place which responds, and no one has ultimate control. All we can do is identifying shared visions and objectives.” (Interview B)

The establishment of 'shared visions and hopes' is indicative to the post-political condition in which dissensus is overcome and consensus aimed to be achieved through the creation of partnerships and collaborative working which acts to pacify dissent. This has not been successful, however, with several developers feeling there was a lack of consultation over policy development and issues of planning and housing guidelines. The viewpoints of the developers indicate that while the rhetoric of partnerships is to develop and inform policy, this was not achieved. This is still felt to be a relationship and process driven predominately by the local authority as it is the public sector that set strategy in relation to what they deem viable and achievable for themselves as public providers. Within the constraints of the 'partnership'-- again established and managed by the local authority-- there is an appreciation of the benefits which the private sector can bring to housing and renewal within County Durham. For the local authority, the creation of the HARP, and other partnerships, imply both an awareness that these relationships are not as functional as they could be and, secondly, that developers provide a valuable resource which needs to be coerced to continue house building and feeding the economy, especially in austerity times. The value of the private

sector is evident in the private sector driven or inspired LEP and policy such as the County Durham Plan (discussed in depth previously). However this seems to jar with the actual relationship which the private and public sector have, and it is interesting to consider how the rhetoric and reality of this approach differs.

This is, nevertheless, a mutually beneficial relationship which is kept functional by both groups. Developers need the local authority to grant them planning consent, provide them with land, and so forth, while the local authority need the private sector to invest in areas, finance housing and renewal, and so on. This suggests that irrespective of the partnership forum an agonistic relationship exists in which there is an appreciation of one another's viewpoint but a continued drive to achieve what each particular group require. This will have little chance of being turned into a consensual one while the public and private sector hold very different visions.

### **7.5 Council and third sector housing groups: partnerships and forums**

Addressing Dutch Social housing, but equally applicable to their British counterparts, Priemus (2007: 376) proposes that Housing Associations perform a crucial role (previously held by local government) in the management and regeneration of areas of social housing. They not only enhance the physical environment of housing estates, but also

“Alleviate social problems, boost economic vitality and restructure social real estate which is not attractive to commercial investors”.

As such social landlords have become increasingly involved in broader issues which are wider than their housing remit. This includes a greater emphasis on community development and consultation (Gibb, 2003), as well as aligning their non-profit organisation philosophy with a growing emphasis on 'commercial structures', which has reduced civic control and encouraged the involvement of private sector organisations (Glynn, 2009).



The move away from local authority majority ownership of social housing to that of ALMO's and RSL's has resulted in the need for continued collaboration between the local authority and social housing provider. This takes the form of partnership structures which are a common arrangement in between local authorities and ALMO/RSL across England (Glynn, 2009) which serve to preserve contact between the two groups. In County Durham this has taken the form of the County Durham Housing Forum (CDHF). The CDHF provides a bi-monthly, closed meeting in which members of the council's housing department and social housing providers for the county can convene to discuss issues, problems, consult on strategic policy and develop greater partnership working (much like the County Durham Housing and Regeneration Partnership- HARP- discussed above). Falling under the umbrella of County Durham Economic Partnership, the partnership is made up of a range of different Housing Associations, Arms Length Management Organisation, Public Sector representatives, and Charity groups, including<sup>87</sup>:

- Independent Chair
- Sedgefield Borough Homes/ Livin\*
- HCA<sup>^</sup>
- Durham County Council<sup>88^</sup>
- North Star\*
- Three Rivers (4 Housing Group)\*
- Derwentside Homes\*
- Primary Care Trust<sup>^</sup>
- Home Group\*
- Cestria\*
- DAMHA (Durham Aged Mineworkers Housing Association)\*
- East Durham Homes#
- Dale and Valley Homes#
- Homeless link +
- Accent Group\*

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<sup>87</sup> listed on <http://www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk/Pages/EcP-Membership.aspx> accessed 23/8/2013

<sup>88</sup> County Durham Council manage the social housing stock for Durham City

(\* Housing Association; # Arms Length Management Organisation; ^ Public Sector;  
+ Charity)

All respondents from the housing associations, ALMOs and the local authority interviewed for this thesis reported good working relationships and high levels of contact with one another in general, and stated that the CDHF functioned to enhance this relationship further. Not only is it assumed that the CDHF provides a setting in which the council can consult and maintain strong links with social housing providers and managers, but it also provides an opportunity for the Unitary Council to keep up-to-date with emerging ideas, agendas and strategies influencing the provision of social housing. Ultimately this group has to exist due to the council's obligation to express interest in the provision of social housing in their jurisdiction as the stock is either associated with them through arms-length management (ALMOs) or endorsed by them (Housing Associations) through which social housing is provided for local citizens. Whether this group would exist if this was not an obligation is questionable. Existing housing is evidently seen as a necessity as opposed to a driver for regeneration or wider economic improvement. As a result the CDHF is seen as a resource for the Council who facilitate the forum and employ it to influence and engage with providers through an agenda of collaboration.

Unlike the HARP, I was able to gain access to the CDHF which offered an insight into the interactions between the council and housing associations/ ALMO. Not only does the forum facilitate closer working between the council and each individual social housing provider but also offers a situation in which these housing providers can discuss issues, advise one another and work together on different projects. Therefore, it offers a useful resource away from its actual function, presenting a springboard from which to facilitate further cooperative working. Held at different housing providers' premises on a rotating basis, meetings gave each member an opportunity to host the forum. This allowed all members to feel they possessed equal authority over the meeting when, in reality,

agenda setting and the discussion of issues was set by the Unitary Council with additions to it made at the behest of the forum members (HA's, ALMO's, etc). Meetings are held in a formal manner, following a set agenda, and chaired by a senior local authority representative. However the events are relatively relaxed exemplified by the ability for members to speak freely. While business pertaining to scheduled topics was discussed during the forum there were also break times during the 3 hour meeting which provided members with an opportunity for 'off the record', casual conversations of issues highlighted during the meetings, as well as to debate policies or forthcoming agendas away from the group as a whole. This evidently happened a lot, and there was obviously a good working relationship between all of the housing providers. There was accord between the members of the forum (and the companies they represented) who largely expressed mutual goals and objectives during the meeting and 'off the record'. There appeared to be genuine agreement that the meetings and general relationships were good, and this was also echoed during the interviews conducted for this research. While this partnership working could be argued to have facilitated consensus, the public sector ideals embedded in this housing provision (whether it is provided by public or private companies) provide a good basis of shared agendas. Nevertheless, the fact that the local authority facilitates and possesses a pivot role in this partnership working places the local authority in an enhanced position over the other members suggesting an unequal relationship is at play.

#### **7.6 Council and Community/ Stakeholders: a 'power shift' from the 'managerial elite' to 'the community itself'?**

It is argued that the 'power shift' from the 'managerial elite' to 'the community itself' (Diamond, 2004) could serve to exacerbate socio-economic inequalities. This occurs because it is the more powerful (city mayors and local authorities) who provide the platform for participation (Bailey, 1995; Jacobs, 2000). More recently the formation of the UK Coalition Government in 2010 is argued to have ushered in a new period of power transfer; the greater emphasis on 'bottom-up' neighbourhood plans has witness local planning authorities relinquishing some of

their 'top-down' power (Pugalis and Townsend, 2013). While the philosophy of community consultation is admirable, the reality is often less successful. Some groups have less influence or access to resources than others. There are also other groups who lack interest in the act of public participation due to the diverse and complex nature of 'the public' who are segmented and divided by physical proximity, financial or political constraints, business interest, personal values and the perception of degrees of community influence (Faga, 2006). Forester (198:214) suggests there could be problems in 'confusing the self-serving advertising of corporate leaders with the real possibilities of a vibrant civil society'.

The interviews highlighted that while the ideas of community consultation and collaboration were embraced by the local authority, the reality of working alongside the community was cited as 'challenging'. Communities not only vary in size but also in socio-economic structure. As a result there is no one voice nor is there one over arching agenda which everyone wants or could agree on. This makes the process complex, and it is ultimately impossible to satisfy everyone. A regeneration manager for the Unitary Council (Interview U) emphasized that communities are not always right and do not always suggest ideas which would be successful or accepted by others: "... just because something has come from the community it doesn't mean its hunky dory and there won't be any disputes". Similarly, a regeneration strategist (Interview F) drew attention to a major concern regarding the difficulty of achieving a 'one size fits all' approach even at a micro, village level. What the council did not want to achieve was a 'one size fits no one' approach in which a compromise is adopted which suits no one (Interview F). Nevertheless, irrespective of the issues raised, it was widely accepted by local authority and third sector representatives that consultation was invaluable

"You know; what do these people need? Sometimes all you need to do is ask and they'll tell you, rather than determining in London, for example, what they want and shoving it onto them"

Diversity between and within neighbourhoods and communities ensures that the type of collaboration and consultation must differ between projects; for example, if a housing renewal scheme involved the refurbishment or demolition of property then every individual affected would be consulted. However, feedback on an economic strategy would be received by consulting with community stakeholders rather than a whole community. In addition, due to the economic resources required the act of consultation is constrained-- and even reduced-- during periods of austerity when the public sector 'tightens its purse', as highlighted by a local authority senior planner (Interview J) who stated that there has to be changes made over consulting so as to reduce spending, meaning it "...comes down to hard choices".

Ultimately, assessing the success of community partnerships can be difficult, and it is questioned whether greater community consultation actually has a material effect (Parkinson, 1998). Echoing post-political thinking, Davidson (2008:2404) notes

"For the most part, communities do not have the ability to define, control and hold their community infrastructures. And political control appears increasingly up for grabs in neo-liberal forms of governance"

In an economic position where funding for urban programs or urban policy of any scale is limited, the use of steering groups and AAP provides a more feasible setting in which communities and those in local political control can engage in, maintain and foster a useful dialogue. Dissensus can, potentially, be changed to consensus through close working and consultation but this is only possible if local stakeholders and communities feel they are always kept abreast of the ongoing issues currently or potentially impacting upon them. In addition it means that any issues can be addressed at an early stage so that problems can be addressed and overcome, ultimately allowing consensus to be maintained. In East Durham housing-led regeneration community consultation takes place at a neighbourhood level through steering groups which were established for Housing Renewal Areas, and at a broader community level through the Area Action Partnership- both discussed next.

### **7.6.1 Housing renewal steering groups**

The steering groups were facilitated in line with the Private Sector Housing Strategy<sup>89</sup>, which set out to “...focus on areas with the worst concentrations of housing...” (DCC, 2011b, 9): areas referred to as ‘cold spots’ throughout this research. The area based regeneration received £3-4 million to tackle housing concerns via a ‘holistic approach’, and targeted eight areas across County Durham, three of which come under the remit of in East Durham: Wheatley Hill, Dawdon and Wembley (Durham County Council, 2010c). This regeneration work is undertaken with an aim to improve stock through urban policy which focussed upon management practices as well as bringing empty properties back into use and promoting more energy efficient homes(DCC, 2011b). These broad aims were to be facilitated through a range of programmes including group repair and facelift schemes, selective demolition, selective licensing and environmental improvement work (DCC, 2011b).

Each area has a project plan linked to housing-led regeneration work and, according to a housing strategist in the local authority, is used as a tool to “...bring together issues” by entering into discussion about the main issues of the villages with ‘key players’. These groups are attended by “... anyone with an interest in the community”; namely stakeholders, residents and local ward councillors. Community groups tend to be made up of the ‘usual suspects’ who were present at the meetings most regularly. Other members of the community attend on an ad hoc basis visiting infrequently depending upon the topic, while the remaining (majority) population may never visit a steering group meeting. A local stakeholder (Interview GG) supported this observation when discussing those present at local meetings which she had attended years previously. She was still able to list the people who were at the meetings, highlighting there were few, if any, new additions. This goes a long way in supporting the idea that the ‘usual suspects’ regularly attend community meetings, and it is they who represent the

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<sup>89</sup> Aligned with the objectives of the overall housing strategy

community. This type of community involvement, while important, has the unfortunate capacity to result in a repetitive debate which lacks both 'quality' (noted by a third sector representative) or an ability to stimulate further debate. Therefore, it could in fact be damaging to the future of the community if few or no other residents become involved. The concern is that the same set of debates are discussed, damaging the perceived capacity for community consultation and leading it to be regarded as an un-reactive 'talking shop' (Stoker, 2004 b- discussed later in the chapter).

Representing a power based relationship; these groups are facilitated by the local authority who decides the mode of consultation. This raises the question of agency, leading some (see Paddison, 2009) to criticise the degree of power held by the community in such structured groups. Post-politics assumes that these groups are introduced as a means to foster consensus and, irrespective of the agency which individuals possess, this certainly seems to overlook the extent that these Steering Groups, and others like it, possess the ability to facilitate change. Duncan and Goodwin (1988) highlight the realist aspect, which this research also adopts (see Chapter 3), to illustrate that geographical variation makes a difference to localities which, simultaneously, affect and are affected by structural requirements of governments at different levels. The transformation and impact may be constrained; however the steering groups do seem to provide a platform from which the community and stakeholders can come together to action some change. The degree of this change is questionable and will hardly lead to revolution. It is more that agency, however small, does matter, and does impact. The AAP, however, does arguably support this assertion- discussed below.

The groups have a community run feel as they are chaired by an individual selected by residents and are open and inclusive in manner, facilitating easy discussion between the agenda and wider concerns which the community or stakeholders may express. While attended by local authority employees as representatives, such representatives were, to a greater extent, also residents of East Durham playing the role of 'midpoint' or intermediary between residents and

the Local Authority to address issues raised by other attendees and ‘feed it back’ to the council (Interview D). Council representatives and stakeholders alike were all very positive about the contribution the groups made and all suggested that the steering groups were successful, and would continue to provide a valuable asset in the future. A local ward councillor (interview Y) summarised this widely held attitude, stating

“I think the fact that so many people are turning up to the meetings shows that the steering group is or will have an effect, and it gives people opportunity to hold the housing officers to account so that they can’t hide behind emails or pass the buck. In those respects it is having quite an impact and it’s getting a reputation for getting things done. We need to keep on top of that and make sure that the group repair keeps going and people like [names proactive member of the local authority] keep fighting for us. And there are all the residents who attend the meeting, and nothing gets past them. So hopefully we can see the improvements continue over the next few years.”

Bennett, et al., (2000) examined community programmes in former coalfield areas, concluding that funding was required in these areas to release community capacity and allow them to achieve their potential. This community capacity, facilitated through these steering groups and other local level community organisation is argued to be strong in East Durham. Indeed, the Audit Commission highlighted the districts community consultation “Some districts have encouraged forms of local governance through community forums, for example as at Easington” (Audit Commission, 2007, 23). Indeed this research has discovered—as discussed in Chapter 5.2.3—that the use of steering groups in East Durham has opened up the agenda of Community Consultation, making the communities feel more included in a process which is ultimately their own. This in turn has enhanced community capacity and facilitated a greater degree of success for the agendas which they focus upon and tackle.



### ***Wheatley Hill Steering Group***

The Wheatley Hill Steering Group was in the main attended by female, middle aged residents- while members changed each meeting a core of 12 people attended, only 3 of whom were male. These 12 people were made up of a mix of residents, local councillors and council representatives, and additional community stakeholders also attending when there was a discussion or presentation regarding issues pertaining to them- such as the creation of a new health centre. The meeting always focussed solely on the housing provision and wider regeneration of the village, with the regeneration work paying particular attention to the demolition of properties and, in some places, the redevelopment of land to provide new homes.

Since the start of this programme of renewal and the associated establishment of the steering group, the wider economic conditions and housing market slump have affected Wheatley Hills housing also. As this village is a housing 'cold spot' the shift in the economy has meant there is visible housing market stagnation and no development has taken place. Discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5, these economic problems have impacted upon developers' capacity and, possibly more significantly, their desire to build housing in certain parts of East Durham. The programme of demolition carried out in Wheatley Hill witnessed the removal of full streets and caused many residents to express concern regarding the lack of development and the ongoing removal of housing stock. The plan for new build properties to replace former stock was actively encouraged by steering group members, disquiet emerged due to a lack of discussion and explanation by the local authority who had not explained the reason for the this stall in building. This was a contentious issue and one which arose regularly at steering group meetings. The lack of development created resentment at the ongoing removal of one bedroom bungalows to make way for two bedroom properties to be built in the future—a promise which seemed hollow to the community. Residents were visibly exasperated by the demolition of friends, neighbours or family members "canny [one bedroom bungalow] homes" which were argued to be "solid", "decent" and "kept nice", especially when there was no guarantee that any properties would be built in their place.

Many steering group meetings seemed to end with dissatisfaction from residents regarding a lack of explanation over why the programme of development had stalled. To address and- to a large extent- pacify residents, a senior housing representative attended the meeting in December 2011 to discuss concerns as well as explain the economic conditions and field questions from residents. There was little satisfaction from the answers given, however individuals seemed genuinely pleased to have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

Irrespective of all the issues which were raised during this meeting the steering group offered a real opportunity for the community to discuss local level issues and concerns with senior local authority staff which, without this groups, would not have been an option. In these terms, consensus to a point was achieved via this steering group. However, this will continue to be an issue of contention until building work starts or resumes on cleared land. There are no guarantees as to when, or even if, this will take place; as such there will be many more similar meetings in the future in which disgruntled residents' voice concerns and the local authority continue to act in a pacifying rather than active manner.

### ***Easington Colliery Steering Group***

Easington Colliery Steering Group is attended by residents-- who tended to be older, in their 70's and 80's and mixed by gender-- and a wide variety of community stakeholders-- including councillors, representatives from the police, neighbourhood wardens, landlords, management groups, social housing providers and, intermittently, the Area Action Partnership. The meetings are always well attended; the reason for these significant numbers is, a local councillor (Interview Y) suggested, due to the strength of the community spirit. He suggested

“They [the residents] are the people who can remember the community spirit that was about 30 years ago, and that was something that attracted me. [I] moved to Easington Colliery 15-20 years ago. What I was attracted

by was the sense of community in which people would help each other... That's one of the reasons I stayed in Easington."

This community cohesion is arguably derived from the 'mining mentality' which embodies a 'we'll show them' approach (Interview Y and Interview E). This was borne out by the residents in attendance at the meetings-- who tended to be older and had experienced the tight knit mining community who worked together down the mines and joined together to overcome mining strikes or disasters. A female resident, who attended every meeting, stated

"We have got a lot to fight for, and a lot to lose if we don't fight for it. I think the older people realise that and I think that's a major reason why they do fight to keep places going. It's not just Easington [Colliery]... There are a lot of people willing to fight hard for their communities and guard them against anyone coming in to harm them".

Easington Colliery has had recent problems with absentee landlords and unattractive housing stock and environment. It is this which prompted the establishment of the Easington Colliery steering group which allowed the local authorities to consult on local initiatives of selective licensing and group repair (see figure 11a and 11b). Both Selective Licensing and Group Repair are (or aim to be) active in the six streets known as Wembley. Wembley was once the most prized area of the colliery to live in; highlighted numerous times by the anecdotal stories. I was told by a few different interviewees how residents who were allocated housing in other parts of Easington Colliery would pay (monetary or in other ways, such as furniture swaps) so that they could exchange houses with someone who lived in Wembley. By contrast it was this area which was most affected when the mine closed and the houses were sold off by the Coal Board (discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5). This resulted in a very high proportion of absent landlords across the colliery area. The interviews and steering group meetings attended for this research emphasized that the large scale sale of Coal Board housing had a devastating impact upon the social fabric of the community. A lack of jobs and the outmigration of those who could gain

employment elsewhere meant there was an excess of properties in the colliery area. A need to rent out these properties by absent landlords who had not tie to the community, or desire for it to continue as a sustainable area, meant that potential residents were subject to limited, sometimes none existent, vetting processes. Resultantly properties were often rented for low rents to ‘undesirables’<sup>90</sup>. This damaged the image of the neighbourhood, and ultimately led to a spiral of decline.

A significant concern raised regularly by the attendees at Easington Colliery steering groups related to the implementation of Selective Licensing, and it’s associated legal obligations. Many attendees-- including private landlords who had already registered for the scheme and local ward councillors-- becoming visibly frustrated by the ‘lack of action’ from the local authority (expounded upon in Chapter 5). For all the vocal opposition during this group few changes were made to the implementation of the agenda. Further tensions emerged as a result of a lack of funding to complete group repair on all the streets in Wembley concurrently.

Chaired by a local ward councillor, the steering group was welcoming and inclusive; offering an opportunity for any concerns (current and future) affecting the community to be raised by any attendee. The elected chair worked to ensure the meeting was community focussed allowing attendees and stakeholders to voice their opinions and help in setting agendas. The value of this meeting is very much in the platform it offers for any issues or concerns raised to be fed back into the council at a more strategic level. In reality, whether this level of agency has a genuine impact upon local authority agendas or working is questionable, yet it did provide residents with a feeling that they were being consulted and their opinions were regarded as being legitimate.

The main observation was that the community wanted the best for their locality, and the local authority wanted to achieve a level of improvement which would not

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<sup>90</sup> As they were referred to by residents and local stakeholders alike

be too expensive (due to funding cuts). Evidently, there is a concern that such groups become 'talking shops' which provide little but should be more focussed so that intervention and democracy are achievable (Stoker, 2004b; Paddison, 2009). The intention of this group and drive for inclusivity is evident, the reality may be different. However this group appeared to be functional and able to foster a better relationship between the Unitary Council and the community as well as enhancing community capacity. Nevertheless tensions existed and opinions voiced seem to have little, if any, impact

### **7.6.2 Area Action Partnership**

Area Action Partnerships (AAP) took the place of the former Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP), and were established throughout County Durham when the Unitary Authority took control in 2009. In hierarchical terms, the AAP sits between County Durham Forums (such as the HARP and CDHF) and local community groups (such as the Steering Groups). As such the main advantage of the AAP lies in its ability to provide a link to the unitary council and the lower level structures of parish councils or civil society which was needed when the LSP was disbanded.

Representing part of the County Durham Partnership (CDP), the Area Action Partnership is made up of public, private and third sector organisations which work collectively to "...improve the quality of life for the people in County Durham" (Durham County Council, 2010b, 1). The value of the AAP is, arguably, in its funding allocation; providing a fund of between £20,000 and £60,000 designated in £5,000 blocks to local, not-for-profit community organizations for projects which tackle the local priorities, selected at a public vote<sup>91</sup>. The inclusion of the community in setting these priorities gives a sense that communities possess power in driving their own local AAP. The Durham Council website<sup>92</sup> states that:

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<sup>91</sup> Durham County Council, <http://www.durham.gov.uk/pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=6379> accessed 22/08/2013

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.durham.gov.uk/pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=6379> accessed 22/08/2013

“AAPs have been set up to give people in County Durham a greater choice and voice in local affairs. The partnerships allow people to have a say on services, and give organisations the chance to speak directly with local communities. By working in partnership we help ensure that the services of a range of organisations – including the county and town and parish councils, police, fire, health, and voluntary organisations – are directed to meet the needs of local communities and focus their actions and spending on issues important to these local communities”.

In turn the AAP's also provides a practical link with higher level governing in the County as representatives from the 14 county wide AAP's attend the 'thematic partnerships' of the County Durham Economic Partnership so that “strategic decisions about the county are linked to issues of importance to local people” (Durham County Council, 2010b, 1)

Held on a bi-monthly basis, the Board (made up of local stakeholders and community representatives) meet to discuss a detailed agenda. The meeting is open, allowing forum members to “...submit any emerging issues to the board in advance, for discussion and progress<sup>93</sup>”. However the discussion centres on key issues and takes place with input only from board members. Attendees are only encouraged or permitted to speak when the board have completed their discussion. Indeed, it is suggested “We can't guarantee that an answer will be available at the meeting, but one will be sought prior to the next meeting<sup>94</sup>”. In reality the 'partnership' is very little more than a 'talking shop' which provides limited and constrained community involvement. The meetings offer more of an opportunity for stakeholders and the council to meet to discuss issue and impose their opinions on the community, rather than for the community to get involved. This gave way to a resident attending the meeting criticising the board and its members as being “all piss an' wind that lot, can't get a word in edge ways”. The resident voiced frustration regarding a lack of freedom to discuss issues, in a

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<sup>93</sup> East Durham Area Action Partnership;  
<http://www.durham.gov.uk/pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=6509> accessed 21/8/2013

<sup>94</sup> East Durham Area Action Partnership,  
<http://www.durham.gov.uk/pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=6509> accessed 21/8/2013

setting which felt authoritative and markedly official. In these terms it is a tool to pacify rather than consult the community; a piecemeal policy introduced to bridge the gap between local and sub-regional governing imposed by the new Unitary Council.

While the board members are set and cover most, if not all, service and business areas, there appears to be a problem with attracting a high number of regular 'observers'. This could be due to the trans-community and trans-neighbourhood aspect of the AAP which focuses on the larger district area as a whole rather than specific more local level concerns affecting particular neighbourhoods. Therefore it attracts local councillors who are working at a more strategic level or local councillors who only attend when there are particular concerns regarding their local neighbourhood which requires addressing by the wider AAP. A further, and more obvious reason for low attendance numbers must lie in the limited input which 'observers' have in the meetings. While some local councillors interviewed attended these meetings when appropriate, no other members of the steering groups, for example, attended the AAPs. A number of third sector representatives interviewed suggested that the AAPs were not as functional as they could be, and it was noted that the meetings provide the board members with greater authority than the community. In turn this removes equality from the partnership. No other sectors expressed an opinion regarding the AAP or its function due to a general lack of contact with the organisation and, more often, a lack of awareness of the existence of the AAP.

### **7.7 Developers and the community: NIMBYism and Localism**

The issues of Localism and NIMBYism have been discussed previously in Chapter 6, while in Chapter 5 Bridge's (2003) suggestion that many developers or investors involved in new build housing are 'corporate gentrifiers' aiming to make profit with little or no connection with the local community or neighbourhood. These themes are certainly evident in this research with the majority of contact between

communities and developers takes place as part of the planning process, required to pass planning applications. Aside from this there is no forum or meeting group to help foster relationships between these two, very distinct groups. The lack of contact makes communities feel inconsequential; only “used when they [developers] want something” as an elderly resident from one of the steering groups accessed stated. Developers, conversely, see the community as wanting to stall development and prevent progress. A volume builder argued that communities have a poor perception of them and their activities. A national volume builder (Interview K) argued

“We tend to lose every time because we are the nasty developer raping a green field site. Green Belt is the least understood planning policy which has ever existed: just because a field is green it doesn’t mean it’s ‘Green Belt’. We’ve had instances where there is an allocated site, in an adopted local plan, high court challenges, planning appeals, six and a half years to have it approved and £1.8 million in fees. Is that the system? Is that how it’s meant to operate? I don’t think so!”

There is a belief that tensions cannot be resolved. When asked if attitudes and goals can be aligned another volume builder (Interview U) stated that communities do not want developers and new housing, elaborating that in some cases they struggle to encourage community support

“We’ve got examples of where we’ve addressed every technical issue thrown at us and people have said after all that ‘I don’t want it anyway’. And there is nothing we can do about that. There is a site in Middlesbrough here we had 3 community consultation exercises running over 6 days, where we addressed every single technical point and then people turn around and say ‘I love the houses but I don’t want them next to me’, and unfortunately that’s the attitude” (Interview U).

This is not necessarily the case in East Durham, where a belief is held (highlighted during the steering groups) that if there was more contact between the private sector and communities then developers would appreciate what a ‘nice place’ East Durham is and decide to build properties in these areas. The lack of contact



ultimately created misunderstanding between the groups, and caused extreme conflict. Indeed, in East Durham new housing provision would be actively encouraged, especially in the 'cold spot' areas in which the steering groups are held. However (as discussed in Chapter 4 and 5) these 'cold spots' are not very attractive to developers due to negative association, or are deemed uneconomical due to a poor housing market and/or lack of available credit for mortgages.

Nevertheless NIMBYism is a factor in some neighbourhoods and the biggest issue which emerges between developers and the community (discussed previously in Chapter 6 in relation to Localism). Developers wish to build in certain areas due to the opportunity for high profits or as a result of a partnership or cross funding scheme with another interested party. Communities, on the other hand, may be hesitant to see any change or expansion to the area. Evidently there was a belief held by developers that consultation slowed the building process (Interview O).

The traditional community consultation techniques were blamed for the existence of these conflicting views and relationships. It is argued that there is a need for a much more meaningful dialogue to be developed through new, non standard mediums. For example, this could be achieved by accessing resources such as the Area Action Partnership and local meeting groups. While developers felt that there was a lot, sometimes too much, consultation, many also believed that community involvement was beneficial for a number of reasons. A volume builder (Interview U) illuminated this opinion;

"I think it's very valuable. We could come along with a scheme and the local community could put forward a different solution which may work better, so you'd be foolish not to do that. It also helps to get 'buy in' if you do it from the outset, and that community will act as a representative of what the development will be because they have been able to see how the scheme has developed and how they've been able to be involved, so if there is someone from the local area who feels they've not been involved enough then they can act as a champion to the proposal. With the best will in the

world these community groups and individuals will live in the areas where the development takes place so they have to be happy with it”.

The Localism agenda (discussed previously in Chapter 6)-- stipulates a legal requirement for house builders and developers to hold pre-application community consultation for local residents—is believed to provide a platform for fostering meaningful collaboration (Home Office, 2011). The increased, enforced consultation witnessed in Localism, in theory, provides a stage for all communities (both those not wanting, and those wanting development) to have a significant and early dialogue with developers so as to facilitate housing markets or neighbourhood renewal. This growth in post-political emphasis causes a considerable problem for developers, however, who will struggle with the need to aligning agendas not only with the council’s planning regulations but also, increasingly, with the community and neighbourhood specific plans. The prospect and reality of this undertaking was deemed ‘challenging’ and ‘entertaining’ by two volume developers (Interview K and Interview R). While it may not overcome the long running antagonistic relationship which has developed between communities and developers associated with NIMBYism, the Localism agenda in this way may transform the relationship between these distinct groups, and reduce tensions. While it is unlikely that consensus will ever be fully achieved, the aim surely, is for an agonistic relationship in which they can appreciate each others’ agenda. Certainly, only time will tell the relative success of Localism overcoming these problems, and this would require further study in the future.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the increased growth of partnership and collaborative working techniques adopted as an integral part of New Labour’s Third Way policies. Fundamentally it has shown the manufacture of consent through partnership working which has been employed in housing-led regeneration. This has been aided by adopting a post-politics perspective which provided a framework from which the chapter could scrutinise the consultation and

collaboration of and between different stakeholders, offering an opportunity to investigate the institutional approach to governance. In addition this chapter has added to the field of post-political thought by applying the theory to a housing and regeneration setting (as discussed further in Chapter 8).

Neo-liberal partnerships aim to achieve social inclusion, community cohesion and “active citizenship” (Imrie and Raco 2003; Fuller and Geddes, 2008). In reality, however, the extent to which this is achieved or achievable is questionable. There is always a power imbalance—often significant-- within these partnerships. This imbalance tends to be in favour of those who facilitate the collaboration—largely the Local Authority or public sector—and it is through this medium of partnership which neo-liberal mechanisms can exploit their associated policies. In this situation the facilitator is able to manipulate the relationship so it appears to be one of mutual discussion and development but in reality is one which is heavily constrained. This is particularly evident in community consultation which tends to be approached as a requisite for urban policy (by planners and the local authority alike) and I would question the extent to which these events offer any real opportunity for meaningful debate. Instead the platform is provided and acts to pacify dissent rather than act as a tool to achieve meaningful consensus. The perceived success of policies and regeneration are very much dependent upon the successful framing and implementation of these partnerships. Achieving shared goals is the ultimate, however the opportunity for consultation to create a relationship based on agonism also, seemingly, has a positive impact.

The relationship with the public and third sector is one based on a shared goal. As a result this form of collaborative working is the most consensual. There is little ‘management’ of one group by the other, and this is evident in the CDHP in which a formal agenda is approached in a casual and conversational manner by attendees.

The most interesting relationship exists between developers (the private sector) and local authority (public sector). There is a general tussle between each group who, on the whole, are not dependant on the other, yet this is a mutually beneficial relationship which both groups are aware of creating an agonistic relationship

rather than one based on convergent goals. Nevertheless, in times of austerity there is a greater reliance on the private sector to bridge the funding gap produced by the cuts agenda, therefore policy and emphasis shifts in favour of the private sector in these periods (as discussed in the previous chapters). This relationship functions to shape policy with regard to new build housing, and impacts on the success in achieving regeneration.

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This thesis has addressed the process of housing-led regeneration in East Durham. More specifically the research endeavoured to examine the gap between policy expectation and outcome to appreciate how new and existing housing interventions played out in real regeneration terms. The conceptual frameworks of uneven development, governance and Post-politics were adopted to analyse secondary policy documents and primary empirical research in the form of interviews and participant observation. This chapter considers the research presented in the thesis, providing a summary of the empirical findings. In addition the novel contribution of the research is debated, covering empirical, academic and policy. A personal reflection on the research process offers an insight into my experiences of the research. Lastly, a discussion of the recent changes and shifts in housing-led regeneration since the research was conducted, and a consideration of the opportunities for future research provide an up-to-date perspective.

The thesis owes its structure to the research aims and associated objectives which were used to scrutinize the gap between policy expectation of (new and existing) housing interventions and the regenerative outcome of these policies. The aims of the research was twofold:

- To assess the role of housing within regeneration in a post-industrial area
- To evaluate the process of governance and governing approach in housing-led regeneration

In order to achieve the above aims, the research objectives were established with an eye to:

- Appreciate what influences shape housing-led regeneration in marginal areas
- Examine how space and place impact upon regeneration policies and housing development

- Determine how the restructuring of governance and governing impacted upon housing-led regeneration in East Durham
- Develop an understanding of the institutional approach to governing housing driven regeneration

## **8.2. Revisiting the Aims: An Overview**

In the broadest sense the aim of urban policy is to promote regeneration and improve the social, economic and political conditions of the locality. In these terms the role of housing is to drive regeneration and create widespread equality while the governing structure exists to spread power and influence across and between all sectors and stakeholders. The extent to which this is achieved depends on the locality and housing type. In general new build housing is undertaken with the wider aim of stock diversification, while existing private and social stock is tackled by programmes linked to management, retrofit and demolition.

This research has examined East Durham- a district shaped by investment and withdrawal of capital and changes in governing systems. The decline of heavy industry (including the UK mining industry) in the 1980's and 1990's was accompanied by a political shift to New Right, Neo-liberal philosophies. This agenda witnessed a shift to "...marketized urban policies and entrepreneurial planning" (Punch et al, 2004, 5) as a tool to overcome industrial decline and promote an economic 'renaissance' through a programme of policy-led physical and social regeneration. In turn this involved the repositioning of power from local state to entrepreneurial and commercial public-private partnerships (Peck and Tickell, 1994; Wilks-Heeg, 1996) and an emphasis on local stakeholders and partnership working.

The role of housing-led regeneration has been to offer a tool to counter the process of de-industrialisation, based on the assumption that by restructuring housing provision a supply of good-quality, sustainable properties would be provided so as

to retain the current population, attract new residents, promote housing market growth and attract new businesses (Easington District Council, 2008, 4). With the aim of urban policy to support regeneration, this research supports the idea that, in reality, while aiming to overcome the problems associated with industrial decline and the associated need for area based renewal, urban policy has in fact, created or exacerbated the existence of uneven development in certain instances. This has given rise to inequality between geographical areas and groups of individuals by segregating communities into hot spots and cold spots, strategic towns and colliery villages. This is most starkly observed in East Durham when comparing the strategic centre of Seaham, with its already established port which grew as a result of industrialisation of the area and became an important local centre, and the colliery village of Easington Colliery which formed as a mining encampment on previously green field land, close to the newly established mines.

Chapters 4 and 5 highlight that the approach adopted by the local authority was dependant on the local micro housing market as well as the perceived needs of that community. This involved, in cold spot areas, stock rejuvenation or retrofit, working with (public and private) housing providers or demolishing empty or void properties. Conversely, in hot spot areas, an approach was adopted to exploit housing market conditions, influence private investment, attract home buyers and generate economic prosperity. Chapter 4 clearly highlighted the divergence of development between Seaham's Vane Tempest colliery and Easington Colliery's pit. Both closed in 1993 (and were the last pits in the Durham coalfield) and occupied a similar site on the coast with land reclamation simultaneously carried out on both sites. For Seaham, initial policies such as Enterprise Zone (EZ) and Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) had a 'knock on' effect in aiding the focussed renewal of Seaham but with little regard to the surrounding colliery villages. Seaham's designation as an Enterprise Zone—the urban policy from which the town's post-mining growth trajectory can be plotted—may be unsuccessful from a business point-of-view, however the targeted funding and policy attention (which provided a new road, rail head facility and expanded the shopping offer) provided enough appeal to increase the overall perception of Seaham. Single Regeneration

Budget further built on this initial regeneration focus, providing further regeneration projects in the town, and ignoring other local communities. With other policies building from this, today Easington Colliery has a former pit site which sits greened over and vacant, while the site of the former Vane Tempest mine has been subsequently developed into East Shore Village, a 600 property new housing development.

This research has also noted that unevenness and inequality is further influenced and exacerbated by wider economic conditions, most significantly observed between the boom and slump periods recently witnessed in the housing market. Chapter 5 considers how the (inter)national housing market crisis and related economic recession, which took full effect in 2008, reduced the spending capacity and gap funding of local authorities and, by association, limited the impact of targeted regeneration work. Resultantly this placed greater emphasis on the private sector to influence—and in some cases drive-- regeneration through their housing activities. The impact of economic changes made private sector go for 'sure wins' which involved avoiding 'cold spots' and focussing their attention on the more lucrative 'hot spots'. Such an approach evidently advanced the schism between these distinct community types.

It is evident that not only has policy, on the face of it, affected the development across a district, but the approach has influenced and been influenced by the attitudes of others, most significantly the private sector. The branding of areas as needing regeneration (as was the case with cold spot areas) or focussing on the economic viability of others (evident in hot spot zones) through urban policy shaped wider perceptions of place. Focussed policy and associated funding suggested an asymmetry of confidence held by the local authority. This 'Selling the city' influenced private developers who reflected their perceptions in actions creating the attitude expressed by a volume builder who stated

“We are house sellers. If it'll sell we'll build it... and some places don't sell 'cos no one wants to live there. Simple as”



This cyclical relationship influenced the devalorization process- initiating a rent gap which was exploited for profit by developers in the hotspot areas, while the lack of attention on cold spot areas produced red lining.

The relative influence of different groups and the governance of housing-led regeneration, shaped by shifts in governing scale and geographical location, were addressed in Chapters 6 and 7. This has, in turn, been influenced by pre existing hot spot and cold spot areas and impacted upon policy development and implementation.

The restructuring of County Durham's governing authority which (re)moved influence from each local district and centralised power in Durham City, has maintained or threatened to extend inequality. This has resulted in a philosophy and associated urban policies (such as the County Durham Plan) which emphasise Durham City first, and the former district centres second (ultimately becoming the "poor relation to Durham city" because of their less strategic significance and less "political weight") with the less economically viable villages gaining little attention. While the rhetoric is that all communities are viewed equally, it is evident that governing changes and the associated delivery of urban policy have lessened the attention received by marginal areas. This is not a case of sour grapes, but highlights a more significant concern and risk that cold spot areas can and do become further marginalised as a result of structural, governing changes which bring with them less (or no) targeted policy and associated funding (the latter tied to the private driven aspect of the agenda). Similarly the move from the RDA to LEP has witnessed a shift from regional to sub-regional authority as well as a transfer from public sector focus to a private sector driven agenda which favours economic sure-wins over supporting the sustainability of less strategic communities/areas serving to fracture and fragment regions into 'small territorial units'.

This multi-level governance occurs between a selection of private, public and third sector groups, operating at a range of geographical scales and highlights the complex relationships involved in governing housing-led regeneration. As an entrenched element in Neo-liberal policy, this governing architecture has a considerable impact upon urban spaces. Therefore the use of soft and formal governing structures in the form of partnerships, meeting groups and general collaborative working and involving the state, partners, communities, stakeholders and other interested parties, are clearly evident in East Durham's housing-led regeneration. The research has illuminated the evidence of conflict which results from the different perspectives espoused by each group. This dissensus is argued to be an essential part of urban policy (according to Post-political theorists) as the political wrangling allows for the full disclosure of different groups' needs and the progression of politics to benefit all. However, instead formal and informal governing techniques are used to promote and manufacture consent through pacifying and tokenistic power transfers.

Like uneven development across geographical space, there has developed an uneven power balance between groups which is clear and evident in partnership working. This tends to favour those who facilitate the collaboration—largely the Local Authority or public sector—and it is through this medium of partnership which neo-liberal mechanisms can exploit their associated policies. In this situation the facilitator is able to manipulate and constrain the relationship which, on the face of it, appears to be one of mutual discussion and development. Similarly the private sector-- deemed a group not to be governed by Local Authority interviewees involved in this research—also display power through their willingness to invest in and, ultimately, aid in the regeneration (or otherwise) of localities. Steering groups and community consultation offer residents and other stakeholders a contact point to air concerns and receive feedback from the Local Authority or private Developers, and this is well received by neighbourhoods who feel their views are being considered. However the extent to which these meetings function to exercise an equality of power is questionable; discussion in the 'cold spot' steering groups revolved around the same issues on a monthly basis,

supporting the idea they are arenas for discussion but not action meaning that and transfer of authority is symbolic, rather than practical and effective. As such the emphasis of policy and the private sector continues to emphasise the aims and wishes of the local authority and developers- namely hot spots- and overlook less strategic areas.

The above debate provides a discussion of the basic thesis aims, and offers an initial insight into how regeneration in East Durham has been shaped by policy agendas and influenced by political conditions. This provides a platform from which to focus on the central issue of the thesis; the disparity between rhetoric and reality of different housing-led regeneration interventions. This gap exists due to a failure in achieving the aims of the different agendas which are, as noted above, influenced by area based issues of space and place as well as perception and stigma which are linked to and permeate from issues of local governance.

### **8.3. The gap between policy expectation and regeneration outcome**

The central concern for this thesis was to examine the gap between the policy expectation of different types of housing intervention and their outcome in regeneration terms. The interventions fall into the broad categories of new build and existing stock.

As stated above the policy approach adopted by East Durham differs according to these stock types and their link with the different economic conditions of each area- i.e. hot spot or cold spot.

#### **8.3.1 New build**

Based on the urban renaissance (DETR, 2000), promoted in the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003) and within the Barker Review (Barker, 2004)—discussed in Chapter 2-- East Durham's new build properties were emphasised as a tool to rejuvenate the post-industrial district. Brownfield sites, plentiful in East

Durham due to the large number of ex-mine sites as a result of industrial decline, formed the core location for this strategy.

The central aim of new build housing in housing-led regeneration in East Durham is twofold: to ensure the long term sustainability of urban settlements by infilling (on brownfield, post-industrial land) and restructuring the housing market by providing a more diverse property profile offering larger properties so as to retain the current population or attract in migration. In turn this capitalised on the corresponding national upsurge in housing prices. New housing on previously developed land has been successful in the hot spot areas of Seaham—the area of East Durham where the policy was most focussed. All significant areas of brownfield land have been developed in Seaham as a means of diversifying stock, and this is reflected in the considerable upward surge in housing prices. Seaham alone witnessed a brownfield development providing: 650 homes on brownfield land at Vane Tempest/ East Shore Village; 190 new properties on the former local authority housing stock site at Parkside; and 400 homes on the former combined sites of Seaham Colliery and North Dock (former Port of Seaham location). These properties offered 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes which were rare across the district and-- with the larger size came a larger price tag-- so influenced Seaham's housing market with a house price increase of 173% witnessed between 2000 and 2006. This further crystallised Seaham's viability for new-build housing-led regeneration, creating "...increasing developer interest..." in the town (Easington District Council, 2008). It may have been little more than "...than state-led, private-developer-built, gentrification" (Davidson and Lees, 2005, 1174), but it did accommodate, rather than displaced a population and, so, significantly the policy achieved what it set out to; it increased house building, local investment and diversified housing stock in this community.

While the thesis highlights an elements of tension between the private and public sectors (emerging from their fundamentally different economic approaches) the relationship is one of mutual understanding, agonism. As such the existence of the Housing And Regeneration Partnership (HARP) between the local authority and

private sector also encourages this positive policy outcome. It allows the public sector an insight into the workings of the private sector to appreciate which areas are most attractive (hot spots). This gives way to a policy which is more tailored to the needs of the private sector and which, I argue, is damaging to cold spot areas. The lack of collaborative working between the private sector and communities (other than at times of planning obligation), and the assumption on the side of developers who feel they know what areas want and need furthers this asymmetrical approach to new build housing. The success of new build properties in facilitating positive regenerative outcomes in hot spot areas—detailed above—is indisputable, however it could be argued that this philosophy, targeted at cold spot areas, would be equally successful. In other words, large scale brownfield developments offering larger houses, stock diversification and infilling may be popular and success in cold spot areas but this type of regeneration has not taken place—and the reason for this is based on assumption held by the private sector and essentially endorsed (through policy) by the local authority. The lack of local community interaction from the private sector only serves to perpetuate this problem. Indeed, the governance of the new build sector highlights a distinct flaw in new build policy: the emphasis on hot spots at the expense of cold spot areas.

The extent to which new build regeneration in East Durham has created inequality and has no obvious 'knock on' impact elsewhere is significant. Essentially this policy agenda has lavished greater policy attention and funding (public and private) on strategic areas for new build housing with no, or very little, for new build developments in cold spot areas, which has created a widening chasm between neighbourhoods. This thesis has highlights how Seaham remains the more viable economic centres in East Durham possessing 'feasible housing markets' and, this is amplified by its ability to offer a reasonable level of assurance of financial return to developers who desire "easy wins and safe bets". Less reliable markets, evident in the cold spot areas such as Easington Colliery, dissuade "risk averse" developers concerned about the lack of available finance for local residents to buy a property. Fundamentally the discrete, significant differences in attitudes toward localities in East Durham are dependent on the perceptions of the local housing markets.

This research has highlighted the increased power of the private sector in periods of economic slump when governmental austerity hampers gap funding making it in short supply. As such the location of new housing provision is dependent upon the discrimination of those with available finances. With the private sector chasing profit, this approach results in the building of more properties in housing market hot spots, and few in cold spot areas which are regarded as unattractive and lacking profit/a market for the properties once built. The power of the private sector is again reflected in the policy of the local authority, most notable in the County Durham Plan (CDP) which highlights the market/ private sector driven emphasis of the future. As a county wide agenda emphasising Durham City as the “driver for economic growth”, there is a risk that, as the former strategic centres of each district take secondary emphasis, they will also be regarded in a more marginal light. Therefore there is little emphasis, and hope, for the villages and hamlets which gain attention for limited developments. I find this agenda concerning and (as discussed in Policy implications, section 8.6.2) there is a definite need for a power and geographical shift which places less emphasis for new housing developments solely on hot spot areas and which is not so driven by the largest housing developers who express a concerning monopoly on development.

### 8.3.2 Existing stock

Urban policy directed at the regeneration of existing (private and social) stock applied to “...areas with the worst concentrations of housing...” (DCC, 2011b, 9): those referred to as ‘cold spots’ throughout this research. This urban policy focussed on, for private stock, landlord management practices and the quality of the housing stock, whereas the social housing focussed solely on housing standards. All stock type held a broad policy aim to improve communities’ locality and overcome any issues of pre-existing stigma. Irrespective of the economic climate, existing stock plays an essential policy role in the targeted regeneration of marginal, housing cold spots.

Each policy agenda had corresponding partnership working embedded within it which was facilitated by the local authority and worked, according to the policy, as a means of consultation.

- **Selective Licensing**

As discussed in chapter 5, a lack of investment by private landlords blighted localities physically and socially, resulting in a spiral of Devalorisation. Selective licensing was introduced to tackle the long standing problems of absent landlords in former colliery areas by supporting landlords in the management of their properties while simultaneously overcoming the negative issues which poor housing management can have on a neighbourhood. By vetting tenants, using a traffic light scheme to assess criminal backgrounds, it was believed that 'bad' tenants would be removed from particular streets (those in the scheme) which would then tackle antisocial behaviour, improve the perception of the area and, in time, improve local housing markets.

For all the intentions of the policy there exists a stark difference between expectation and reality. This is not solely a personal reflection, but also one held by interviewees; a ward councillor stated the scheme had not been "...the panacea that we'd hoped it was going to be...". The implementation of this policy is the first issue. A compulsory scheme, Selective Licensing had a relatively low signing up rate and this issue was not pursued by the Unitary Council. This not only jeopardised the scheme's integrity but also the council's credibility in enforcing urban policy. Landlords who did cooperate were subjected to a slow process of tenant vetting which meant that potentially 'good' tenants were dissuaded by waiting to be 'vetted' and so when elsewhere, where properties were also available but easier to rent. This lumbering process often forced landlords to install tenants

who had not undergone checks, thus contravening the agreement and potentially risking prosecution (if it were imposed).

If the Local Authority had exercised its powers and successfully implemented all aspects of the Selective Licensing then there would have been significant concerns expressed relating to the policy's selection process and associations with overt social regeneration—see Chapter 5. However, the lack of action and enforcement highlights the failure of the policy to achieve any of its aims and have any impact on local regeneration. Even the Unitary Council themselves are unable to comment on the scheme, highlighting the need for “further work” to ensure the “efficacy” of Selective Licensing (Durham County Council, 2011). The lack of action also, more damagingly, calls into question the authority of the Unitary Council in implementing and enforcing urban policy. As such the policy appears to be more a piecemeal approach rather than one which could, or does, action any real change. If anything the label of ‘Selective Licensing’ further stigmatises a community, highlighting the need for Council ‘enforcement’ and involvement in resolving wider problems.

- **Group Repair**

As discussed in Chapter 5, Group Repair emerged from a growing realisation that some existing properties (largely 1919 terraced private rented homes) would benefit from street wide rejuvenation. This retro-fit scheme tackled the external of the property providing new doors, new windows, new fences, and chimney stack repair. By physically altering properties and making the street more uniformed, the aim of the scheme was that the houses and the surrounding community would become more aesthetically appealing so as increase the profile of the area and house prices, and retain or attract current and potential tenants or homeowners.

Largely the scheme was success and it achieved the physical change which was the aim. In turn this will have had an impact on the perception of the street and so,



could be argued to raise the profile of the least attractive streets. The perceived success of Group Repair is also aided by the community steering groups employed in these areas. Not only does this collaborative working promote and raise awareness of the scheme but it also give landlords and homeowners alike the opportunity to feel engaged with Group Repair which is a permanent topic on the meeting agenda.

As a policy approach it is a positive step in targeted urban policy and in tackling years of underinvestment. However it does not go far enough, and does little more than improve the aesthetic of the dwellings, as the inside of the property is ignored. As such it provides, at best, a sticking plaster to the selected streets which, in time, will need addressing through more significant means and the improvement of internal features. In addition, while the properties involved in the scheme are more attractive, the required uptake—at 75%-- diminishes the impact which could have been achieved if all properties had been subject to physical renewal. With 1 in 4 houses unaltered under the scheme, this gives the street the like of poor dentistry; with rotten teeth spoiling the effect of polished veneers.

- **Decent Homes Standard**

Implemented as a national policy, the Decent Homes Standard works to ensure that social housing stock is maintained at an acceptable 'minimum fitness standard' level, offering properties which are in a 'reasonable' state of repair with modern and thermal facilities (ODPM, 2002). Like privately rented and owner occupied stock the agenda rests on the assumption that poor housing can negatively impact on the surrounding environment, community and the areas sustainability (ODPM, 2004).

The failure of East Durham's social housing stock to meet decent levels led to the stock transfer of properties to the specially formed ALMO, East Durham Homes.

The aim of this policy was to achieve a 2 star 'minimum fitness' rating and use the resources to improve stock quality. Nevertheless the standard was not achieved, and this had damaging consequences on the attitudes towards local social housing. Between 2007 and 2009 standards did improve and East Durham Homes were able to access government funding. The improvement in standards and the ability to achieve the minimum rating is, of course, a positive step and suggests a success on one level. The County Durham Housing Forum (CDHF)—partnership working group between the Unitary Council and RSL's and ALMO's in the County—was vital in helping achieve this aim. With all group members possessing a similar outlook and with no competition between providers, this group offered a supportive environment to discuss and aid in the improvement of housing stock.

The longer term success of the Decent Homes Standard and the impact of this funding (which is considerably less than anticipated, or arguably needed) in improving stock and having a positive knock on effect to local communities is in its very early stages. While the continued use of the CDHF I believe the policy will continue on the upward trajectory, however, raising the standards of social housing and the perceptions attached to this stock type will be a slow process. Years of underinvestment and the stigma of the label 'none decent' blight this already marginalised housing stock. Indeed, the term 'Decent Homes' by definition suggests the property is somehow lacking if it fails to meet this standard. This stigmatising association caused outrage among residents and stakeholders who felt it implied a lack of personal pride and respect for their home. The terminology will also function, I contend, to attract negative associations from those external to the stock or area, who will regard the properties and, by association, the area as inadequate. As such the longer this term is applied, the more damaging it is in tempering future regeneration success which could be achieved. This makes raising the levels of social housing paramount to distance itself from this stigmatising label.

- **Demolition**

In East Durham demolition increasingly played a significant role in restructuring the housing offer and removing empty properties in low demand areas so as to tackle concerns over housing market failure. Properties were either cleared and the sites greened over, or land was redeveloped to provide sites for new properties or other amenities.

Easington Colliery was subject to the demolition of the B streets (see figure 10) and every other street in the A streets. While this removed some vacant properties it did not resolve the problem, as void and low demand properties continue to cause a problem in the village. Conversely, the approach adopted in Wheatley Hill was based on compulsory purchase and demolition/ redevelopment with a long term agenda of redevelopment to accommodate new housing as a means of stock readjustment. The economic downturn hampered the redevelopment plans, with developers no longer attracted to this cold spot village. Compulsory purchase and demolition continued and residents were displaced, raising questions over the schemes legitimacy and its aim to achieve gentrification- discussed in chapter 5. With housing still in demand this highlights that the fabric of existing stock is not necessarily lacking, rather a belief that new build properties will improve or regenerate a locality is driving the agenda. In these terms demolishing a house and building a new one displaces problems rather than solving them. As such the aims of the policy are not achieved and, more significantly, the weight attached to new build housing over existing stock as a driver to regeneration as a cure-all is evidently regarded as much more significant.

While an unsuccessful agenda in Wheatley Hill, this is tempered in the minds of residents who attend the Steering Group. Residents talked anecdotally of how demolition impacted upon themselves and friends/ family. Ongoing in a time of recession and without any sign of redevelopment or private sector investment, community members were annoyed by displacement and the loss of long term homes. The Steering Group served to provide a platform from which residents

could voice concerns directly to the local authority. This had no obvious impact upon the adopted policy approach or potential inward investment. However it did function to pacify group members and moderate previous tensions.

#### **8.4 Reflections on the Research Experience**

My opening reflection on this research has to be the amount of enjoyment I gained from every aspect of the thesis; from inception to writing up, and everything in between. This is not to say that there were no problems or issues to be overcome, more that I feel fortunate to have been able to conduct research in a subject and geographical area in which I have a great interest, and I hope this is expressed when reading the thesis.

In more specific terms, the thesis was conceived and embarked upon at a time when the housing market was at its most buoyant and house prices were relatively high across the UK. The cracks started to show in the UK and US economies during this time but there was no predicting the dramatic slump which took place (echoed in the interviews for this research), and the complex situation, outlined in this work, which emerged. Evidentially this had a huge impact on the research. I was initially concerned that this economic shift would impact negatively on the thesis, and feared it would compromise its value. In reality, I believe the work has benefited from this economic shift as I have been able to take advantage of the changes, taking a snapshot of phenomena in the immediate aftermath of the crisis.

My approach to the thesis was always to look at the role and governance of housing-led regeneration. Initially the research was to focus on the standard definition of housing-led regeneration, namely the capacity for new build properties to drive regeneration. However it quickly emerged that all housing types- new and existing stock- played a significant, if not different, role in area based renewal. As a result the research broadened its scope looking at both new and existing stock. Another issue which quickly emerged was that policy theory

and reality were, at times, difficult to align. Therefore the central tenant of the thesis developed to use the aims of understanding the role and governance of housing-led regeneration to interrogate the disparity in neoliberal urban policy.

The case study area was a prerequisite for the research being a CASE studentship, part funded by the former local authority of Easington District Council. The positioning of the research in East Durham was, I feel, perfect as it offered an interesting insight into housing-led regeneration in a semi-rural area which is not always first choice. Much research into regeneration and the effects of industrial decline in the North East is focussed on Newcastle/ Gateshead- see, for example, Cameron, 2006. Due to the semi-rural, post-industrial nature of East Durham this research also provides a valuable insight which could be applied to other geographical locations - discussed in 8.5, below- which have not been targeted for research but which have experienced similar issues of rural, industrial decline and a consequent unevenness in the renewal process.

The data collection element of the research went relatively smoothly. On the whole interviews- and the request for participation in interviews- were met positively. Some respondents prepared for the meetings, bringing with them or sending later relevant additional materials, others were less prepared and answered off the cuff. Irrespective of the degree of preparation, all insights offered rich, varied and valuable data. I conducted 35 interviews which turned out to be very time consuming when the transcription and NVIVO data analysis was taken into account. In hindsight I could have conducted fewer interviews but do not regret the 35 as I was able to access the majority of those I wished to speak with and feel the research benefits from greater representativeness. The only interview problem was my inability to secure meetings with estate agents I had hoped to talk to so as to gain an impartial, private sector insight into housing market changes which result from the different regeneration scheme. While this was not possible I did interview private sector planners/ surveyors who provided me with the same

insight and data as they occupy a similar position in the wider market and so were able to offer a comparable insight.

As discussed in chapter 3, my attendance at the range of partnership meetings was, in general, warmly received. However, there were some problems accessing meeting groups- either due to clashes in scheduling or as a result of not being welcome. The meeting group clash between the AAP and Wheatley Hill Steering Group forced me to choose which meeting to attend based on the relative merit of each. Therefore I attended the AAP meeting once and the Wheatley Hill Steering Group the other times, feeling this provided more useful information for the research. While this situation was far from ideal from a research perspective, the conflicting scheduling impacted more significantly on community members who were (unintentionally) excluded from attending both the Wheatley Hill meeting and the AAP. The negative response from the chair of the Dawdon Steering Group prevented me from attending this meeting, and I feel that this is the most regrettable aspect of the research as it would have provided me with an insight into Group Repair in its latest stages. I would have also liked to have accessed the Housing and Regeneration Partnership (HARP)- a closed Local Authority facilitated group which promoted collaboration and discussion between the public and private sector. Due to the politically sensitive nature of this meeting it was designated a 'no go' area for me. While not ideal I did manage to speak to numerous private sectors developers who spoke openly about not only the role of housing in regeneration, but also the governance of it- particularly their relationship with local authorities and communities (the former being what I would have witnessed if I had attended the HARP).

A potential weakness of the research comes from my not accessing the attitudes of those living in the hotspot areas of East Durham. In the early days of the thesis I considered sending questionnaires (paper or virtual) to residents of new build properties in developments such as the large brownfield redevelopment of East Shore Village, Seaham. However, time constraints, and the associated low response

rate of this method meant this was ruled out so as to focus more fully on the other elements of the research and data collection.

### **8.5 Changes and shifts post- research**

In the interim between the field work for this research and the writing up of the work there have been some changes which have taken place. These were not added in the main body of the thesis as they occurred in a different time period to that of the study. However, this section will act to highlight some of the subsequent changes which have taken place, and which impact upon this area and topic of study.

When the research for this thesis was conducted the UK economy had slumped. All areas of the country were affected with particular pockets and housing markets- such as those in the North East- regarded as, at best, sluggish. Since this time however, there is evidence of post recession economic growth. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research suggest that the UK economy reached pre recession output in mid 2014. A growth of 0.9 per cent between March and May 2014 equated the gross domestic product to a level which was 0.2 per cent above GDP in January 2008- before the recession struck. This growth was predicted to continue- with a suggestion that a 2.9 percent and 2.4 percent increase would be witnessed in 2014 and 2015 (respectively) (West, 2014). Crucially, the wider economic recovery has also influenced house prices and housing markets. Research conducted by The Halifax and Nationwide Building Society suggests that house prices rose by 7.5% and 8.4% (respectively) over 2013- a trend which picked up sharply towards the end of the year (BBC News Online, 2014a). Such an increase is based on a UK average which sees areas such as London (which witnessed a considerable increase of 21.6%) driving up these mean figures, while other, more marginal, areas have experienced relatively little, if any, house price growth. Indeed, the North East witnessed the slowest rate of increase of 3% (BBC News Online, 2014b). This is an average figure and the concern is that

while some areas in the region will have witnessed growth at a higher rate than 3%, others will have experienced lower- possibly in negative figures. It is impossible to draw this down to the district level and, therefore, difficult to speculate on growth levels for East Durham. It is possible to assume that, with no wider changes to policy provision, this growth has been witnessed in strategic areas, with the more marginal communities limiting the regional average.

The most visible sign of the housing market improving is the increase in house building which is visible across the North East, either in the form of actual building or future developments (evident in the billboards advertising new building projects). Indeed, house building in East Durham has taken place recently; this is most noticeable in a large development in the cold spot area of Easington Colliery. Persimmon Homes proposed 80 property development on the site of the former Easington District Council Offices which were closed and demolished when the local governing structure shifted to a County wide Unitary Authority. Persimmon envisaged the development—consisting of 2-4 bedroom houses-- would annually contribute £1million to the local economy as well as visually improve the amenity of the area ([Engelbrecht, 2014](#)). Previously possessing an Easington Colliery address, this brownfield development, which sits on the border of the attractive Easington Village and the less attractive Colliery, is being marketed by Persimmon as Easington Village. The rural location and proximity to the heritage coastline is reflected in the price of the properties which range from £120,000 to £220,000. It is the location of this site and the ability to focus on the village rather than colliery which has facilitated this new development. Nevertheless it will be interesting, going forward, to see how this impacts upon Easington Colliery and to appreciate how the upward move of the housing market has influenced house building in this cold spot area.

The political importance of housing is reflected in how it is viewed in the run up to the National Election, due to take place in May 2015. Housing is increasingly being used as a pawn for election sound bites, with all parties pledging to build more



houses. Irrespective of the numbers, which vary between parties<sup>95</sup>, this highlights the growth in the housing market. The wider political/ urban policy approach to housing has also altered somewhat in the period between the research being conducted and the present. Just as this research was being completed, the Conservative party, at their 2013 annual conference, announced the early introduction of the Help To Buy scheme which was adopted to promote house buying of all stock types. Developed during the budget of 2014 and building on previous policy to promote house building and stimulate the housing market- observed in First Buy and Homebuy- the significance of this policy is its emphasis on both new and existing stock up to a value of £600,000. In essentials it follows the same template that homebuyers with a small deposit (5%) can progress on the housing ladder and are applicable to a selection of schemes such as equity loan, mortgage guarantee and 'other' (Shared Ownership, Right to Buy and New Buy). The scheme highlights the shift in the government incentive programme, reflecting the development of and changes to urban policy which attaches greater value to all housing types and their capacity to promote development or renewal, and stimulate the wider economy.

The shift in urban policy approach to tackle existing stock is evident in Toxteth, where difficult to let, low demand properties in need of rejuvenation were sold by Liverpool Council for £1. The properties came with the caveat that they go to first-time buyers who would spend money (usually through an easy repayment loan) renovating the house and live there for a minimum of 5 years. This has been heralded as a valuable housing-led regeneration scheme which, when completed, will offer "a brand-new, regenerated community" (according to a new resident of the scheme) as well as significantly increasing the value of the houses (with properties valued by local estate agents at £125,000 before renovation, rising to £150,000 post refurbishment) (Barlow, 2014; Taylor, 2014).

Significantly, this approach has also recently been mooted in East Durham to try to

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<sup>95</sup> The Conservatives propose 100,000 properties built by 2020; Labour pledge 200,000 by 2020; Liberal Democrats 300,000 by 2020 and the Green Party 500,000 by 2020 (Ross, 2015).

emulate the perceived or potential benefits of the programme. Accent Housing Association is experiencing problems in letting 160 properties in the Horden and Blackhall villages of East Durham. These areas would require significant funding to renew the properties. As a result the Housing Association are considering selling the properties for a nominal fee, so as to transfer the housing repairs to another party. Accent Housing argue that the impetus for this programme of homesteading was the Bedroom Tax which has put a significant pressure on these 2-bedroom properties which have habitually attracted single occupancy—regarded as it's 'only market' (Merrick, 2015). This led Easington District MP, Grahame Morris, to criticise Accent for "long-term mismanagement" when raising awareness of the situation in the House of Commons, as well as calling for a regeneration and revival plan which encompassed the "selective demolition" of some of these properties. The area MP also raised concerns that these empty properties, if not managed properly, could result in an "influx of absentee landlords with no interest in the community" (Merrick, 2015). This not only echoes the experiences of the past for housing in East Durham, but also shows the extent to which absent landlords are seen as an ongoing threat to the sustainability of the area. This issue of empty homes and absent landlords continues to be a thorn in the side of East Durham, and unfortunately will be for the foreseeable future.

There have been other significant changes in the management of social housing in East Durham since the research was conducted. Stock transfer of the remaining Local Authority and ALMO owned stock is due to take place in spring 2015. Approved by Durham County Council's cabinet and awaiting the seal of approval from Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the scheme is believed to be worth around £114m to the Unitary Council. Durham Housing Group will take over the management and running of 4,227 properties from Dale and Valley Homes, 5,905 dwellings from Durham City Homes and 8,277 houses from East Durham Homes. This will be overseen by 114 members of council staff who will also be transferred to administer the newly formed company (Metcalf, 2015). While offering much needed funding to the unitary authority, it has been criticized by Councillor John Shuttleworth as short-sighted as it these

properties that are deemed “their greatest asset” which will only increase in value (Metcalf, 2015). Nevertheless when assessed against the need to achieve the Decent Homes Standard- a level which East Durham Homes has struggled with- and the problems of a lack of resources for social housing, this move seems a positive one for the quality of the stock and the associated well being of tenants in these properties; an opinion supported by Housing Minister Kris Hopkins who stated it was an “...opportunity to get renovations and refurbishments made to the housing stock” (Butcher, 2014).

Since the research there have been policy developments in national and sub-regional forms. Nationally the Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced changes to, amongst other things, housing benefits in the form of Universal Credit and gave way to the much maligned ‘bedroom tax’-- a levy on under-occupied properties; resultantly any ‘spare’ rooms cost the tenant who has money deducted from their housing benefit allowance. The implications of this Act are not fully felt as yet; however there is concern that single occupancy in ‘family’ low demand properties and the demolition of one bedroom bungalows in East Durham may have a significant impact on the area of research (discussed further in Research prospects’, below). Within County Durham the County Durham Plan (CDP) has had problems in its later phases of consultation in which it was ‘rubbished’ during independent assessment by the Planning Inspectorate. CDP’s 20 year programme was regarded as unrealistic, unsound, undeliverable, and environmentally flawed meaning that the 5 years of development, public consultation and enquiry have been to no avail, and the policy will very likely be scrapped or suspended (Tallentire, 2015). From the findings of this research, the Inspector’s assessment and the prospect of the Unitary Authority shelving the policy is a welcome result. As highlighted previously in this thesis, the policy was regarded as further evidence of Neo-liberal policy which would greatly favour hot spot/ strategic areas to the detriment of cold spots, thus marginalising the less strategic areas and widening the gap of uneven development. This point is also supported by the Planning Inspectors assessment which argued that the emphasis on Durham City as a ‘boom town’ with over 5,000 to be built in the city until 2030 was based on an “unrealistic

assumption” about inward migration and job creation, and that there was a need to address the housing provision (and sustainability) in other towns and villages (Tallentire, 2015).

## **8.6 Research Implications**

The aim of any thesis is to contribute to knowledge in its field (Dunleavy, 2003). For this research, that has been achieved in three areas: empirical, policy and conceptual.

### **8.6.1 Empirical Significance**

The empirical distinctiveness of this research is evident when examined against the wider field of housing and regeneration. New build housing as a driver to regeneration has received much attention during the economic boom period. This was largely due to the emphasis placed on this technique as part of Neoliberal policy. Resultantly the definition of housing-led regeneration focuses on the capacity for new build housing to stimulate local growth (see, for example, Cameron, 2004; 2006; Boddy, 2007; Lister, Perry and Thornley, 2007; Pinnegar, 2009); the impact of the recession on the capacity of new build driven renewal (Parkinson, 2009; Dolphin, 2009; Ward, 2009) and the related health implication of this approach (Atkinson, Thomson and Kearns, 2006); Thomson and Pettigrew, 2007; Pevalin, Taylor and Todd, 2008). By comparison research into existing housing stock and regeneration has a much longer history (due to the longer term urban policy attention). This research is varied, covering issues applicable to this research such as: ‘problem estates’ (Hastings, 2004; Kintrea, 2007); demolition (Redmond and Russell, 2008; Power, 2008); empty homes/ low demand (Power, 2000; Morton and Ehrman, 2011; Dalton, 2014)

This highlights that the fields of research tackling new and existing stock are, to date, separate and distinct. In the simplest terms, therefore, this research builds on

pre-existing work into the role of new and existing stock in driving regeneration, offering a new, combined definition for the study of housing and regeneration. This new approach offers the capacity to, simultaneously, in time and geographical space, examine policy approaches and perceptions. This not only gives a holistic insight into local housing and regeneration, but also the interaction between the two approaches. As such the thesis is able to illuminate the relative weight and differing attention which each approach is afforded during different economic periods, and as a result of wider governing shifts—not afforded by previous work which provided a mono-tenure analysis.

The second empirical significance of this research revolves around the case study. The case study of East Durham has been valuable in presenting how the decline of heavy industry, a housing/ economic boom and, later, an economic slump have impacted on a district. With multiple deprivation, high levels of worklessness and many properties falling into tax band A, the plight of East Durham is considerable but, more significantly and worryingly, not unique. Traditionally, case studies are area specific and rarely applicable to other locations. However, East Durham's experiences of deindustrialisation and the subsequent need for regeneration are shared with other post-industrial (particularly former mining areas) areas. Indeed, the Review of Coalfields Regeneration (DCLG, 2010) found that while there is marked improvement in the conditions experienced in the former coalfields significant social challenges remain. These are universally applicable to former coalfield areas--East Durham as much as other communities-- and include (compared to non-coalfield areas): greater isolation; less employment opportunity and lower expectation; greater number of young people not in education, training or employment. It is estimated that 5.5 million people (equivalent to more than Scotland's population) live in these former coalfield areas, which are most concentrated in the North of England, Scotland and Wales (Coalfield Regeneration Trust website). Not only are experiences of post-industrial decline witnessed across the UK but there is also evidence of issues of stigma and uneven development in these areas. This is exemplified by the Yorkshire Coalfield areas. Elsecar, near Barnsley, also developed from an agricultural area to become a

village with a long mining history. Unfortunately, in 1983, the mine closed and the village suffered from similar economic problems witnessed elsewhere in the region. The wider area of Barnsley is also subject to a Landlord Accreditation scheme, bringing with it the private rented issues which are also evident in East Durham. In addition the neighbouring communities of Grimethorpe and Kendray have been radically transformed through targeted housing-led regeneration under the Housing Market Renewal Programme (Barnsley Council Online, accessed 29/3/2015). The case study within this research is also valuable to areas of ongoing industry. Continuing on with the Yorkshire example, the mines of Kellingley and Hatfield Main, on the South Yorkshire Coalfields, continue to produce coal, however it is questionable how long such mining will continue (BBC News, 2014c). As such, the withdrawal of capital has the capacity, if not addressed fully, to create unevenness and inequality—as witness in East Durham. Therefore, an awareness of the potential social and economic consequences in developing and administering urban policy is essential to the future sustainability of the area. In these terms this research offers a nationally transferable case study, by providing a ‘working hypotheses’ (Lincoln and Guba, 2009) to similar cases.

### 8.6.2 Policy Recommendations

The central concern of this research has been to highlight the contradictions which exist between the aims of Neo-liberal urban policy and the actual impact in regeneration terms. As such there are problems in the current approach to which I shall attempt to offer alternatives. I offer three such suggestions. Firstly, many of the problems highlighted in this research revolve around the consequences of urban policy implementation; namely uneven development. Hot spot areas, with stronger housing markets, gain attention from the private sector irrespective of the wider economic conditions, while cold spot areas struggle to draw in such investment in economic boom periods and times of slump. In periods of funding cuts which rely more on the private sector, this approach further damages the sustainability of the more marginal areas. Therefore I suggest employing the planning system to implement a mechanism in the form of planning gain—Section

106 or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)--which is applied to developments in hot spot areas and used to gap fund or stimulate growth in cold spot areas. This money would be put into a 'pot', ring fenced for funding and facilitating housing-led regeneration work in neighbouring cold spot zones in the form of existing stock rejuvenation, for the remediation of land or funding to attract new build developments.

The second policy recommendation is linked with the shift in governing scales and move towards greater private sector powers. The Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Authorities are at odds with one another, spatially and philosophically. As such there is a considerable need to reintroduce broader housing and regeneration strategies which work beyond the unitary area or city region. In essence such an agenda would be similar to the former regional policies which were dissolved alongside the Regional development Agencies. However, rather than being administered or developed by a special organisation, this would be as a result of collaborative working between **all** Local Authorities and LEPs in each region. As such this structure would function to: make the policy more cost effective (not requiring a separate agency and the funding issues associated with that); and create closer working between and within public and private agencies so as to follow housing markets (which are rarely constrained by governing boundaries); and work towards resolving any competition (as much as this is possible) between the LEPs which cut across, and threaten to fracture, regions.

Finally, the thesis has drawn attention to the growing power of the larger building developers (such as Miller Homes, Barratt Homes, and Taylor Wimpey). This is evident in their involvement in not only the new-build housing-led regeneration programmes during the 'golden age', but most obvious in the periods of slump and witnessed further in Neoliberal urban policy agendas in the post-2008 period. In all these private companies pick and choose development sites attracted to those with greatest profits. This has a significant impact on the creation and exacerbation of uneven development, observed in East Durham. This monopoly

could be counted if a greater emphasis were placed on the smaller, local builders. I believe that such an approach would counter this hot spot fixation perpetuated by private housing developers, and lead to a more evenly spread development process as smaller builders have less overheads and are more inclined to build in cold spot areas. As such I propose the formation of a loan to build package. This would be similar to the Homebuy scheme but, instead of offering loans to home buyers it would provide easy repayment, low cost loans to smaller house builders.

### 8.6.3 Conceptual Contribution

The thesis has examined and adopted the theoretical schemas of uneven development, governance and post-politics. I will now discuss how this research has contributed to and developed these theories

- Uneven Development

The influence of Neil Smith on urban geography is reflected in the significant amount of work inspired by his theories of, and relating to, uneven development. As such, and like others using this theory, this research builds from existing work such as that of Smith (1984; 1996; 2002; 2008) himself, and other work on the governance of uneven development (see, for example, Peck and Tickell, 1995; Punch, et al, 2004; Pike, Tomaney, Coombes, 2012); the impact of economic markets (Peck and Tickel, 1992; Jones, 2001; Hadjimichalis, 2011 ) and its application to coalfield Neoliberal regeneration policies (Anderson, et al, 1983; Punch, et al, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Hudson, 2013). In particular this thesis' value is in its ability to highlight the numerous complex and diverse issues which create local inequality and unevenness at the point where governance, economic markets and neo-liberal policies intersect. The approach of this thesis offers an agency and structure approach to pin point the conditions which created inequality in the post-industrial case study of East Durham by examining the attitudes and viewpoints of those involved in the process of housing-led regeneration as well as the wider policy and economic circumstances.



This thesis also combines approaches of uneven development which focus traditionally on existing housing stock through discussion of gentrification (see, for example, Smith, 1996; Hackworth, 2007) and more recently on brownfield development regarding the gentrification/ residentialisation debate (discussed in Chapter 5.2.1, also see, for example, Tallon and Bromley, 2004; Macleod and Johnstone, 2012). As such the broader definition of housing-led regeneration, adopted in this thesis, offers a new and combined way of examining the processes of uneven development to show that the process is influenced not only by geographical location but also stock type.

- Governance

As stated previously, the current work on governance concerning housing and regeneration is conducted in distinct fields of social housing (see, for example Flint, 2002, 2006; Bradley, 2008; McKee, 2011); private housing (which is restricted to home owners and residents associations—see Chen and Webster, 2005); private housing markets (Kettl, 1993), planning issues with regard to the community (see Deng, 2003; Morris, Wilson and Bell, 2012); new build (Cameron, 2006) and the governance of regeneration (see, for example, M Rowe and C Devanney, 2003; Davies, 2002; Blanco, Bonnet, Walliser, 2011; Carley, 2000). This thesis builds from and combines these distinct approaches to housing so as to provide a broader picture of governance in all aspects of housing regeneration. As such this research fills the gaps between these distinct, pre-existing approaches and offers a more considered and substantial analysis of governance which relates to each field of housing, and the interplay between them.

In addition, there is a mismatch in previous research into the stratification of governance. For example, there is a significant wealth of work pertaining to community powers in housing governance (see, for example, Chapman and Kintrea, 2000; Flint, 2002; McKee, 2008; Hackworth, 2008; Flint, 2014) and regeneration governance (Southern, 2002; Somerville, 2005; Ross and Osbourne, 2009; Doering, 2014) while the private sector has gained less attention-- also

highlighted by Allen (2008)-- and has largely been undertaken more recent, reflecting the economic slump and greater emphasis on the private sector (see, for example, Syrett and Bertotti, 2012; Matthews, Bramley, Hasting, 2014; and Bailey, 2014). Applicable work is recent and applies to other countries, such as China (Zhou, 2014) or single issues, such as Localism This research, therefore, attends to this gap in the governance literature, and expands the conceptual field, by exploring the experiences of all those involved in governing housing-led regeneration simultaneously, as well as their relative influence and associated interactions.

- Post-politics

Post-politics added value to this thesis as the governing practises of Neoliberalism dovetailed neatly with the behaviour and attributes observed in the governance of housing-led regeneration witnessed during the research. Similarly the research has contributed to the arena of post-politics and examination of the post-political condition. The focus of post-politics, in recent years, has centred on issues of environmental sustainability, emphasising ecological concerns<sup>96</sup> (see, for example, Escobar, 1996; Badiou, 2007; Swyngedouw, 2007; 2009; 2010; 2011). The postpolitical condition has been applied to regeneration in a number of different aspects. These include: the broader regeneration process (Deas, 2013); the renewal of the South Bank in London (Baeten, 2012); the impact of recent planning reforms and their links to regeneration (Houghton and Allmendinger, 2010; 2013); and the regeneration of British council estates (Lees, 2013). Housing has received less attention in the study of the post-political condition and, where it has, it has centred around social/ affordable housing provision in Australia (Lagacy, Davison, Liu, Van Den Nauwelant and Piracha, 2013) and Irish 'ghost' estates in the wake of the recent housing crisis (O'Callaghan, Boyle and Kitchin, 2014). In light of this pre-existing research this research both expands the field of post-political debate applied to housing and adds to regeneration by applying the theory to housing-led

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<sup>96</sup> Namely, environmentalism is regarded as a personal lifestyle choice and, as such, this draws attention away from society's structural relationship with nature, which is considered the properly political issue.

regeneration, the point at which these two fields cross, and a topic which has received no previous theoretical attention.

### **8.7 Research Prospects**

This research highlights the potential for further research to develop the field of study or grow from this work. In comparative terms it would also be of interest to replicate this research in other post-mining/post-industrial areas to appreciate how different areas experience uneven development and marginality, as well as the structures in place for local governing housing-led regeneration. In addition a follow up study would be of value to examine the more recent policy and economic changes. These include, but are not limited to:

- the resurgence in the housing market which has given way to new build housing development in the cold spot area of Easington Colliery (though it is marketed as Easington Village);
- the impact of the Help To Buy scheme which is applicable to all housing types as opposed to former new build emphasis;
- the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act and associated bedroom tax-- argued to have a significant impact upon the let-ability of properties in cold spot, low demand areas where single occupancy in larger properties is commonplace and cited as forcing housing providers to sell off properties for nominal prices; and
- the impact which the stock transfer of all properties in County Durham has had on the dynamic of governing this housing stock

### **8.8 Concluding Remarks**

By developing a broader, more holistic definition, this thesis has been crucial in achieving a full understanding of housing-led regeneration, assessing the role and governing mechanisms of this phenomena as well as investigating the comparative

disparity between Neo-liberal urban policy aims and reality in regeneration terms. The impact of urban policy as a tool to (unwittingly) focus attention, manipulate perception and drive uneven development is significant and cannot be overlooked. The built environment is created and recreated through the interplay of policy and perception and, if urban policy had been implemented differently I strongly believe that I could have easily been writing about different villages as cold spot and hot spot communities. In the future, urban policy must be mindful of the wide-ranging impact it can have on creating equality and stability so as to implement a broader regeneration agenda.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Date of Interviews**

Interview A	8 <sup>th</sup> December 2010
Interview B	14 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
Interview C	8 <sup>th</sup> February 2011
Interview D	9 <sup>th</sup> February 2011
Interview E	10 <sup>th</sup> February 2011
Interview F	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2011
Interview G	24 <sup>th</sup> February 2011
Interview H	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2011
Interview J	14 <sup>th</sup> March 2011
Interview K	15 <sup>th</sup> March 2011
Interview L	17 <sup>th</sup> March 2011
Interview M	23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2011
Interview N	23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2011
Interview O	24 <sup>th</sup> March 2011
Interview P	30 <sup>th</sup> March 2011
Interview Q	4 <sup>th</sup> April 2011
Interview R	6 <sup>th</sup> April 2011
Interview T	14 <sup>th</sup> June 2011
Interview U	18 <sup>th</sup> July 2011
Interview V	25 <sup>th</sup> July 2011

Interview W	28 <sup>th</sup> July 2011
Interview X	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2011
Interview Y	8 <sup>th</sup> August 2011
Interview Z	25 <sup>th</sup> August 2011
Interview AA	7 <sup>th</sup> September 2011
Interview BB	15 <sup>th</sup> September 2011
Interview CC	7 <sup>th</sup> October 2011
Interview DD	5 <sup>th</sup> December 2011
Interview EE	10 <sup>th</sup> December 2011
Interview FF	15 <sup>th</sup> December 2011
Interview GG	27 <sup>th</sup> January 2012
Interview HH	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2012
Interview JJ	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2012
Interview KK	8 <sup>th</sup> February 2012

## Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

1. Discussion of interviewee's job title and what their job entails  
  
Is their role different now to pre- economic slump/ political reorganisation? if so, how?
  
2. Role of housing in regeneration:
  - Biggest issues for regeneration/ housing
  - Previous regeneration/ housing aims
  - Current regeneration/ housing aims
  - Role of housing in regeneration/ role of regeneration in housing
  - How well do housing and regeneration aims align?
  - New build developments or refurbishment of older properties favoured?
  - Role of void, vacant property- housing or regeneration function
  - Effect of recession and spending cuts on housing/ regeneration
  
3. Role of policy:
  - Most influential policies- **past** (e.g. HMR)  
**-present** (e.g. Housing and Regeneration Act)
  
  - influence over policy direction- local, regional or national
  - policy emphasis and aim- department (housing, economic, etc)  
-geographical (Durham city, East Durham, etc)
  
  - Localism - attitudes towards  
- impact in future
  
  - Effect of recession and spending cuts on policy- now and future
  - Effect of RDA dissolution and impact on policy- now and future
  - Local Authority restructure and impact on policy- now and future
  
4. Governance:
  - Unitary Council- changes, similarities and effect
  - Partnership working - effect, benefits, disadvantages  
- experiences: positive and negative  
  
internally and externally
  
  - Contact with council/ other councils/ other departments
  - Contact with developers
  - Contact with communities/ community consultation- community interest, beneficial/disadvantage
  - How easy to align interviewees sector needs with regeneration/housing/developer/community, etc needs.
  
5. Any other issues which the interviewee feels are important to discuss