Housing Segregation in Britain; lessons from policy histories

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Abstract

Persistent segregation in deprived inner areas of British cities is sometimes seen as both a symptom and a cause of ethnic inequalities, and as an indicator of the failure of minority ethnic groups to integrate into wider society. This paper takes an historical perspective, tracing the shifting emphases of political discourses and policy approaches to minority ethnic residential segregation and inclusion, and setting these alongside broader understandings of governmental social control and regulation. We reflect on episodes of post-1945 intervention into migrants' settlement patterns and housing circumstances, and highlight key problematic experiences associated with certain kinds of 'top-down' interventions. Neither demolitions nor dispersal are very likely to generate social integration, unless they reflect and reinforce the positive adaptation strategies that minority ethnic households already tend to pursue. The keys to constructive social development lie primarily outside the realms of housing renewal, and generally beyond governmental strategies for social engineering focused upon localities.

Key words: ethnic minority, integration, renewal; history.

Please Note

This presentation draws upon our earlier writings, but also relates closely to a paper presently being considered by a journal. Please do not quote directly from it without permission, as it is subject to amendment and any necessary correction of errors.
We include in this version a set of boxes containing summaries of key points, and these will be used to support the spoken presentation.

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Introduction

BOX 2

Focus & coverage of the paper

An historical perspective. This cannot be comprehensive, but the aim is to place recent concerns about ethnic clustering in a wider frame.

The paper notes that changes in ethnic residential patterns & housing disadvantage have been complex & are ongoing, with competing interpretations available.

We draw on experiences of established post-war BME groups, but also briefly mention 'newer' migrants & refugees.

We review the shifting emphases of UK political discourses & policy approaches related to minority ethnic residential segregation & inclusion, & reflect on post-1945 interventions. Ethnic spatial concentration has often been conceptualised negatively.

The paper adds two sub-themes that may be slightly more innovative for contemporary debates on ethnic relations & neighbourhood policies.

Black and minority ethnic spatial concentration and segregation in Britain have long been conceptualised negatively. Persistent separation of minority groups into deprived areas is thus seen as both a symptom and cause of ethnic inequalities, and as an indicator of the failure of minorities to integrate into wider society. Britain, however, has an uneven history of policy interventions designed to disperse ethnic populations, and relatively few examples of formal housing or urban policies that could be termed de-segregationist. There have nevertheless been attempts to 'engineer' a social mix through housing and urban renewal, and some specific policy initiatives to address so-called 'unacceptable' levels of ethnic segregation. The latter found their most recent expression in the reports of the Community Cohesion Review Team (2001) and Community Cohesion Panel (2004), which called for the 'break down' of the ethnic segregation supposedly implicated in the development of 'parallel lives' between British Asian and white people over several decades.

This paper takes an historical perspective, reviewing the shifting emphases of UK political discourses and policy approaches related to minority ethnic residential segregation and inclusion, and reflecting on post-1945 interventions in settlement patterns and housing circumstances. Although the historical account cannot be comprehensive, it enables us to identify some intellectual and political underpinnings of neighbourhood strategies, and thereby to place recent concerns and discourses about ethnic clustering within a wider frame.

BOX 3

Two additional sub-themes or claims

First; an understanding of UK interventions around ethnicity benefits from a historical overview of renewal and social control.

This should include but go beyond 'race' & segregation.

Responses to ethnic concentration can be placed historically within or alongside a broader set of strategies, ongoing beliefs, & practice repertoires, linked to social control & social engineering.

We note links with social control across diverse domains of 'difference' & categorisation (for theorists this could be taken further; cf Harrison with Davis, 2001, on 'social regulation', structure and human agency).

Second; lessons & reservations from broader policy history may be applicable to present strategies on ethnic clustering.

The paper's central themes highlight ethnicity and change, but two additional linked sub-themes or hypotheses also help shape this review. One is that an understanding of UK interventions around ethnicity will benefit from a historical overview of renewal that includes but goes beyond 'race' and segregation. Thus mainstream reactions to ethnic concentration can be located within or alongside a broader set of strategies, ongoing beliefs and practice repertoires linked to social control and social engineering. The other hypothesis is that lessons applicable to present strategies can be learned from this broader policy history. Here we seek to generate insights to inform renewal policies focused on neighbourhoods with ethnic clustering. For practical purposes we deploy the term 'BME' (black minority ethnic) below, this being the most commonly used contemporary descriptor for UK migrants and minorities.

The period of our review encompasses significant changes in housing systems, discursive and institutional contexts of immigration, and the character of BME communities. The changes have been touched upon previously by many authors (for instance Harrison et al., 2005), so we need make swift reference only to three trends. First, the postwar housing market underwent major restructuring, moving it from a predominantly private rental market in the 1950s to nearly 80 per cent owner occupation now. Meanwhile, by the close of the 1970s, growth and investment for local authority social rented housing was ending, with the effects of ongoing processes of residualisation increasingly evident through the following decades. Policy interventions since 1979 have taken place in an increasingly neo-liberal, privatized and commodified

environment. Second, successive pieces of increasingly robust race relations legislation have been enacted since the mid-1960s, outlawing both direct and indirect discrimination. The political and policy discourse has shifted from one that was assimilationist in tone to multiculturalist (although some would argue that assimilationist discourses have resurfaced in the light of the 'war on terror' and fears of national disunity in twenty-first century Britain). Third, BME populations are maturing, and becoming increasingly diverse in terms of housing conditions, settlement patterns, housing market experiences and life-chances. In addition, the earlier post-war migrants from the Indian sub-continent and West Indies have been joined by successive waves of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers. This has brought increasing diversity of status, social entitlement, housing experience, and demand, and has implications for community relations.

The paper begins with a brief portrait of ethnic segregation and housing disadvantage in Britain, and notes competing interpretations of the distinctive patterns. Given its historical perspective, our discussion focuses primarily on experiences and trajectories of established post-war BME groups, predominantly of South Asian and West Indian origins. Mention is also made, however, of newer migrants and refugees settling in Britain in the twenty-first century. Amongst these, European migrant workers arriving after European Union expansion in 2004 might be expected to be privileged to some extent by their 'whiteness', compared with more visible settled BME groups or refugees from African and Middle Eastern countries. They nevertheless experience high levels of poverty and weak labour market positions putting them at a disadvantage in housing markets, suffer from newcomer and 'outsider' status that promotes spatial concentration, and encounter barriers to housing access which reflect social constructions of their 'acceptability' (McDowell, 2009). It is worth remembering that European ethnic hierarchies are by no means simply about ascribed skin colour, as experiences among Roma and Traveler groups (including UK gypsies) demonstrate, so that other explanatory variables for status are also required.

Trends in UK black and minority ethnic segregation and housing deprivation

The settlement of post-war migrants to Britain from South Asia and the West Indies has been generally characterized by housing deprivation, inner-city concentration, ethnic segregation and racialised inequality (Phillips, 1998). In the earliest stages of post-war settlement in the 1950s and 1960s, poverty, lack of knowledge of housing, and blatant racist discrimination meant that newly arriving migrants usually had little choice but to rent or buy sub-standard accommodation at the bottom end of the private market. Racist discrimination hindered access to social housing in the 1960s, gave rise to direct and indirect discriminatory allocations practices in the 1970s and 1980s, and resulted in 'racial steering' and limited financing options in the private sectors (see, for example, Harrison & Stevens, 1981; Phillips & Karn, 1992; Sarre et al., 1989; CRE 1984, 1985, 1988). This led to over-representation of minority ethnic groups in the least popular and most run-down social housing, and in areas of cheap, often sub-standard private accommodation. Indices of dissimilarity, which calculate the proportion of an ethnic group that would have to move to produce an even distribution, provide insights into the intensity of ethnic segregation at the time. Indices of 70-80 (at ward level) were commonly reported for immigrant reception areas in the late 1970s (Cater & Jones, 1979), while Peach (1996) reported similarly high levels for Asian groups in the 1980s.

Today there is much greater diversity in housing experiences and outcomes for Britain's BME groups, and a changing geography of residence (see Harrison et al., 2005, for fuller comment). The 2001 census indicates that all minority ethnic groups (but especially the Black-Caribbeans) are now well represented in social housing, and access to finance and information has greatly improved for those searching in the private sector. Some groups (particularly UK Indians) are experiencing suburbanization, there is growing generational and class differentiation within all the established BME populations, and indicators of dissimilarity now vary considerably between different ethnic groups (Finney & Simpson, 2009). Experiences of segregation and housing deprivation nevertheless persist for many. Disproportionate numbers of BME households face socio-economic disadvantage, occupy poor, overcrowded housing and, according to the English House Condition Survey of 2001, nearly three times as many BME as white households live in districts with multiple problems of environmental quality, socio-economic deprivation and over-burdened or under-resourced services.

BOX 5

Debates & policies on clustering and deprivation

Arguments about causation may debate choice versus constraint, & the power of individual agency versus institutional discrimination. However, we favour acknowledging effects of multiple processes.

Discursive positions & strategic interventions of policy-makers have shifted in emphases. Some early post-war initiatives – including immigrant dispersal – targeted immigrants as the cause of ethnic segregation.

This was gradually superseded by policy directed more at institutional barriers, with development of a 'race equality & diversity' housing agenda within a wider multiculturalist approach.

Recently, there has been some re-apportioning of blame to BME communities in policy discourses, alongside contentious claims under a 'community cohesion' banner about so-called 'parallel lives' of ethnic & religious groups.

Researchers examining causes of minority ethnic housing concentration, segregation and deprivation have long debated the salience of minority ethnic choice versus constraint, and the power of individual agency versus institutional discrimination in shaping British ethnic geographies (for a review see Phillips, 2007). Many academics have come to recognize the contribution of multiple processes at any one point in time. As we will see, however, the discursive positions and strategic interventions of policy-makers have tended to shift in emphasis over the decades. Some early post-war

initiatives – which included immigrant dispersal – targeted immigrants as the cause of ethnic segregation. This policy emphasis was gradually superseded through the 1980s and 1990s, by one more directed at white hostility and institutional barriers to minority ethnic social and spatial mobility, as well as strategies for neighbourhood renewal. This period saw development of a 'race equality and diversity' housing agenda, which has been sustained within the context of a wider multiculturalist regime (Harrison et al., 2005). Nevertheless, we are now once again seeing some re-apportioning of blame to BME communities in policy discourses. This reflects a new historical moment in which culturalist interpretations of ethnic segregation and references to 'desegregation' have re-gained prominence; a discourse fuelled by contentious debates about the so-called 'parallel lives' of ethnic and religious populations. The following sections explore these shifts and historical moments in more detail.

Tackling segregation and clustering through dispersal

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BOX 6

Tackling segregation through dispersal

Early post-war interventions in the settlement of migrants from Britain's former colonies were preoccupied with managing the 'immigrant problem', and protecting the indigenous population from perceived harmful effects of 'alien others'.

There were ideas about voluntary dispersal as a means of improving housing conditions, assisting integration, & relieving pressure on welfare services.

Dispersal ideas were put into effect in the late 1960s and early 1970s in national policies for refugees, and again more recently. These planned dispersals seem to have had limited success.

National dispersal policies were mirrored by local attempts to disperse BME groups *within* urban areas (not refugees). Key aims were to reduce visibility, & minimise the impact of ethnic clustering on the white population, rather than improve the life-chances of the minorities. This affected social rented housing allocations.

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Early post-war policy interventions in the settlement of new migrants from Britain's former colonies were preoccupied with managing the 'immigrant problem', and protecting the indigenous population from perceived harmful effects of those seen as alien 'others'. The political discourse of the time focused on the potential for increased crime and disease associated with ethnic segregation, and the possible negative impact of migration on the British way of life (Smith, 1989). Influential independent reports by Rose and associates (1969) and Cullingworth (1969) reinforced contemporary negative representations of immigrants, and encouraged ideas about their voluntary dispersal as

a means of improving housing conditions, assisting integration, and relieving pressure on welfare services. Dispersal ideas were put into effect in the late 1960s and early 1970s in various national and local policies.

The first notable national intervention was the planned dispersal of East African Asian refugees in the early 1970s. These newcomers were directed away from cities with established Asian populations (e.g. Leicester, which was designated a 'red area') to places with few visible BME groups ('green' areas). This national policy was supported by local efforts, as 'red areas' mounted campaigns to deter refugees from coming to their localities. The policy aims were two-fold; to spread the 'burden' of resource allocation, and to avoid accusations from the indigenous white population of the 'favourable treatment' of Asians in housing and welfare provision (Bristow, 1976).

The principle of spreading the burden re-surfaced in subsequent refugee settlement schemes, notably the dispersal of Vietnamese 'boat people' in the late 1970s and 1980s (Robinson et al., 2003; Bloch & Schuster, 2005), and government's current programme of asylum seeker dispersal (Phillips, 2006a). The success of Britain's national dispersal programmes, however, has been limited. Geographical dispersal of the East African Asian population was short-lived, and within a few years most of these refugees had gravitated to established Asian communities in inner areas of cities like Leicester. The fate of the current asylum seeker dispersal programme, which seeks to disperse newcomers away from areas of BME concentration in London and the South-East of England, appears to be similar. Once asylum seekers receive a positive decision on their refugee status, they are free to move where they wish. About half relocate to the south-east to join established communities with which they feel an affinity (Phillips, 2006a).

National dispersal policies have been mirrored by some local attempts to disperse black and minority ethnic groups *within* urban areas. The prime objectives of these policies were, once again, to reduce the visibility of black and minority ethnic households, and to minimise their impact on the white population, rather than improve the life-chances of the minorities. Henderson and Karn's (1987) study of Birmingham provides the best documented example of this sort of initiative. Birmingham's council housing department operated a formal policy of dispersal through its housing allocation system between 1969 and 1975. In this case, not more than one in six properties in a block could be allocated to a black person. The housing department justified its policy in terms of (1) spreading the burden on resources, (2) 'racial' integration (although there was no evidence at the time that dispersal aided integration), and (3) objections from white tenants about living amongst too many black people.

Many local housing authorities undoubtedly operated ad hoc dispersal practices of a more informal but routine nature well into the 1970s, even though these were discriminatory under the terms of the 1968 Race Relations Act (Phillips & Karn, 1989).

Birmingham's policy stood out because it was formally embedded in the allocation system, and contravened the spirit of earlier reports that had advocated *voluntary* dispersal. Birmingham's formal dispersal policy was finally suspended in 1975, following a challenge in the courts, and – as the more anti-racist era of the 1980s dawned – dispersal as a solution to segregation fell out of favour more generally.

BOX 7

Recognising limitations and shifting the focus

Dispersal thinking of the 1960s/1970s failed fully to acknowledge the preferences of minority groups to live close to one another, advantages from this, or constraints on movement into non-traditional areas.

Through the 1980s/1990s, policy concerns were shifting towards more directly improving housing opportunities & conditions for BME households. White-run institutions gradually came under more scrutiny, via ethnic monitoring, studies & audits.

Today, the 'race equality & diversity agenda' in housing seeks to remove discriminatory barriers, meet culturally specific needs, & open up pathways through widening choices.

One goal is to facilitate movement into a wider range of neighbourhoods. This does not remove constraints of poverty that bind many households to poor areas. Neither does it remove the legacy of discrimination, which has helped cement attachments to inner city areas (where community relationships & institutions have been created).

Britain's dispersal policies of the 1960s and 1970s can be seen as products of their time, and reflected a rather simplistic conceptualization of the causes of segregation. They failed fully to recognise the preferences of minority ethnic groups to live close to one another, the social capital derived from this, and the very real constraints on movement into non-traditional areas. By the 1980s, the policy direction was shifting towards ameliorating the poor conditions of BME households (generally through area based schemes, as explored below), rather than protecting the interests of whites. White-run institutions implicated in the production and reproduction of racialised inequalities gradually came under more scrutiny, through ethnic monitoring and a variety of studies and audits. Today, the 'race equality and diversity agenda' in housing seeks to remove discriminatory barriers, meet culturally specific housing needs, and open up new housing pathways by empowering minorities to make wider choices (see Harrison et al., 2005). One objective is to facilitate BME movement into a more diverse range of neighbourhoods and, in the process, bring about greater ethnic mixing. It needs to be recognised, however, that this does not remove constraints of poverty, which bind many BME households to poorer areas. Neither does it remove the legacy

of discrimination which has helped cement BME people's attachments to (often poor) inner city areas, where they have built community relationships and institutions.

Tackling ethnic segregation & deprivation through urban renewal

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The development of urban interventions/renewal post-1945, and the role of 'race'

Urban renewal policy development has gone through many stages.

There was the rise & fall of large-scale housing demolition & reconstruction programmes from the 1950s through to the mid-1970s; and a series of other varying interventions into inner areas from the 1960s onwards (targeting deprivations or low economic status).

Historically, 'race' has sometimes played prominent roles in stimulating inner area policies (or in their legitimation).

BUT there is little evidence from British literature to match US experience of 'racial' de-concentration policies, or the directly racialised nature of urban renewal.

At the same time, while BME groups might have been expected to be major beneficiaries of investment in area regeneration, evidence of gains was limited.

Official goals have generally been set in 'neutral' terms; not tied specifically to BME groups, but to deprived & deteriorating places.

Despite incorporation of a range of interests into policy implementation, BME groups made only limited gains in terms of shaping the agenda or growth of assets.

Government has concerned itself frequently since the 1960s with inner city and old industrial urban areas where BME groups live. Policies have particularly sought to combat deprivation, improve life-chances, enhance mobility, and assist community relations by focusing resources through area-based strategies. The tradition over the decades has been to set targets in largely 'neutral' terms, not tied specifically to minorities but to deprived and deteriorating neighbourhoods. Although there have seldom been enough data to enable a clear appraisal of the impact of urban renewal schemes on BME households (see Harrison with Phillips, 2003), a synthesis of available evidence suggests that the gains for minority ethnic households have not been clear cut.

Policy development has gone through several stages, including the rise and fall of large-scale housing demolition and reconstruction programmes from the 1950s through to the mid-1970s. These clearance schemes attracted criticism for their potential to cause problems to residents, and became linked in public debate with the increasingly unpopular high rise buildings that often constituted the replacement housing. Newer inner area initiatives of the 1960s were generally more concerned with an ameliorative social pathology approach, rooted in accounts of deprivation and social and economic isolation, and a community development philosophy. Although slum clearance remained high on the agenda, policies at this time were also influenced by reactions to political turmoil over racism and potential urban conflicts. Shifts in direction came in the 1970s, with increasing acceptance of economic and structural explanations of urban decline, and a change in emphasis towards urban rehabilitation rather than clearance, although social welfare concerns remained evident during the Labour government period that ended in 1979. Conservative governments subsequently confirmed an ongoing public commitment to the inner cities, but strategies were affected by desires to bring in private capital and contain or cut direct public expenditures.

There then followed some movement in the direction of collaborative partnerships between levels of government and public and private sectors, with an incorporation of a wider range of interests into policy implementation, and explicit competition over resource allocation. In the last stages of Conservative strategy there seemed to be efforts to address problems of compartmentalism, with the setting up of a new Single Regeneration Budget, and from 1994, twenty targeted programmes (including specific urban and housing programmes), were to be brought together to support social and economic regeneration. From 1997, New Labour's goal of tackling 'social exclusion' (SEU, 1998; Cabinet Office, 2000) included a clear geographical focus. It was based on the premise that deprived neighbourhoods, including those with large BME populations, could be 'turned round' through governmental action on employment, child care, crime, drugs, education and public health. As the New Labour period continued, the focus turned to deteriorating housing in specific areas with relatively low market demand, and regeneration and 'market renewal' moved onto the agenda. In areas with significant BME populations, this has been specifically linked to a community cohesion agenda with a de-segregation flavour.

Since BME groups have long been disproportionately concentrated in areas of inadequate or 'unfit' dwellings (those officially viewed as unfit for human habitation in health terms), these vulnerable households should have been major beneficiaries of investment in area regeneration. In the early days of post-war slum clearance, however, areas of black or Asian minority ethnic settlement did not figure strongly in renewal programmes. The implication was that this derived from political expediency related to the rehousing obligations and access to new social rented units that such a strategy would have involved (Jacobs, 1985; Ratcliffe, 1992). Brownill and Darke (1998) argue that while 'race' had often been on the policy agenda, this had usually

been implicit rather than explicit. They also note some patchy performance in specifying strategies to benefit and involve minority ethnic communities, and some reduction in resources directed to minority groups' needs with the advent of the Single Regeneration Budget. Established white-run bodies frequently seemed to shape the agenda and pre-empt funds. Some black-run enterprises did develop, but often became clients of larger white-run partners, or dependent on short-term discretionary public funding (although see Harrison, 1995, for BME housing associations).

The positive effect of urban renewal on ethnic mixing is dubious, especially as the focus of some later schemes was rehabilitation of housing *in situ.* It was argued that the improvement of existing properties would open up new housing pathways to better areas, and that this would in turn lead to greater social mixing. As a group, South Asians were most likely to benefit because of their high levels of homeownership. However, the impact of renewal on house prices and asset ownership has been mixed and varied between localities, depending on conditions in local housing markets. Research in Birmingham suggests that renewal schemes in the 1990s had little direct impact on prices, although they did help sustain the local market, which increased prospects of selling without significant house price inflation (Groves & Niner, 1998). This apparently had the advantage of improving living conditions without the risk of gentrification and displacement of the local population, but did not significantly help mobility between areas. There is some evidence from Bradford that long-term inner city minority ethnic homeowners have seen their property values appreciate partly as a result of renewal (Bradford Trident, 2008), but many others have seen the differential in the quality and value of inner city and suburban properties increase, and the prospect of moving up the housing ladder and out to better areas recede further. Similar findings emerged from focus groups conducted by one of the present authors in the Oldham and Rochdale Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder areas in 2006. Here, some Asian homeowners in regenerated inner areas still felt that the price gap between inner and outer city properties was a major stumbling block to their mobility (Simpson et al., 2007).

Structural and cosmetic improvements to housing also do little to lift their owners out of poverty; issues of affordability, maintenance, heating costs, etc. remain. A survey by Ratcliffe (1996) of nearly 1,000 Bradford BME households in areas destined for renewal highlighted the great depth of poverty amongst Muslim households living in extremely poor quality housing in the inner city (half had no-one in full-time work), and its negative impact on property upkeep. Groves and Niner's (1998) research in multi-ethnic areas of Birmingham found that publicly funded renewal work did not stimulate further investment and improvements by home owners, because of affordability problems. Grant take-up by BME households in areas destined for renewal could be poor, especially if owners have had to make additional investments themselves as part of the conditions of the grant. More generally, we can note that governments from the late 1980s onwards showed lessened enthusiasm for large-scale national programmes of grant support (albeit with exceptions linked to particular needs), and ideas about

governments not responding to so-called 'grant dependency' eventually began to influence official rhetoric.

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BOX 9

Tackling ethnic segregation & deprivation through urban renewal; some further critical points

Although de-segregation (or de-concentration) has not been a specific programme objective, demolition & re-housing could have effects in that direction. This has brought some resistance from communities, & resentment from those dispersed or displaced.

Controversy over demolition & its impact on community and low income groups re-surfaced over the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder programme, implemented in nine areas of 'housing market decline' in England.

There are resonances here with the negative effects of slum clearance on (white) households in earlier decades (displacement, loss of economic & cultural capital, weak democratic processes, etc.).

HMR might have strong implications for BME (especially British Muslim) populations, given the nature of owner-occupation, local ties, & threats of harassment elsewhere.

Questions of ethnic mix may have moved up the policy agenda, alongside other themes such as widening housing options & residential mobility. HMR has potential to be linked up with the community cohesion agenda (and its de-segregation aspirations), in places with substantial BME clustering.

It is doubtful that ethnic mixing & community building can be socially engineered. Residential mobility may be seen largely as a one-way process by Asians & whites.

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Renewal programmes involving demolition in areas of minority ethnic concentration have also brought special challenges, for those targeted by the schemes and for policy-makers. Although de-segregation has never to our knowledge been articulated officially as a specific programme objective, demolition and re-housing might have effects in that direction. This has brought instances of resistance from communities to clearance over the decades, and resentment from others who have been dispersed. For example, proposals for renewal in multi-ethnic Saltley (Birmingham) in 1995/1996, which is home to an established Pakistani population, met with considerable resistance to the possible break-up of the minority community (Phillips & Karn, 1992). This reflected the value of social capital embedded in such areas as well as worries about moving to less secure places as a result of re-housing. In another case study, Phillips and Harrison (2005) reveal the sense of loss amongst African-Caribbean people over the break-up of their

community and established territorial base in the inner city of Bradford in the 1980s. Young men and women participating in focus groups conducted some twenty years after the event referred to the community's loss of identity and feelings of political disempowerment through dispersal. One summed it up, saying: "*We did have pockets of communities and they (the council) broke that up … they tore it apart*". There was a plea to *"stop pepper-potting us around different areas where we can't actually link up with our own people"*. A perception of lack of consultation and broken promises about the re-housing of the dispersed African-Caribbean community brought resentment amongst some focus group participants, and a sense of betrayal that is still part of the community narrative today. Whilst arising from small-scale fieldwork, these findings were nonetheless reminiscent of the sense of grief about urban renewal first noted in writings by scholars from the USA some decades ago (see Fried, 1967).

Controversy over housing demolition and its impact on community has recently re-surfaced in the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder programme implemented in nine areas of housing market decline in England (DTLR 2002). This programme aims to regenerate 'failing' neighbourhoods and housing markets as part of a process of local and regional economic rejuvenation, although intertwined with this economic enterprise is a wider agenda of social regeneration and improved 'social mix'. Critics of the HMR programme, such as Allen (2008) and Cameron (2003; 2006), have highlighted its negative consequences for low-income groups, as increasing privatization brings gentrification and the risk of household displacement. Cameron (2006, p.7), for example, argues that "there is little to suggest that Pathfinders, or other market renewal initiatives, will do much to improve the income and economic welfare of existing low-income residents of the neighbourhoods in which they operate", and points to differences between this programme and the community-led 'New Deal for Communities' initiative, with its emphasis on community empowerment and local improvement. Atkinson (2004, p.124) argues that the approach of the Pathfinders has been largely undemocratic and "will destroy existing communities in ways reminiscent of earlier waves of demolition and clearance activity". Protests from white and BME residents at the possible break-up of established communities have nevertheless brought some victories, and demolition proposals have been scaled down over the years.

Concerns over the consequences of neighbourhood revitalization through housing market renewal have particular implications for BME (especially British Muslim) populations, who are over-represented in deprived Pathfinder areas in northern English towns, such as Oldham, Rochdale and Nelson. Here, questions of social mix go beyond class to incorporate ethnicity. These major housing initiatives coincide with national concerns about loss of community cohesion following the 2001 disturbances in some northern cities. Thus, although minority ethnic de-segregation has not been explicitly articulated as a policy objective in multi-racial neighborhoods designated for

housing market renewal, questions of ethnic mix have been pushed up the policy agenda here.

A recent review of the performance of the HMR Pathfinders (Leather et al., 2007) indicates a variable level of commitment to community cohesion as opposed to economic regeneration. Some Pathfinders, such as Oldham and Rochdale, have nevertheless seen the goal of building cohesive, ethnically-mixed communities as integral to their regeneration strategy. Their objective is to tackle segregation by widening housing options and residential mobility, through increasing equality of opportunity and providing support for BME households wanting to move to non-traditional areas. Ideally, policy-makers would wish to attract white residents into revitalised Asian-dominated inner areas, as well as enabling Asians to move outwards to white neighbourhoods. Focus groups conducted with Asian and white residents in 2006, however, found that residential mobility was seen largely as a one-way process by both Asians and whites (Simpson et al., 2007). Most whites could not envisage living in areas they identified as 'Asian', and Asians were, by and large, resigned to this. The reticence of whites was partly due to the unappealing physical environment of the older Asian areas, although there was also some aversion to moving into areas of new-build that they labelled as 'Asian' (Phillips et al., 2008).

The coincidence of a major urban and housing regeneration programme, in the shape of the HMR Pathfinders, and a national community cohesion initiative has provided a significant opportunity for a top-down social intervention in officially-designated ethnically-segregated neighbourhoods. The research referred to immediately above (in Oldham and Rochdale) nevertheless revealed doubts amongst both Asians and whites as to how effectively ethnic mixing and community building could be socially engineered. Typical comments from whites included *"… you can't force community cohesion…"* and *"… community cohesion is for the community and not for politicians*". Perceived stumbling blocks to greater mixing at the neighbourhood level were encapsulated in discussions about feelings of safety and belonging. Entrenched perceptions of racialised difference, alongside claims that one ethnic group did not want to mix with another, surfaced in both Asian and white focus group discussions. For example, one white man recounted his feelings of unease when living in an 'Asian area', saying *"I felt like they didn't want to speak to me".* Meanwhile, a British Pakistani woman said that she felt inhibited from entering 'white areas' because *"They look at you like you're an alien or something".* Thus, for some – especially British Muslim women – there were deeply engrained feelings of vulnerability and being 'out of place'.

Reflections on interventions in neighbourhoods, housing and social integration

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BOX 10

The legacy of perceptions, & the processes of change

Britain's urban & housing policy heritage includes some strongly negative outlooks on neighbourhoods occupied by low income households (white & BME). These views relate to physical environments, family or community failure, deviancy & disorder.

Negative ideas about households penetrated housing policies & practices, & in parts of the post-war period overlapped with racialised concerns about segregation. The 'threat' of the poor or deviant was reinforced by a racist turn in some local political discourses.

Ethnic categorisation often slots into a larger set of status & socio-economic distinctions. Judgemental labels & social control practices have been associated with longstanding class or intra-class demarcations, gender, impairment, & concepts of deviance, as well as ethnicity. There are attempts to influence, contain, micro-manage & discipline behaviours, across neighbourhoods & within households.

The positioning of settled BME groups within wider visions of respectability, class & inferiority has changed, particularly with growth in numbers of middle class minority ethnic households, new laws, & increased acquisition of resources & skills.

Nonetheless, anxieties persist about spatial clustering, as was clear in the community cohesion agenda. This agenda has been challenged strongly.

A neglected line of interpretation is to explore links or parallels between community cohesion ideas & the wider array of discourses about controls over behaviour that have developed in relation to neighbourhoods (as well as more broadly) since the mid-1990s. We can place community cohesion alongside other approaches to social regulation that mix themes of positive support with those of discipline, therapy & containment.

An historical review of discourses and policy approaches on minority ethnic segregation and housing deprivation reveals that Britain's urban and housing policy heritage includes a set of strongly negative ways of thinking about neighbourhoods where low income households (including BME groups) live. Connecting with legacies of anti-urban thinking from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, negative perceptions have often been about physical environment characteristics, but also sometimes family or community failure, threat, deviancy and disorder. These ingredients have penetrated housing policy and practices, and overlapped with racialised concerns about segregation that are rooted in colonial ideologies and deep-seated fears about alien

'others'. A pejorative view emerged in the 1970s of neighbourhoods with substantial clusters of minority ethnic households (Duke, 1970; Jacobs, 1985) and, at the same time, the 'threat' of neighbourhood concentrations of poor or deviant people developed a racist turn in some local political discourses. Birmingham, with its formal dispersal policy, was not alone in casting minority ethnic households amongst the 'less respectable' in council housing access and allocations practices (Phillips, 1998). It is worth emphasizing, however, that single parents and people dependent on social security payments were also stereotyped as 'disreputable' (Henderson & Karn, 1987). Ethnic categorisation has often slotted into a larger set of status and socio-economic distinctions. Judgemental labeling and practices of social control have been associated with longstanding class or intra-class demarcations, gender, impairment, and concepts of deviance, as well as ethnicity. Negative assumptions about households have sustained powerful political drivers to influence, contain, micro-manage and discipline behaviours, across neighbourhoods as well as within households.

The positioning of settled BME groups within wider visions of respectability, class and inferiority has changed substantially over time, particularly with the growth in numbers of middle class minority ethnic households and their increased acquisition of resources and skills. Today, 'moral panic' in Britain is more closely aligned to concerns about housing entitlements, welfare consumption and possible community tensions associated with settlement of white new migrant workers from central and eastern European countries (Amas, 2008). Nonetheless, anxieties persist about spatial clustering of visible minorities, especially British Muslims. With the advent of government's community cohesion agenda following the 2001 urban disturbances in northern England, there was a re-emergence of official perspectives on ethnic clustering that in some ways echoed earlier ideas about assimilation and de-concentration (Community Cohesion Review Team, 2001; Community Cohesion Panel, 2004). The contentious debate around inter-relationships between segregation, social integration and so-called 'parallel lives' at neighbourhood scale has received wide critical attention (for example see Phillips, 2006b; Flint & Robinson, 2008; Finney & Simpson, 2009), and we therefore summarise some key points now.

The government's community cohesion agenda was primarily inspired by worries about geographical segregation, social isolationism, community breakdown, and the potential for new conflict at the neighbourhood level. The assumption was that visible minority ethnic clustering within inner city areas was a 'problem' needing intervention. Minority groups in England were believed to be 'self-segregating' into ethnic and cultural enclaves, thereby damaging wider society. There was an implicit emphasis on minority ethnic change, particularly via minority group de-concentration, rather than adjustment by the majority populations (Phillips, 2006b; Robinson, 2008).

The prevailing political and policy discourse around ethnic segregation and community cohesion has been challenged by several inter-related arguments. First, it seemed that

minority ethnic communities (especially British Asian Muslims) were being blamed for their own exclusion from the social mainstream, while the effects on ethnic mixing of wider structural constraints, racist hostility or anti-Muslim religious hatred were being 'down-played'. Second, rather than resulting from a process of 'self-segregation', there is much evidence to suggest that spatially separated living in low quality housing areas develops through an accumulation of *bounded choices* (Phillips, 2006b; Robinson, 2008). These reflect cultural affiliations and practicalities in terms of support, but also constraints on where minority ethnic people can live. Significantly, minority households perceive some areas as dangerous or unwelcoming, particularly places occupied mainly by white working class groups. Reports have documented events ranging from verbal abuse to violent assault against BME people, and the home is one key target (Chahal, 2005). Concern about harassment sometimes operates alongside weak labour market positions to push minority groups into areas where they have been settled before, exacerbating overcrowding and shortages. This is not to deny the attractions of clustering, but to set alongside these the realities of limited choice. At the same time, the least 'mixed' places, as indicated by the Index of Diversity, are generally those where white people live in large numbers (Stillwell & Phillips, 2006). A third argument has been that in any case social integration does not depend on geographical integration, and housing may not be the best place to intervene. This point was recognized in the report from the independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007, p.119), which pointed out that the challenges relating to integration were not adequately reflected in "a narrow focus on residential segregation". Finally, despite the poor environments of many established areas of minority ethnic settlement, a degree of voluntary geographical segregation amongst households need not necessarily be problematic *in itself*, even if local conditions in other respects are disadvantageous.

One line of analysis not developed fully by scholars so far is to explore connections or parallels between community cohesion ideas and the wider array of discourses about controls over behaviour that have developed in relation to neighbourhoods (as well as more broadly) since the mid-1990s. The community cohesion enterprise might be interpreted not only in terms of a reconstruction of previous approaches to multi-culturalism, but also as part of a larger pattern of social control and regulation that mixes positive support with disciplinary elements and practices. Elsewhere, the term *disciplinary therapy* has been offered as an identifier to capture the flavour of policy and practice trends running across areas as diverse as sex work, homelessness and the containment of youth behaviours (Harrison & Sanders, 2006). Contemporary concerns to exert social control, and engineer or contain social change, connect firmly with the long legacy of pejorative ideas about people and neighbourhoods touched on above. An understanding of racialisation on its own can neither account for nor adequately chart the character and impact of official discourses over time, although it deserves a firm place within any broader overview.

Conclusions

BOX 11

Learning from the past by being cautious about present options

First, a 'top-down' approach may be problematic, unless it connects with people's aspirations, capacities & costs, & acknowledges potential for diversity amongst households in their needs & reactions to change.

Interventions that disrupt clustering (by forced dispersal, quota strategies in whatever guise, or 'social mixing' through social housing allocation or renewal) should be tested for their impact.

It is not enough to claim that renewal will produce positive economic change for a city or increase integration (howsoever this is being defined), via 'lifting' an area's image or altering tenure balance.

Neither is it likely that dispersal or physical changes in themselves will reduce crime or social problems. Places do not 'cause' crime or economic deprivation, & these phenomena may well reappear elsewhere, while housing disadvantage itself may be manifested in new areas.

Second, Tackling places where minority populations are concentrated does little to alter locational choices exercised by better off mainstream (white) households.

BOX 12

Learning from the past (continued)

Third, community consultation & engagement offer ways to help appraise the impact of change on people's potential housing pathways, household assets, & strategies, across the range of types of households.

Fourth, accounts of racialisation cannot comprehensively describe urban patterings & differentiations. We should review parallels & links with other aspects of 'difference'.

Many groups (not only BME ones) are adversely affected by the sifting into different status neighborhoods & dwellings that occurs through price mechanisms, & by the under-investment in social rented stock that disadvantages those who seek it.

In the UK it would be timely to revisit comparisons & overlaps between minorities & 'the white indigenous mainstream', disaggregating the latter, & taking account of social regulation effects, uneven development, & inequalities amongst white households.

Fifth, neither demolitions & reconstructions nor dispersal seem very likely to generate social integration or other desired social changes, unless they reflect & reinforce positive adaptation strategies that minority households already pursue.

Keys to constructive social development lie primarily outside the realm of housing renewal & associated strategies for social engineering, although increasing the supply of affordable housing might help combat inter-group tensions.

There is little evidence from British literature to match the USA's experience of 'racial' de-concentration policies or the directly racialised nature of urban renewal. Connerly's (2005) study of Birmingham, Alabama, 'the most segregated city in America', shows tight interconnections between racist perspectives, city planning, and the containment or destruction of areas of black settlement. Nonetheless, there is plenty of historical evidence of discriminatory processes in the UK social rented and private housing sectors, while critics still sometimes doubt the depth of government commitment to minority ethnic groups in regeneration programmes. Beazley and Loftman (2001), for example, have commented on urban policy failure in providing benefits to minority communities, and a "fairly bleak" picture for minority ethnic groups in relation to renewal. They argued that in terms of success in securing funding, "the results for BME groups are not good", and barriers remain for voluntary and community organisations in accessing and managing funds (Beazley & Loftman, 2001, pp.38-40). There have been positive gains for BME people from some neighbourhood regeneration activities, but uncertainties remain about 'what works' or does not work (and for whom).

As hypothesised in our introduction, an historical review can indeed help with suggestions about ways forward. First, a 'top-down' approach may be inadequate unless it connects well with people's aspirations, costs and opportunities, and acknowledges potential for diversity amongst households in their needs and reactions to change. Drawing on past experiences of urban renewal, we argue that top-down interventions focusing through substantial changes to physical environments need to be well informed about implications alterations will have when seen from the grass roots. Interventions that disrupt clustering (by forced dispersal, quota strategies in whatever guise, or 'social mixing' through social housing allocation or renewal) should be tested for their impact. UK slum clearance history indicates that large-scale demolition of neighbourhoods and population displacement can undermine households, and have sometimes destroyed communities. It is not enough to claim that renewal will produce positive economic change for a city or increase integration (howsoever this term is being defined), through changing the tenure balance or 'lifting' the area's image. Neither is it valid to argue that dispersal will reduce crime or social problems. Places do not 'cause' crime or economic deprivation, and these phenomena will likely reappear elsewhere, while housing disadvantage itself may be manifested in new areas.

Second, tackling areas where minority populations are concentrated can do little to alter one causative factor of segregation; the locational choices exercised by better off mainstream (white) households. This sentiment was captured by one of the white focus group respondents participating in the Rochdale research reported earlier, when he reflected on new housing developments there:

… you can't force people to mix, unless those communities want to mix, you know. And I think that's the first issue that needs to be addressed. Not just banging up new houses, it's addressing the core issues - like why certain communities don't want to interact.

Widening choices so that low-income minority households can move voluntarily into higher quality areas may be good strategy, but has to be fully resourced. Racialised concerns about ethnic mixing also have to be addressed in order for new communities to be sustainable. Pawson et al. (2006) report that introduction of a 'choice based' lettings system by some social landlords has offered new housing pathways to previously disadvantaged BME households, and resulted in a degree of African-Caribbean and Asian de-concentration. The long-term sustainability of more mixed communities, however, has yet to be assessed.

Third, meaningful community consultation and engagement offers a way to help enable careful appraisal of the impact of change on potential housing pathways, household assets, and strategies across the range of types of households. This applies directly to ongoing regeneration and reconstruction programmes under the Market Renewal Pathfinder banner, as well as to other smaller-scale interventions affecting minority ethnic households and low-income white British households. Chahal (2000) contends that whilst minority ethnic groups were included in a range of urban regeneration programmes in the 1990s, they were not adequately involved in the planning and implementation. We now see greater governmental efforts to draw minority groups (and other 'hard to reach' residents) into area regeneration processes through stronger commitment to community engagement and empowerment (cf CLG, 2007, 2008). There is a growing recognition that – for housing interventions to be successful – people's voices need to be heard, so that action can build on households' own strategies, and barriers can be confronted. This may not be easy to achieve or sustain, however, outside ad hoc short-term projects, and the whole process is complicated by new governance structures associated with the fragmentation of housing provision (Blake et al., 2008).

Fourth, analyses of racialisation cannot comprehensively describe urban patternings and differentiations. Debates on segregation and concentration often fail to explore parallels, links and overlaps with other dimensions of difference. Many groups (and not just ethnic ones) are adversely affected by the sifting of households into different status

neighborhoods and types of dwellings that occurs through the price mechanism, and by the under-investment in social rented stock that disadvantages those who seek occupancy within it. Indeed, it would be timely to revisit comparisons and links between minority groups and 'the white indigenous mainstream', disaggregating the latter more fully, and taking account of uneven development, social regulation, and widening inequalities amongst white households.

Finally, claims about being able to produce social changes through physical interventions should be treated cautiously. If we look to countries with a long history of de-segregation policies, we cannot see much firm evidence that residential dispersal positively impacts on social mixing, integration and upward mobility (Musterd, 2003; Arbaci & Malheiros, 2009). Certainly, UK experience suggests that neither demolitions and reconstructions nor dispersal are very likely to generate social integration, unless they reflect and reinforce positive adaptation strategies and options that minority households already tend to pursue (cf Harrison, 2008). The keys to constructive social development lie primarily outside the realm of housing renewal and associated strategies for social engineering, although increasing the supply of affordable housing, and giving tenants and owners-occupiers more rights of local participation, might help combat inter-group tensions. Integration might be facilitated, particularly, by reducing barriers that minority groups face in their own preferred paths of adaptation into the better parts of the housing market.

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