

Swimming against the tide: a study of a neighbourhood looking to rediscover its 'reason for being' through residential regeneration – the case of South Bank, Redcar and Cleveland

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Abstract:

It is becoming increasingly difficult to find financial support for large-scale regeneration projects in the U.K., due to extensive cuts to government funding. Competition for existing funding is becoming ever greater, with potential schemes vying for the same dwindling funding streams. Closer scrutiny of the viability of proposed schemes, and of the neighbourhoods they aim to transform, is being undertaken before scarce funding is granted.

This paper will discuss some of the neighbourhood factors that may contribute to the perceived viability of regeneration schemes, and therefore influence their chances of receiving funding. These include:

- the geography of competition for funding
- the spatial level of funding decision making
- a potential 'reason for being'
- the functions of local area or neighbourhoods
- local demography
- the scale and manifestation of social problems
- the quality of the built and natural environment;
- transport links.

The paper goes on to explore the consequences for neighbourhoods that are unable to secure funding for regeneration projects, including deteriorating socio-economic conditions, further loss of confidence in local government among residents, and feelings of abandonment. Finally, the alternatives available to such neighbourhoods are considered, including scaled-down regeneration projects, managed decline, and less resource-intensive options such as community development work.

This paper is based on a series of interviews of national, regional, and local housing professionals, and local resident, conducted for a scoping exercise for a 25 year longitudinal assessment of planned neighbourhood regeneration in South Bank in Teesside, U.K..

(**Note - provide a stronger residential flavour to the abstract – the viability of a residential community, demolitions and new build/investment opportunities?)

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Shrinking Cities

'Towns that were once in the right place at the right time, may now well be in the wrong place at the wrong time, severely restricting their ability to attract jobs.'

(Policy Exchange, 2008, p62)

Couch and Cocks (2011) describe shrinking cities as densely populated urban areas, with a minimum population of 10,000 residents, which have faced population losses for more than two years and are undergoing significant economic transformations and exhibit some of the symptoms of structural crisis. Places that enjoyed the conditions for creating wealth in the coal-powered 19th-century do not do so today. Port cities had an advantage in an era when exporting manufactured goods by sea was a vital source of prosperity; today the sea is a barrier to their potential for expansion and they are cut off from main transport routes. Many of the U.K.'s largest coastal cities are generally large for a reason that has disappeared; they have lost much of their *raison d'être* (Policy Exchange 2008)

Mah (2010) suggests that industrial ruins are produced by capital abandonment of sites of industrial production; they can be "read" as the footprint of capitalism, the sites which are no longer profitable, which no longer have use value.

'Each spatio-temporal moment of industrial ruination is situated somewhere along a continuum between creation and destruction, fixity and motion, expansion and contraction. Over time, landscapes of industrial ruination will become landscapes of regeneration, reuse, demolition or abandonment all over again'.

(Mah, 2010, p400)

The message for people living in cities that are less well-connected is simple and apparently bleak: if you remain where you are, then your chances of being unemployed are higher and your wages will be lower than if you move to a place that is better located for the modern economy. As a result, the only way towns and cities that are less well connected, and which the realities of physical geography dictate will remain less well-connected, can compete to attract firms is to accept lower wages (Policy Exchange 2008). But is even this dismal prospect enough? Are some urban areas beyond resuscitating?

The Policy Exchange (2008) controversially go on to recommend that some old industrial areas in the North of England should be taken off the 'life support systems' that have been sustaining them over the last three decades, stating:

'..... if we are honest about the constraints and realistic about the opportunities then we can make progress. We need to accept above all

that we cannot guarantee to regenerate every town and every city in Britain that has fallen behind.'

(Policy Exchange, 2008, p5)

Of great concern is that the spatial impact of the economic downturn is likely to impact more heavily on cities with a high concentration of employment in manufacturing and construction. The midlands and north of England have been hit hardest by a reduction in regeneration activity and funding, the combination of which implies that marginal places in second order cities or peripheral areas of core cities will be most severely affected (Experian 2011).

Social polarisation, entrenched deprivation, negative stigma and perceptions

'Entrenched deprivation is defined as persistent and profound poverty and disadvantage that is characterised by multiple complex problems (such as generational worklessness, very low income, low educational achievement, chronic health problems) and is resistant to interventions to improve quality of life for people.'

(Hothi et al, 2010, p11)

Imrie and Raco (2003) describe deprived communities as:

'...portrayed, in pathological-underclass terms, as entities that inculcate individuals with the values of immoral behaviour, disorder and (welfare-state) dependency, while simultaneously being promoted as a source of moral good, whose corrosion lies at the heart of urban problems and disorder'.

(Imrie and Raco, 2003, p26)

Those claiming benefits become more segregated and increasingly concentrated in certain neighbourhoods during the years of economic growth (Schmuecker and Viitanen, 2011). Whilst the causes of deprivation are largely rooted within the economic decline and industrial restructuring described above, the process of creating highly localised deprivation are largely driven by the operation of the housing market (North et al, 2006). Atkinson and Kintrea (2001) confirmed that the concentration of deprivation in neighbourhoods intensifies disadvantage for individuals living in those neighbourhoods for most outcomes, but most notably through the perceived reputation of the area. Thus, urban neighbourhoods and their residents are hit with a 'double whammy' of, not only increasing levels of deprivation due to their geographic and economic circumstances, but also an accelerator of the speed of deterioration due to negative stigma that is attached to an area. Like many reputations, that of being a 'deprived area' may be easily gained but difficult to lose as perceptions can only be changed or banished across generations rather than over 'mere' decades.

Responses and strategies

A considerable literature exists on the performance of Area Base Initiatives (ABIs) in the U.K., dating from evaluations of the City Challenge initiative in the mid-nineties (Russell, 1996; Robinson, 1997), through Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) (see DTLR 2002), to more recent evaluations of New Deal for Communities (NDC) and Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes (see Tyler et al., 2008; Lawless et al., 2006). Despite the numerous studies of ABIs, there is still some doubt about how effective they are because of:

- 1) inadequate development and understanding of the theory of change behind the policy intervention
- 2) insufficient development of evaluation theory and method
- 3) lack of information on the impact of the interventions on the key outcomes they are designed to affect (attribution)

(Rhodes et al, 2003, p.1920)

Lawlor and Nicholls (2008) reveal that despite there being no shortage of evaluations of regeneration and economic development initiatives, and the wealth of academic literature in this area, many evaluations have failed to ask 'who got the jobs?', 'how sustainable were they?' and 'how many of them would have been created anyway?' (see deadweight, additionality and displacement). They contend that evaluations tend not to ask the right questions and that policy makers have not sufficiently grappled with outcomes – the only way of knowing that positive change has taken place. Outcomes are the ultimate effects of an intervention that often only manifest in the longer term; not to be confused with outcomes that are the immediate things that intervention produces. Outcomes are complex and difficult to measure (Lawlor and Nicholls, 2008)

There is a need for regeneration and economic development policy instruments to match functional economies and not arbitrary boundaries drawn on map. Williams (2010) suggests, in order for improvements to be achieved, that Local Authorities need to understand the economic, housing and regeneration needs of their areas - and not confuse those areas with their boundaries. The need for greater cross boundary coordination, collaboration and working between authorities presents a challenge to councils that adopt a parochial view. Disappointingly, some of the progress made in England over the last five years, with the introduction of Local and Multi Area Agreements and the 'Total Place' initiative appear to have been jettisoned by the Coalition Government in favour of their 'localism agenda'. The prospect for the new Local Economic Partnerships to make a fundamental contribution to improving conditions in deprived areas is slight, given the overriding prerogative of backing winners in order to secure funding. The risk is that deprived areas are cast adrift and that social and economic polarisation is exacerbated further.

The emerging literature on the concept of 'shrinking cities' (see Pallagst et al., 2009, Anderson, . 2009; Couch et al 2005 and Pyl, 2009) describes how land use strategies can be applied to deal with an urban fabric that is no longer in use; these include greening vacant lots, developing a database of property condition and classifying city neighbourhoods and comprehensive planning for decline. Such interventions are unlikely to arrest the decline but may ameliorate some of the worst side effect of it.

Understanding neighbourhood function and typology

Robson et al (2009) believe that a key element in better understanding the roles that deprived neighbourhoods play is residential mobility, or the flux of people into and out of deprived neighbourhoods. They observed that deprived neighbourhoods are not identical; they differ in their social composition and the functional roles that they play in the housing market. The typology that Robson et al (2009) devised to characterise urban neighbourhoods is set out below.

Table 1: Typology of deprived neighbourhoods (adapted from Robson et al, 2009)

Type	IN-movers ↓	OUT-movers ↑	Context
Transit	Less deprived areas	Less deprived areas	First step on ladder after parental home
Escalator	Equally or more deprived	Less deprived areas	Onwards and upwards progress on ladder (resident often older than transit)
Gentrifier	Less deprived areas	Similarly or more deprived areas	Improver or Gentrifier (could involve displacement of existing residents)
Isolate	Equally or more deprived	Equally or more deprived	Entrapment of poor households unable to break out of deprived areas

The logic of the typology, all other things being equal, would lead to the expectation that *Gentrifiers* would improve as a result of asymmetric migration; *Isolates* would stagnate; and *Escalators* would (possibly) deteriorate. However, since most of the deprived areas are targeted by regeneration initiatives, actual change might be expected to depend on the intensity and effectiveness of policy intervention in areas (Robson et al, 2009).

University of Glasgow (TERU 2010) developed a typology of deprived areas in the North East of England for the Northern Way, using cluster analysis of the 566 Lower Super Output areas (LSOAs) in the North East that were in the worst 20% nationally (according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation). They identified four clusters/types of deprived neighbourhood:

- Cluster 1: Deprived former industrial/coalmining areas – rural
- Cluster 2: Most deprived – predominantly social housing areas
- Cluster 3: Lesser deprived areas
- Cluster 4: deprived transitory inner urban areas

Having identified the four typologies they attempted to establish ‘what works’ in tackling deprivation in each of these types of areas by exploring ‘local’ approaches to regeneration. A summary of the characteristics of the four types of deprived area and the responses best suited to tackling deprivation in such areas is summarised in the table below.

Table 2: Typology of deprived areas (adapted from TERU 2010)

	Cluster Name	Characteristics	What works
1	Former industrial/ coalfield: rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older demographic • Longer travel to work and services • High level benefit dependency • Less in flux or lacking access to resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing local jobs • Increasing connectivity with job market • Innovative outreach and local learning
2	Most deprived: predominantly social housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to resources • Higher crime levels • High level benefit dependency • Younger demographic • Less in flux 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term holistic tackling multiple disadvantage • Investment in housing • Tackle stigma • Intensive community outreach and lifelong learning • Tackle health issues
3	Lesser deprived areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older demographic • Longer travel to work and services • Less in flux • Crime less of an issue • Less dependency on benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in housing stock • Increase availability of local jobs • Increase links with wider jobs base • Local learning offer
4	Transitory inner urban areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In flux • Prime age demographic • Distance to work and services less of an issue • Lack of access to resources less of an issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote area as ‘up and coming’ • Engage with diverse ethnic communities • Maximise connections and locational advantages

(summarising TERU 2010)

Whilst the two typologies are different, the former being a typology of residential neighbourhoods from the perspective of housing market and migration, the latter a typology based on levels of deprivation, they clearly have some similarities and common characteristics. For example, the ‘Isolate’ and ‘Most deprived’ types may be one and the same, similarly with the ‘transit’ and ‘transitory’ types. Transitory inner urban areas may also exhibit many of the characteristics of either escalator or gentrifier residential neighbourhood types. The former/coalfield type of deprived

areas predominantly exist in rural areas but can sometimes be found in 'backwater' urban areas of the isolate type.

Despite the improved resolution or granularity of measures of deprivation, it is recognised that even LSOA based statistics may miss the extent of poverty and disadvantage that exist in small pockets. This is because data may be skewed by the presence of more affluent (or at least less deprived) households in other parts of the area, a result of which is that sometimes resources are allocated to other neighbourhoods that appear to have more pressing social needs. Another problem arising from using statistical evidence to identify deprivation, is the difficulty in translating a general picture of disadvantage into the reality of peoples' individual experience (Young Foundation, 2010).

Methodology

The subject research adopts the two typologies described above, as a framework for an intensive investigation of a deprived neighbourhood that has lost its reason for being, and a significant percentage of its resident population (see detailed profile of study area, South Bank, in Redcar and Cleveland, below).

A detailed baseline was compiled to capture the current condition of the study area, against which changes in the area may be measured during the course of a 25 year longitudinal study. A series of interviews were conducted with local stakeholders to enrich the baseline data and provide a deeper contextualisation of the area. In addition, as the first phase of recruitment to the longitudinal study, in-depth semi structured interviews were conducted with local residents, households and community activists. Following interpretation of the baseline survey and analysis of the preliminary interview data, the research locates the study neighbourhood within the two models/typologies presented above, identifies potential opportunities for the study area to break out of its cycle of decline and contemplates threats to its prospects of doing so.

Context for study

Atkinson and Kintrea (2001) acknowledge that the context in which a neighbourhood sits is a very important influence on neighbourhood outcomes. The neighbourhood chosen for the study is one of the most deprived areas in the country.

The most recent Indices of Deprivation (ID2010) (CLG,2011) data from central government suggests that South Bank contains within its boundaries a LSOA which ranks as the 74th most deprived area in England (out of 32,482 LSOAs). Neighbouring Grangetown contains the highest ranked LSOA in the North East (ranked 17th most deprived nationally) according to the ID2010 the same LSOA (in Grangetown) was ranked 73rd overall (nationally) according to the ID2007, which illustrates that the levels of deprivation in the locality have escalated over the past 3 years.

The neighbourhood of South Bank is located in the district of Greater Eston, in the Borough of Redcar and Cleveland, which is situated at the eastern end of the Teesside conurbation in the North East of England. Greater Eston is bounded by the River Tees to the north, the Wilton chemical works and former Corus steel plant to the east, the North Yorkshire moors to the south and Middlesbrough to the West.

(# insert OS location map of location within Teesside conurbation – to be added)

Teesside comprises a polycentric structure of distinct towns (Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough, Redcar, Billingham), with the name Teesside used more by outsiders rather than as a strong badge of local affiliation (Phillimore and Moffatt, 1990). During the last decade the concept of the Teesside conurbation has been expanded, incorporating the towns of Hartlepool and Darlington, to become the Tees Valley city region. Whilst not a city region in the pure sense (it still works to the five local authorities' institutional boundaries rather than adopting a fuzzy boundary with neighbouring County Durham and North Yorkshire) it was one of the first areas to be given LEP status by the new Coalition government in October 2010.

Statistical indicators demonstrate that South Bank is one of the most deprived areas in the country, with 46% of children 'in poverty' (i.e. in families receiving less than 60% of median income), compared with 24% in the rest of the region (#source#). Unemployment is high, but there are about 5000 jobs in workplaces close to South Bank, many of which are filled by people commuting from elsewhere. Stakeholders and residents noted that many local people struggle to find work, particularly younger people and those with few skills. Police statistics (#source#) indicate that South Bank has a very high level of crime: in 2008, 196 offences were notified to the police per 1000 population (compared with 83.4/1000 in Redcar and Cleveland as a whole). The incidence of burglary is particularly high – three times the rate for the borough as a whole. There is, however, a consensus that although crime is a significant problem, the area is quieter and safer than it used to be, mainly as a result of the reduction in resident population.

(#Need to add LSOAs in South Bank, Greater Eston and Redcar and Cleveland in new IMD 2010 and feed in to context; see also Experian 2011 updating the evidence base on English Cities#)

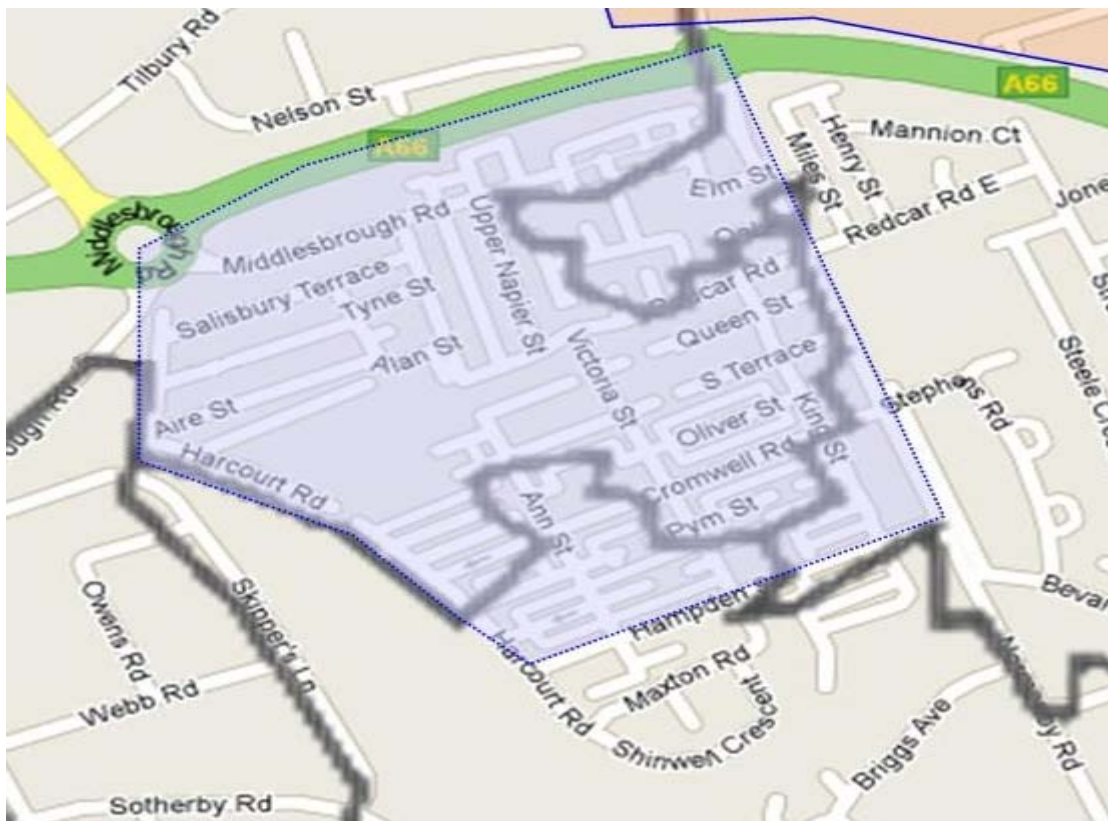
South Bank is viewed by most residents as having two, sometimes three, distinct parts. The ward is bisected by Normanby Road, which runs north to south (# provide location map that shows this more clearly#). To the east is the former South Bank estate, which is made up of ex-local authority housing, some of which is now privately owned through the Right-to-Buy scheme, with the rest having been transferred to Coast and Country Housing Association several years ago through stock transfer. This area was described as being stable and '*well drawn together*'; this is attributed to the way the social housing is managed. Part of the estate was demolished a number of years ago to tackle anti-social behaviour in certain streets, and this seems to have been successful.

The west side of Normanby Road is largely made up of small terraced properties – known locally as '*street houses*' – along with a shopping street and some businesses, community buildings and communal areas, and places of worship. Many

of these properties are privately owned and rented, and the high incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour issues in the area is often attributed to private tenants. This area has suffered increasingly from housing market failure in recent years, and there has been extensive demolition of housing. This is the area of interest in the research.

A third 'section' of South Bank was identified: the area further south along Normanby Road, which is more affluent (or less deprived) and includes mainly larger owner-occupied properties. However, there are no clear boundaries separating this third part of South Bank from other parts; instead, there is a gradual change heading south down Normanby Road towards Teesville, Normanby and Eston.

Figure 1: Detail of South Bank showing the approximate study area marked in blue



There has been a steady and very substantial decline in the population of South Bank over the last decade. In 2001 the population was 6,352; by 2008 it was 5,286, a reduction of 16.8% (#ONS site?#).

Table 3: Population in South Bank 2001-08

	2001	2005	2008	Change 2001-08			
				South Bank	Redcar & Cleveland	NE	England
Population	6,352	5,768	5,286	-16.8%	-1.0%	1.2%	3.9%
Working age population	3,820	3,576	3,408	-10.8%	-1.7%	2.6%	4.6%

Source: ONS (#date?#)

The continued decline of local industries has been marked by closures and large scale job losses: the former Smiths Dock Shipyard closed in 2001; Corus paid off 1,700 workers in 2001, and subsequently mothballed the plant in February 2010, with a further 1,600 job losses, however earlier this year (March 2011), it was announced that the plant had been sold to SSI a Thai company for £320 million, protecting the remaining jobs at the plant and potentially creating future new employment opportunities.

The 2001 SRB position statement confirmed that:

'The decline...of the industries that provided jobs for local residents means that there is no longer any economic justification for the existence of these communities. The challenge which they...face is to determine a new justification for their existence'.

(#see Gill for reference#)

Phillimore and Moffatt (1999) recorded a lack of residents from South Bank working in the neighbouring steel and chemical industries, noting:

'Residents face a double set of costs, experiencing the drawbacks of proximity in the form of atmospheric pollution, without the benefits in terms of employment'.

(Phillimore and Moffatt, 1999, p141)

"If the people of South Bank could hear me say this they would kill me – but there is almost no need for South Bank now, the industry has moved on. South Bank has to shrink further and stabilize and then hopefully over a period of time (its) reputation may begin to change".

(Stakeholder interview, 2010)

Regeneration of South Bank

South Bank has experienced both good and bad times over the 20th century. Unemployment was high during the worldwide depression of the 1930s, and the area suffered some housing damage and loss of life during strategic bombing of Tees Port and the local heavy industries in World War Two. In the 1950s, local authority housing was built in the form of South Bank Estate, on land formerly covered by a slag heap (hence the local nickname 'Slaggy Island'). The ICI Wilton plant was established in 1956 providing more local jobs. At its most prosperous South Bank

had a vibrant 'heart' with its own weekly market, shopping areas and social scene. It was largely self-sufficient and people did not feel the need to travel elsewhere for work, shopping, services or entertainment. However, technological changes which reduced the local industries' reliance on a convenient local labour force, the end of local iron ore mining in the 1960s, and the decline of the local industries led to a slow decline of the area. As early as 1962, Eston Urban District Council expressed concern about '*disturbing*' pockets of unemployment in South Bank and nearby Grangetown.

Regeneration efforts starting in the 1990s included physical improvements (selective demolition in areas where anti-social behaviour was concentrated, refurbishment of properties and street improvements), employment, education, and community safety projects. Single Regeneration Budget Round 2 funding of around £17.5 million was granted, followed by Round 5 funding for housing improvements and community development. However, an SRB position statement in 2001 (#need full reference#) reported that there were still numerous problems in the area, including social exclusion, low housing demand (to rent or buy), unattractive housing stock, falling population, low incomes, and '*a degree of apathy within the community*'. The SRB report described what it regarded as the two main types of South Bank residents:

'those who have been there all their lives and don't want to or can't afford to move; and young people who move into the area because they cannot afford anywhere else'.

(ref#)

Over the past ten years, a series of plans for the area's future have been developed – a Housing Renewal Plan (Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners, 2004), Sustainable Communities Plan (2005) and Greater Eston Strategic Master Plan (GVA Grimley, 2008) – which have sought to identify solutions to the problem of housing market failure in South Bank. There has been a considerable amount of community consultation activity around the formulation of these plans. Based on their recommendations, and with funding from a variety of sources, including the Borough Council, there has been widespread demolition of the street houses, without replacement, which has contributed to the significant reduction in population, mostly to neighbouring areas, described above.

Most recently, the Homes and Communities Agency asked for a full economic appraisal of regeneration plans for South Bank to be carried out to assess funding options. At the time of writing, DTZ are in the process of finalising this appraisal (# check whether available yet). In the opinion of some, South Bank has been in 'managed decline' for the last two decades:

"You have to question whether parts of South Bank have a future. At the moment it is death by a thousand cuts. It has been a long drawn out process and it has exhausted people"

(Stakeholder interview, 2010)

"People feel that the Council has let the area go down over the years, and has not done enough to stop its decline."

(Stakeholder interview, 2010)

“There have been lots of big promises over the last 10 years, which haven’t been fulfilled – why promise something you can’t deliver?”

(Resident interview, 2010)

Stakeholders and residents alike feel that the management of the regeneration process in South Bank has been poor, with too many changes of direction and a great deal of uncertainty along the way:

‘Strategies and plans were put in place with the best intentions with the money that was available, but with hindsight it has been death by a thousand cuts for the community in South Bank.’

(Stakeholder interview, 2010)

This uncertainty had led to other problems:

‘People will argue that they (the residents) haven’t improved their properties because they don’t know if the council are going to pull them down. You can understand this viewpoint.’

(Stakeholder interview, 2010)

One stakeholder argued that the regeneration process to date has shown little evidence of joined-up thinking:

‘a new health village and schools (have been built), but (there is) no population to use them because everyone has been moved out of the area and the housing demolished. If they had built a few houses it would have encouraged people to move into the area and boosted people’s confidence about the regeneration process.’

(Stakeholder interview, 2010)

The lack of positive action has, in the view of some, resulted in the loss of local amenities such as businesses, shops, banks, and the South Bank market, as many of the more aspiring families moved out of the area. The area based regeneration programme is variously described by residents as being:

“ten years of talk, lots of rubble, lots of rats, and no action”.

“we get a lot of promises and plans but nothing comes of them.”

“they say we’re doing this, we’re doing that, but then they pull it all down and it just ends up being green(ed over)”.

“they have been 10 years doing regeneration in South Bank and they have done nothing but pull down houses and that’s not regeneration.”

Housing and regeneration officers take a somewhat different perspective on matters, characterising the complexity of the problems in South Bank, including legal issues, agreements and co-operation between partners, the timing of new developments,

and the how long it takes to achieve things. A key issue was the need to use available funding for the proper purpose and within the right time frame, while at the same time making sure residents accept the planned changes and could still be housed.

“People don’t understand the complexity of the situation – they think it’s just a case of flattening the houses and building some new ones.”

(Stakeholder interview, 2011)

However, one housing officer did acknowledge that:

‘people now...have been subjected to 10-15 years of acquisition and demolition, whilst nothing much exciting is happening. They will generally be very brow beaten and fed up with the process. Expectations won’t be great and you are starting off at a very low point.’

(Stakeholder interview, 2010)

Tackling Housing Market Failure

Housing statistics show that 75% of South Bank’s housing stock is in the lowest Council Tax Band (A); house prices are relatively low (median £43,500, 2008/9 data) and tenants’ surveys indicate low levels of satisfaction on local estates. Stakeholders noted problems of low demand, absentee landlords and void properties attracting anti-social behaviour.

Low housing demand is the biggest problem in South Bank, especially for the ‘street houses’, which are relatively small and mostly without gardens. In 2000, terraced housing prices had fallen to an all-time low of £3,000, with the result that many properties were bought by investors for private rental. Problems relating to private sector tenants appear to have made up a high proportion of incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour in South Bank in recent years.



(C) Fred Robinson (2010)

Void properties are seen as a particular problem, with empty houses being described as ‘*spreading like a cancer*’, where one property in a block becomes empty and has

shutters erected, others will soon follow, until almost the entire block is empty and there is effectively no option but to knock it down. Voids were seen as a focus for crime – especially arson - and anti-social behaviour among young people.

Although there has been widespread demolition of housing in the area in an attempt to tackle housing market failure and abandonment, both stakeholders and residents acknowledge the main problem with the regeneration process is the lack of progress in terms of new developments. The tactic of strategic demolition was not deemed by many to have been successful, and a number of residents were emphatic that the only answer now was to invest in the area by refurbishing existing housing and building new developments.

“Some good houses got demolished alongside the bad.”

(Resident interview, 2010)

“At the time it was as though, if a street was derelict, it was best getting it down but that just spread and spread and spread.”

(Resident interview, 2010)



(C) Fred Robison (2010)

Several people thought it had taken too long to demolish terraces:

“Some (people) will be very unhappy and frustrated at the lack of progress over so long a period, especially those in areas next to Pym and Oliver (streets), where they are waiting for them to come down. The future is still uncertain.”

(Resident interview, 2010)

Analysis of South Bank

From the analysis of interviews with both residents and stakeholders, including housing and regeneration officers, and with reference to the baseline survey, it is apparent that South Bank has become something of ‘sink estate’, particularly the residential area to the west of Normanby Road. In the view of a housing officer:

“the older ‘street’ housing area hasn’t got a sustainable future because of the tenure mix and the makeup of the community. The older owner occupiers who were keeping the place together are drifting off or dying and it is weakening the fabric of the places all the time”.

(Stakeholder interview 2010)

We asked local residents if they thought there was a stigma attached to South Bank. Most people agreed that it does have a bad reputation, associated with crime, drugs, violence and anti-social behaviour.

“There is a stigma; when people ask me where I live and I say South Bank, they are shocked, the usual response is ‘it’s rough (a)round there and there’s (sic) loads of rogues”.

(Resident interview, 2010)

Two or three respondents believed that this reputation was deserved; others felt that it was not:

“South Bank is classed as one of the roughest areas, but if you actually live there, you know it’s not. It’s the same all over; doesn’t matter what town, there’s always that spot – don’t go there!”

“The perception of it being rough and riddled with crime is wrong at the moment. People still think you don’t go to South Bank because you won’t have any wheels (left) on your car.”

“It is a stigma, it is exaggerated and it doesn’t always reflect reality.”

(Resident interviews, 2010)

Others pointed to neighbouring areas which have problems with anti-social behaviour, and said that it happens even in more affluent neighbourhoods. However, most agreed that South Bank has one of the worst reputations, even if it is not the worst of areas.

For an alternative perspective on South Bank, it is illuminating to consider the perceptions of people who have recently left the area. The South Bank Housing Renewal Team is responsible for relocating residents from the street houses to other areas in order to make way for demolitions. The councils’ internal data (2005) shows that out of 116 relocated households, the majority (61) chose to move to another property in South Bank, while 35 moved to other parts of Greater Eston, and 20 were relocated further afield. The Team collected survey data from people who have been through the relocation process, to find out how they viewed the experience. 33 respondents who were relocated between 2004 and 2010 were asked about how their circumstances had changed as a result of moving from the street houses, and how they viewed life in the street houses of South Bank in retrospect. Their comments are reported below:

Positive:

- Improved quality of life - 21 people said their lives had improved since moving from the street houses, giving the reasons that they were *'happier'*, *'more settled'*, *'feel better now'* and were *'glad they had made the move'*;
- Better area - 6 people said they now lived in a better area, that their new area was *'quieter'* and *'safer'*
- Better standard of housing - 12 people said their new home was better than the old one

Negative:

- Wanted a bungalow - 3 respondents said they had wanted a bungalow but none was available so they had to move to a different type of property.
- Sad to leave South Bank - 2 people said they were sad to leave South Bank

An interview respondent whose son had recently been relocated from South Bank to a neighbouring area said he was very happy to have moved out: *"He's over the moon, he's ecstatic. He loves it"*. Several other respondents offered anecdotal reports of people leaving the area – often because they were relocated due to demolitions – and indicating that it was the best move they had made; they didn't realise you could have such a good quality of life, and they wished they had done it years ago.

Applying the TERU (2010) typology of deprived areas to South Bank, it is apparent that the area exhibits many characteristics of a Cluster 1 'former industrial/coalfield areas', but in an urban rather than rural setting. It also displays some symptoms of multiple deprivation associated with Cluster 2 'Most deprived' areas. South Bank has an older demographic, high levels of benefit dependency and crime, but does benefit from good access to services, resources and proximity to employment opportunities. This analysis would suggest that South Bank needs an integrated programme of interventions in both labour market/job opportunities/skills/training and tackling of multiple disadvantage and deprivation. Investment in housing may not necessarily be what is needed to change the fortunes of the area.

In terms of the Robson (2009) typology of deprived neighbourhoods, South Bank may be identified as an isolate, with potential to perform as an escalator, depending on the outcome of new housing developments that are planned to take place both within South Bank and nearby (see below).

Robson et al (2009) defined isolate areas as:

"areas represent neighbourhoods in which households come from and move to areas that are equally or more deprived. Hence they can be seen as neighbourhoods that are associated with a degree of entrapment of poor households who are unable to break out of living in deprived areas"

(Robson et al, 2009, p5)

A transit area was defined as a:

"...deprived neighbourhoods in which most in-movers come from less deprived areas and most out-movers go to less deprived areas. Typically, this implies young or newly-established households coming from less deprived"

areas (such as their parental home) and starting out on the housing ladder. Their early choice of housing...reflects their initially limited resources. For them living in a deprived neighbourhood may entail only a short period of residence..."

An escalator area was defined as,

"...similar to Transits in that most out-movers go to less deprived areas, but in contrast to Transit areas most in-movers come from areas that are equally or more deprived...the neighbourhood becomes part of a continuous onward-and-upward progression through the housing and labour markets. The moving households may be older than for the Transit areas since they would not necessarily be at the start of their housing career" (ibid., p5)

South Bank exhibits many symptoms of an 'isolate' area, with households trapped in a downward spiral of deprivation and unable to escape, other than being re-housed as a result of demolition and clearance of terraced housing stock. Previously it may have operated as an 'escalator', allowing some households to move onwards and upwards in the housing market, contributing further to its deterioration, population loss and social polarisation. As Robson (2009) indicated, areas do have the potential to change their trajectory, and South Bank may be regarded as having some prospect of becoming a 'transit' area, if new housing can be built that would attract younger people into the area, as a first step on the housing ladder, due to low house prices. However, the likelihood of this occurring is constrained, in part due to competition from other more viable housing locations, in part due to the stigmatisation of the area and external perceptions of South Bank as a place to live, and finally, whether any new housing that is built, is used as new stock with which to re-house existing residents from 'street' housing scheduled for demolition.

The following section examines two residential developments proposals planned in South Bank, the first in its very heart, the second at its eastern edge.

South Bank Eco-village

A small 'eco-homes' development is planned in the heart of South Bank, comprising 15 new homes, to be built by the Gentoo Housing Group, on a site formerly occupied by street housing, together with the refurbishment of 11 terraced houses. An 'eco' housing development' is one which meets the Code for Sustainable Homes: 4 units will be built to the highest level (Code 6); the remainder will meet Code 4. Three of the new homes will be for outright sale, 11 will be for social rent and 12 for shared equity ownership. The project is long awaited and the ground was finally broken for development to start in March 2011 it is expected that the development will be completed by March 2012. This represents the first substantial new residential development to have take place in the regeneration area for over a decade.

The development of eco-housing in an area such as South Bank is anomalous and appears to be due solely to the fact that a funding stream to develop this type of housing was available when other sources of funding were not. The views of local people on the 'eco-village' were mixed. While many welcomed, it because it represented the first new building in the area for such a long time, they were also sceptical about whether it would be successful.

“It will be really interesting to see what happens when they build the eco-village. We used to get all this anecdotal evidence – “if you built new houses people would move back to South Bank”. This will be the test.”

(Resident interview, 2010)

People were concerned about the cost of the development, which is expected to be much greater than the value of the houses once they are built; they will be a loss leader.

“There are no roofs on the (street) houses, but they haven’t got the money to knock them down; and then they are on about spending however many millions for the eco-village.”

(Resident interview, 2010)

Many residents thought South Bank was not the right place to build such a development. One said *“people who are likely to buy into the eco-village idea do not want to live in South Bank”*. One stakeholder questioned the wisdom of building eco-homes in an area *“where you can’t even get some of the residents to put rubbish in the bins”*. The design of the new homes features glass fronts, which, as one stakeholder pointed out, will be impossible to secure, and may be a tempting target for vandals.



(c) Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council 2010

The question of who would live in the eco-homes interested many people. One person thought it might encourage existing residents to transfer out of rental properties into something new, thus increasing the number of voids. Another thought the houses for sale were too expensive for most local people:

“Who from the local residents are going to be able to afford £80-90 thousand quid? The only people who are going to afford them are people from outside the area or the older generation who have family here and want to move back into the area.”

(Resident interview, 2010)

Another stakeholder pointed out that there has never been much interest from private developers to build new housing in the area, because the local housing

market would not support it. The eco-village may suffer for the same reasons. Finally, several people felt that because there is no associated economic growth in the area to help it along, it is hard to imagine that the new housing will be successful.

Low Grange

Low Grange, also in Greater Eston, has been identified as the key site in the borough for the construction of new housing in the next 15 years. The volume house builder Barratt owns part of the land, so does the Council, but the majority of the land is owned by the Lady Hewley Trust a charity originally set up to relieve case of need of members of United Reformed, Congregational and Baptist Churches. The local authority has been seeking to progress development on the land but the project is currently on hold due to funding problems and poor market conditions. The Council is attempting to persuade the national Homes and Communities Agency to invest in the necessary infrastructure to kick-start the development, and looking for a new development partner to replace Barratt who have withdrawn from the project. The Council acknowledges that development at Low Grange could be years away. To ensure demand for the new housing, it is vital that South Bank's housing market is stabilised and that the stigma of living in the area is reduced. This will take time. There is also some serious concerns about the impact of such a large scale residential development immediately adjacent to South Bank. Could this be the final nail in the coffin of the street houses? Would the supply of new housing facilitate the relocation of the final residents from the west side of Normanby Road and permit the comprehensive clearance of land? Located adjacent to the strategic A66 dual carriageway, the western part of South Bank would perhaps be better suited for commercial and industrial development.

(#Note: add information about recent big employment opportunities e.g. Corus and prospect for developing the banks of the Tees as a growth area for environmental technologies and a manufacturing and distribution site for massive offshore wind turbines.)

The prospects of a private sector housing developer investing in South Bank is slim, given that residential values are less than the costs of construction (see Appendix). Several stakeholders pointed out that there are other sites within a few kilometres of South Bank that are more viable for development. Among those mentioned were Middlehaven, Gresham, and Grove Hill in Middlesbrough, all of which lie within approximately 1.5 miles of Middlesbrough town centre; whereas South Bank is approximately 3.5 miles from Middlesbrough and 5.5 miles from Redcar. Whilst South Bank has some potential to be a good place to live, there are other locations in neighbouring that are better suited for residential development, for which there is likely to be stronger market demand for new residential units, and consequently greater viability due to higher values; for example, Gresham, in east Middlesbrough, is close to the town centre and would more readily attract young professionals and University students as residents.

Conclusion – Is there a future for South Bank?

Several local residents expressed their fear that the end was on its way for South Bank. The extent of the demolitions, and lack of progress in building new homes, had led people to speculate that the authorities were “*trying to get rid of it, because it is an embarrassment*”.

"It's shrinking so much in just a couple of years there'll be nowt left of it."
(Resident interview, 2010)

There was also acknowledgement that the 'heart' of the area had already been lost:

"There is a feeling that the area has been stripped of its heritage, for example the local market, and the main shopping area."
(Resident interview, 2010)

The picture that is presented is of an area with a declining population, high unemployment, poor but improving educational attainment, high crime rates, poor health, depressed housing market, a lack of local shops and amenities, and environmental problems. Local people are weary and frustrated by the lack of regeneration progress, and the area has a poor reputation. However, South Bank also has a strong sense of community, with many residents displaying a genuine commitment to the area and its future.

#Note: Complete conclusion - link back to key theoretical parts of literature review and comment on application of the two typologies. Sum up; identify limitations and flag up further research – provide note/link to the research team for interest in longitudinal study work.

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APPENDIX A - Housing Market Data

Property sales

In the 2008 calendar year, there were 101 sales of dwellings in South Bank. This level of sales represents 4.3% of the total number of dwellings in the area – higher than the comparator areas, where sales were equivalent to under 3% of dwellings. The majority of South Bank sales (73%) were cash transactions, rather than mortgage-based, roughly the opposite of the position in comparator areas. This may be because the housing is relatively cheap to buy: the median house price was £43,500, as opposed to £115,000 in Redcar & Cleveland; the figures for the mean were £50,500 and £125,666, respectively. Semi-detached houses sell for substantially more than terraces, although there are relatively few in the area: the median for a semi-detached dwelling is £81,764, against £40,000 for a terrace house.

This situation has improved since 2003, when the median selling price was only £19,773 (covering 118 sales). This was equivalent to 27% of the Redcar & Cleveland average (£72,950), whereas by 2008 this figure had increased to 37%. The total number of sales peaked during 2004-06 (at just under 200 annually).

As of March 2007 (the latest period for which data for South Bank is available), 273 dwellings were vacant, equivalent to 11% of the total number of dwellings. This is substantially higher than for comparator areas, where around 4% of dwellings were vacant. Around half of these vacancies (132) were classified as long-term, i.e. vacant for over twelve months.

As of 2008, there were 12 vacant commercial/industrial sites in South Bank suitable for redevelopment. Three of these sites are in Skippers Lane, and four on Tilbury Road. Only one site was suitable for housing. Four had no current planning status, the rest were either allocated in the local plan or in the planning permission process. Several sites had been vacant for some time – four of the twelve were first notified in 1998, four in 2001, and one in 2004. The remaining three were newly notified in 2008.

South Bank sales and lettings snapshot, 15th June 2010

(Source: rightmove.co.uk)

All properties for sale in the regeneration area:

Street	Type	Notes	Asking price (£)
Steele Crescent	3 bed semi	Good repair/décor	69,950
Bevanlee Road	2 bed terrace	'Needs full refurbishment'	37,500 (fixed price)
Normanby Road	3 bed semi	Good repair/décor	82,000
King Street	2 bed terrace	Newly refurbished	59,950
King Street	3 bed end terrace	Tenanted	59,000
South Terrace	2 bed terrace	Needs modernisation	36,995
South Terrace	2 bed terrace	'One of the more popular roads in South Bank'	46,950
South Terrace	2 bed terrace		39,950

Cromwell Road	3 bed terrace		35,000
Cromwell Road	3 bed terrace	'Development opportunity' House next door is boarded up	14,000
Shinwell Crescent	2 bed terrace	'Fully refurbished'	46,975
Beech Grove	4 bed semi	To the south of the area	149,950

All rentals in area:

South Terrace, 2 bed terrace, £450pcm
Hampden Street, 2 bed terrace, £400pcm
Hampden Street, 2 bed terrace, £340pcm

Low demand for local housing was described as a key local problem, especially in relation to the street houses. This was thought to be largely due to changes in the housing market such as the high availability of new build housing, which is more attractive to first time buyers than old, small terraced houses, some of which have only one bedroom, and most of which are without gardens (there are some terraces in the area with front gardens, and these are all fully occupied). Several participants made the point that some of the housing that has been – or is about to be – demolished is of good quality and condition, even though it is old. However, no one wants to live there.

One new housing development, built by Ben Bailey Homes on the boundary of South Bank and Grangetown, has performed very poorly. Approximately 80 2/3 bed units remain unsold over 2 years after they first went on sale. Their sale prices were in the region of £67 - £90k. A local RSL did some market research near the new homes. People from outside the area were coming to view the properties and often didn't even stop – once they saw the surrounding area (CCTV cameras, burnt out and void properties, etc). New build properties in neighbouring Grangetown are only suitable for the local market, and the developer was naive to think they were going to sell well. A local RSL was offered the units by the developer at a heavily discounted price but declined to buy them due to concerns about their type and build quality. This development has been an abject failure and demonstrates the risks in developing new builds in an area like South Bank.

An issue was raised relating to the type of housing available in the surrounding area, and specifically the shortage of sheltered housing or bungalows for older people. Perhaps the developer would have been better advised to carry out more thorough market research and to build units of better quality for older people.