Problem definition and re-evaluating a policy: the real successes of a regeneration scheme

Abstract

This paper seeks to problematise notions of objective policy evaluation using the techniques of interpretive policy analysis, and use the findings to develop a new evaluation and new proposals for policy improvement. It presents evidence from ethnographic fieldwork on the same set of urban regeneration (or renewal) policies in two Scottish neighbourhoods between 1989 and 2009. The analysis showed that the policy was variously understood as a failure or a success in four different ways: as a failure within the rationality of official evaluation; as a failure because of the stigma in wider society against deprived neighbourhoods; as a failure in some ways by local community activists describing their lived experience through local knowledge; and as a success through local knowledge of the improvements to the physical environment. It demonstrates how policy problem definition and evaluation are closely intertwined and therefore for a policy to be judged a success requires a nuanced understanding of policy problems within their wider social context.

Keywords: regeneration; local knowledge; Scotland; interpretive policy analysis; evaluation

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1. Introduction

This paper adds to an existing literature to show how techniques of interpretive policy analysis can bring new insights into the evaluation of policy. Using interpretive methods, or ethnographic data, in evaluation is not novel (Yanow, 1996) and these techniques have even been used in evaluations commissioned by governments (Sullivan, 2007). However, apart from in a limited number of cases these methods have predominantly remained inside the academy, used to construct critical evaluations countering official evaluations. Governments seek the "gold standard" of randomised controlled trials, or cost-benefit analysis and other methods to produce objective knowledge of a policy intervention (see, for example, the UK Government guide to evaluation, the Magenta Book: Government Social Research Unit, 2007). This article speaks to the divide and debate between interpretive and objectivist methodologies in two ways. Firstly, it reveals similar findings to other interpretive studies: policies are interpreted and therefore evaluated differently from different perspectives and different cultural domains (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Shore & Wright, 1997). By analysing policy from problem-definition, through implementation, to evaluation and back to problem-definition, it highlights how problem-definition and evaluation are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Secondly, this analysis is used to produce an evaluative judgement on the policy in question, neighbourhood regeneration policy, by reimagining problem definition based on the different ways in which policy was variously described as a success and failure.

Ethnographic data is presented from two deprived neighbourhoods[i] that have been subject to successive urban regeneration, or renewal, policies one of which has officially been portrayed as a "failure". Both these neighbourhoods have also been subject to decades of stigmatising, prejudiced attitudes from wider society (Dean & Hastings, 2000; Hastings, 2004). It is argued that the true nature of success and failure of policy within these neighbourhoods can only be understood with a full appreciation of this wider context as this is central to policy problem definition. This stigma affects the way the neighbourhoods are understood as "bad" or "broken" and therefore whether the eventual outcomes of a policy intervention are a success. Because problem definition and evaluation are so intertwined an alternative interpretation of policy success, used by local residents, had been marginalised from the policy debate. By bringing this to the fore the paper concludes by reimaging regeneration policy.

The paper is divided into seven subsequent sections. The first two sections introduce debates regarding the epistemology of policy analysis and evaluation and introduce the concept of interpretive policy analysis and what it can offer evaluation. Sections four and five introduce the wider framework used to structure the analysis of the data and outline the methodology used. The final three sections discuss and analyse the data and draw conclusions applicable for policy evaluation.

2. Evaluation and science

Evaluation is now globally embedded within policy processes. Originating from the rationality project of postwar policy science (Stone, 2002), the development of managerialism in public policy, such as the recent emergence of the outcome-focus, has now made the process an even more important part of policy cycles at all scales of government. In this policy process evaluations require objective knowledge, as understood from a Cartesian epistemology, namely that there is a truth of policy "out there" to be understood (Yanow, 2000; Hatch & Yanow, 2008). In the common policy cycle diagrams used by

organisations, evaluation is the final stage of policy implementation and the policy only continues if it is judged a success based on this objective knowledge. The reality of implementation has repeatedly challenged this idealistic conception. Concepts of "muddling through" and realistic evaluation have been constructed to mould notions of rationality and objectivity to meet the complex realities of policy implementation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Colebatch, 2004).

Within this epistemology evaluation is seen as value-neutral. In more critical approaches to public policy, the growth of evaluative science and associated policy changes is seen as part of the 'policy assemblages' rolling-out global-neoliberalism (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Brenner & Theodore, 2002). The approach used in this paper, although critical, relies on interpretive methodologies revealing a multiplicity of meanings and bringing to the fore knowledges that may be discounted in evaluative processes. As a critique of evaluation it seeks to be simultaneously evaluative. Unless we have an inherent nihilist view of social policy our analysis should derive from 'a desire not only to explain agency performance, but to make it more just, more equitable, more effective' (Yanow, 1996: 26).

3. Interpretive policy analysis as evaluation

The interpretive approach to policy analysis uses an epistemology based on phenomenology and situated, or local knowledge (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Yanow, 2003). This accepts the position that policy is embedded within a social world constructed and reconstructed by social actors (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006). Policy-making then becomes a process of social meaning-making (Yanow, 1996). This approach inherently denies that there is one meaning, a superior or objective meaning, and suggests that meanings are multiple, complex, deep and entwined, akin to the depth and embedded movement of a Jackson Pollock painting (Hatch & Yanow, 2008).

For example, in the implementation of policy itself, meanings are created to make the policy tangible to those implementing it. Yanow (1996) provides the example of using the metaphor of a community centre as a "supermarket" of community services to implement a programme of community development in the context of a culture (Hebrew culture in Israel) which had never had community centres. In the field that is the focus of this paper, urban renewal or regeneration, extended metaphors of decline, degeneration, renewal and regeneration frame policy understanding (Furbey, 1999).

Understanding policy as meaning-making can extend our critical insight into the policy process. The meaning of evaluation has been explored in this way. Colebatch (1995) suggests that evaluation has become a commonly used tool to reinforce organisational hierarchies. The assumptions lying behind evaluation place one part of an organisation in power over the evaluated, collecting "objective" facts of performance and then marshalling these for a final judgement. This insight leads us to understand evaluation pragmatically. Evaluation processes *do* feed into rational models of policy making – the results of evaluation feed back into the policy-making cycle changing what is implemented in the future.

The policy cycle presumes that the inputs that begin the policy intervention are as objective as the rational outputs of evaluation. The discursive work of policy documents allows dominant definitions of the policy problem to be reinforced and enacted through policy implementation (Hastings 2000a; 2000b). This problem definition at the start of the policy process constructs the causal story which frames the acceptability of any one policy solution (Stone, 1989). If evaluation feeds-back into its policy solution, embedding and recreating a problem definition rather than challenging problem definition, then it is continuing the discursive work of policy in creating social meanings, as well as recreating the practical implementation of policy.

Meanings are also developed outwith, or adjacent to the policy, by those target communities that are the subject of the policy. Recipients of a policy programme are not passive patients awaiting receipt of their policy medicine, they are active agents in policy implementation, creating and sharing their own meanings as local knowledge (Yanow, 2003) before, during and after the implementation process. They produce their own evaluations as they understand what has happened around them, interpreted within their own biographies and lived experiences and their own problem definitions (for an example of a local interpretation and experience of another housing policy see: Hyatt, 1997).

The various meanings, myths, metaphors and symbols of local knowledge can be understood collectively as cultural domains, 'linguistic and shared cultural knowledge…used to produce coherent and plausible accounts of social events and social action' (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 99-100). Analysis is then a hermeneutic process of meaning making. As Clifford Geertz suggests, the researcher aims to be in 'a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously' (1974: 43). In this way we can understand both the structural and societal influences that support meanings of success and also other interpretations of policy, possibly counter to official discourses. In analysing policy development and implementation through this hermeneutic device of "thick description" (Geertz, 1974; Geertz, 1993; Yanow, 1996) this approach seeks to bring together and respect different cultural domains and their understandings to develop a new normative basis on which to judge policy efficacy (Flyvbjerg, 1998; 2001).

4. Deprived neighbourhoods and problem definition in regeneration policy

For centuries society has understood and constructed some neighbourhoods as problematic. For example, as slums in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

public hygiene discourse (Hyatt, 1997); or in the exaggerated stigma associated with terms such as "council estate" in England, "housing scheme" in Scotland, or "the projects" in the USA (Wilson, 1997; Hastings, 2004; Hanley, 2007). As Hastings argues, throughout the urbanised West there are neighbourhoods marked 'by a local infamy or a nationally problematic reputation. In any large settlement in the UK there are estates with a reputation such that few people would choose to live there, and many avoid even visiting' (Hastings, 2004: 233). This stigma can be historic, deep rooted and finely grained. It is often reinforced by wider social perceptions such as social class distinctions, or specific myths, language, or spatial understanding in towns and cities, supported by negative media coverage (Tucker, 1966; Robertson, Smyth & McIntosh, 2008; GoWell, 2010).

Policies that target deprived neighbourhoods often reinforce this stigma in their problem definition. The neighbourhood has to be constructed as "degenerate" or broken in some way for regeneration to occur (Furbey, 1999). These policy discourses presume that there is something inherently wrong, or pathological, about these areas that means people who live in them are particularly problematic or at worse feckless. Indeed, analysis of the two policies explored in greater detail in this paper – *New Life for Urban Scotland* (Scottish Office, 1988) and *Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap* (Scottish Executive, 2002) – has suggested that they explain the problems of neighbourhoods as pathological (Hastings, 2000a; Matthews, 2010). In doing so, the residence of specific individuals or groups within these neighbourhoods is understood as a problem to the rest of society to be solved through policy intervention (Rochefort & Cobb, 1993).

Figure 1 begins to represent this, and other meanings, that surround regeneration policy. The words surrounding the "neighbourhood" in the centre of the figure offer different concepts which frame understandings of the deprived neighbourhood. This figure will provide the structure for the rest of the article. So, for example, in the case of regeneration policy as outlined

above, stigma and its antonym normality, combine with the rationality of policy-making and concepts of degeneration and regeneration to understand the neighbourhood in a specifically pathological way.

Throughout the analysis it will be suggested that the concepts in the top left (regeneration, rationality and normality) and bottom right (degeneration, local knowledge and stigma) of the figure dominate problem definition and evaluation and thus how failure and success are then understood. Those in the top left dominate understandings with the cultural domain of policy making (hereafter, the strategic domain) whereas those in the bottom left emerge from the local cultural domain of resident community activists engaging with policy and living with its effects (hereafter, the local domain). It is important to note that although the analysis below emphasises the differences between these domains in their social use they had blurred boundaries. This is especially the case as actors could use the two different domains to understand different aspects of their lived experience. For example, a community activist would understand and describe their lived experience in the local domain but could occasionally elide into describing policy in the strategic domain. This was most notable among officers, who would switch to the local domain when reflecting on their work and lived experience, as opposed to describing policy which was predominantly understood in the strategic domain.

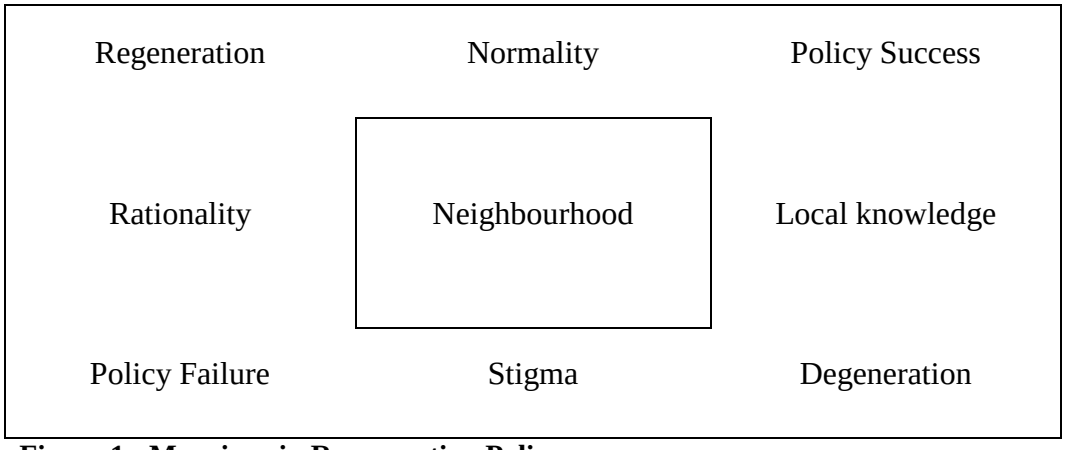

Figure 1 - Meanings in Regeneration Policy

5. Method and policy history

As outlined in section three above, interpretive policy analysis requires in-depth local knowledge of policy implementation gained through the immersion of the researcher within case studies of policy (Yanow, 2003). Case studies allow for the exploration of context and history so particular cases resonate beyond their own specificities to wider cases and theory, as a stone is thrown into water and ripples out across the surface (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 2006). The two case studies in this research were Ferguslie Park, in Paisley, Renfrewshire and Wester Hailes in the City of Edinburgh, both in Scotland. Table 1 outlines the key characteristics of regeneration policy across the thirty year period (1979 – 2009) that will be discussed in the rest of this paper and how each of the case studies relates to these broader policy changes.

Within the two case studies, fieldwork consisted of loosely structured narrative interviews (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) with key participants in public authorities and community groups and local projects, totalling 43 interviews. The fieldwork also used overt participant observation (Gans, 1976) of meetings of community groups and partnership bodies – 44 in total – to understand the everyday processes of delivering public services within a deprived neighbourhood.

Table 1 - Outline of Regeneration Policy Initiatives at Different Spatial Scales

Characteristics of policy approaches **Policy characteristics at different scales**	**Area-based initiatives** • One-off, time-limited initiatives • Geographically bounded • Catalyst funded • Partnerships of local bodies	**Strategic approaches** • Constant effort based on evidence of need • Regional / citywide with local implementation • Partnership approach to funding across public sector • Partnership of public sector agencies at a citywide level
National (Scotland)	Nationally-led policies such as Social Inclusion Partnerships or *New Life for Urban Scotland*; the latter a ten year programme to "turn around" four neighbourhoods. The vast majority of funding was ended in 1999 and the partnerships disbanded.	Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) led by each local authority within guidance produced by the Scottish government[ii]. Given the role of delivering regeneration by the 2002 policy document *Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap* (Scottish Executive, 2002)
Local	**Ferguslie Park, Renfrewshire** – successive local initiatives from 1971 onwards, culminating with the Ferguslie Park Partnership from 1989 – 1998 **Wester Hailes, City of Edinbugh** – some local initiatives from mid-1970s, culminating with the Wester Hailes Partnership from 1989 – 1998 These partnerships were two of the four created by New Life for Urban Scotland	**Renfrewshire** – the Renfrewshire CPP led by the local authority with representation from the local NHS Board, Fire and Rescue Service, Police and the Scottish Government. Nascent local community planning arrangements during fieldwork. **Edinburgh** – the Edinburgh Partnership community planning partnership, again a partnership led by the local authority with more established local arrangements.

6. Understanding policy failure

Stigma and failure

With reference to figure 1, regeneration policy in the two case studies here was understood to be a failure in two ways: as a product of the *stigma* associated with these neighbourhoods and through the *rationality* of policy and evaluation. Turning first to stigma, Ferguslie Park and Wester Hailes had notoriety in similar ways to other deprived neighbourhoods; within wider Paisley the residents of Ferguslie Park were referred to as "Feegies" which entails a suggestion of lawlessness, fecklessness and poverty; for a time in the 1980s Wester Hailes was referred to as "Waster's Hell". In both cases this is a result of historic policy decisions outwith the control of residents.

In Ferguslie Park, in 1942 the Corporation of the Burgh of Paisley chose a number of streets of poor quality slum clearance tenements constructed in the 1930s, "Craigmuir", as an experiment in supervised housing for the most 'incorrigible' tenants of Paisley Corporation. This quickly became a concentration of the poorest tenants who were in rent arrears and who often had multiple individual problems (Paisley CDP, 1978a; 1978b; Clark, 1988). The stigma derived from Craigmuir was exacerbated by the very poor quality of housing constructed in the neighbourhood, with large families sharing inadequate tenement buildings (Figure 2). This stigma made homes in Ferguslie Park difficult to let. This in turn led to the neighbourhood becoming home to those most in housing need and socially marginalised, reinforcing the problems that led to the stigma in the first place. By 1989, the Ferguslie Park Partnership, launched by *New Life for*

Urban Scotland, had ‘tackling the exaggeratedly bad image’ of the neighbourhood as one of its key aims.

Figure 2 - One of the large tenement blocks in Ferguslie Park that housed large families, prior to demolition in the mid-1990s (image courtesy of Ferguslie Park Housing Association)

Wester Hailes, constructed between 1968 and 1972, was the last major local-authority housing estate built in the UK. The neighbourhood was planned to be home to 15,000 affluent, car-owning workers. However, the poor build quality of the tenements and the general poor environment of the 23 high rise blocks of flats meant the area was immediately difficult to let. The neighbourhood became known as a barren, concrete, grey place of poor housing and social problems. The same cycles of vacancy, influx of tenants with high housing need and social stigma that impacted on Ferguslie Park from the late 1960s, impacted on Wester Hailes throughout its history. Like the Ferguslie Park Partnership, the Wester Hailes Partnership sought to normalise the neighbourhood, remove its stigma and ‘to create in Wester

Hailes the life and atmosphere of a small suburban town within the city of Edinburgh' (Wester Hailes Partnership (WHP), 1989: 9). However, even after twenty years of continued policy attention the stigma remained; one resident of Wester Hailes described how more affluent neighbourhoods nearby:

> 'always look doon they look doon the hill at us you know they can be we're in the middle but they're still looking doon the hill at us'.
>
> (Community activist[iii], Wester Hailes)

Figure 3 - Poor environmental quality of Wester Hailes (from WHP, 1989)

As previously mentioned, *New Life for Urban Scotland* pathologised neighbourhoods and their residents as being dependent on the state and lacking their own ability to improve their own situation (table 1; Hastings,

2000a). In this way, it repeated the trend of area-based initiative policies of finding the problem *within* the neighbourhood and apply the policy fix *to* the neighbourhood to bring it back to some presumed "normal" state from which it had fallen (Hall, 1997; Kintrea, 2007). In the case of Ferguslie Park and Wester Hailes the policy was to renew the physical environment, particularly unpopular housing types, so they resembled "normal" neighbourhoods. This policy logic also placed the source of the stigma within the neighbourhood, making it problematic. It was not the prejudices of wider society in Paisley or Edinburgh, or poor maintenance and construction that led to stigmatised views, but something inherent in the neighbourhood itself (Hastings, 2004). The quote above from the community activist in Wester Hailes already demonstrates how the residents, reflecting on their experiences from the local domain, did not share this view of their residence as problematic. The problem was that wider society had an unfair, uninformed view of these neighbourhoods they looked down upon.

In terms of evaluation, this stigma ensured that the *New Life* regeneration policy, or probably any regeneration, could never be a success in either neighbourhood. The stigma would stick no matter what policy solution was applied to the neighbourhood. This was particularly the case for Ferguslie Park which was effectively caught in a double-bind. Because of the regeneration the neighbourhood does have a concentration of local services, such as a sports centre, community centre and new primary school, unlike other similar neighbourhoods in Paisley. The supposed fecklessness of "Feegies" led to a public discourse within Paisley that Ferguslie Park did not deserve any help:

> 'Oh aye that's common knowledge that's common knowledge you get it in the local paper yet something happens they'll go well Ferguslie's had their money they've all x amount.'

As a larger neighbourhood, Wester Hailes had greater physical assets, such as a shopping centre and secondary school with a sports centre, before the regeneration. The investment here left a greater legacy in community projects. These produced the same negative feelings described in Ferguslie Park. The money that these projects received was felt by neighbouring communities to give Wester Hailes an unfair advantage and volunteers dismissively talked about 'the Wester Hailes set' who had their own agenda. Because the policy problem was defined through stigma, and policy was not directed and could not successfully challenge this, any policy solution effectively reinforced the problem of stigma.

Rationality and failure

Exploring the other side of policy failure as represented in figure 1, the neighbourhoods and their regeneration were also understood as a failure within the *rational* process of policy-making. Rational evaluations have dominated policy development in UK regeneration since the first policy, the Urban Programme in 1969 (Atkinson & Moon, 1994). Successive waves of policy have been subject to research and evaluation far in excess of what the small expenditure involved should account for (Edwards, 1997). The official evaluation of *New Life* (CPC, 1999), like evaluations of similar policies UK-wide, showed that it was of minimal success partly because it was inward-looking and failed to tackle the wider social forces that created and reinforced the neighbourhood's deprivation (Hall, 1997; Dabinett, Lawless, Rhodes & Tyler, 2001). The Ferguslie Park and Wester Hailes regeneration was understood as a failure in this way – the policy had succeeded in effecting massive physical renewal, but social change in the neighbourhoods was far less apparent (CPC, 1999).

The answer of Scottish policy-makers, which responded directly to this rational explanation of policy failure, was a more strategic approach to regeneration (Hastings, 2003; Matthews, 2010). This recognised a neighbourhood's role within the wider urban structures and used the resources of the entire public sector to strategically tackle the problems of concentrated disadvantage (Carley & Kirk, 1998). Table 1 illustrates this change in policy reading across the table. The ineffective area-based initiatives were replaced by more effective citywide partnerships. This policy change was implemented in Scotland through *Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap* when Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) took on the role delivering regeneration in 2003, within a broad strategic framework set by the Scottish government (Scottish Executive, 2002; 2006a; Matthews, 2010).

This new rational regeneration policy redefined the policy problem and produced a new definition of failure of the previous regeneration policies. The strategic approach to regeneration taken by CPPs used the collection of objective facts of deprivation, through geographical indices of administrative and national survey data (for example the decennial census and annual Scottish Household Survey: Scottish Executive, 2006b) to define the policy problem and target policy where it could make the biggest impact and also tailor the delivery of services to deprived neighbourhoods (Noble, Wright, Smith & Dibben, 2006). The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) applied this in Scotland. In the second edition of the index, published in 2006, one datazone[iv] in Ferguslie Park came "bottom" of the index, ranked number one of 6,505. It was a "problem" neighbourhood of long-term unemployment, poor health and low educational attainment. The new objective knowledge of deprivation revealed two decades of regeneration in Ferguslie Park to be a failure.

In wider society, this public announcement continued to be interpreted in stigmatised terms. The BBC news called it ‘Scotland's most deprived area’; another national newspaper referred to the neighbourhood as ‘the poorest’ in Scotland (BBC News, 2006, The Scotsman, 2006). Neither of these descriptions was correct, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next section. While the new Scottish regeneration policy aimed reject explanations based on stigma and prejudice in favour of the facts of the SIMD, the interpretation of the outputs of this policy in wider society undermined this, continuing the prejudice towards some neighbourhoods.

7. Understanding policy success

Local knowledge and success

Moving round to the right hand side of figure 1 (degeneration, local knowledge and stigma) problem definition, implementation and evaluation in regeneration policy was understood quite differently through the local domain of community activists and workers within both neighbourhoods. These individuals comprehended their experiences of policy through their shared biographies, rather than the official narratives of evaluation or the stigma of wider society.

Being resident in these neighbourhoods for the vast majority of their lives (30-40 years in most cases) they understood there were problems with their neighbourhood, but these were not problems of their residence, rather they were problems of poor management and inadequate service provision. For example, in a 1983 film, *The Huts*, made for Channel 4 on UK television, the residents of Wester Hailes satirically recreate the scene of housing officer visiting a pensioner who has not paid her rent. The tenant explains she has not paid because of the numerous problems with her flat that have

not been fixed: gaps in the windows frames, doors that will not close, skirting boards coming away from the wall and damp. The housing officer replies that it is "just the block settling" or "normal moisture build-up" as the tenant reels off her many problems. Through self-organised community action within the domestic sphere (Jupp, 2008) residents of both neighbourhoods had fought for decades for policy interventions to improve their lives, their communities, their homes and their neighbourhoods (Paisley CDP, 1978d; Gilloran, 1983; Collins, 1991; Hastings, McArthur & McGregor, 1994).

This activity, and the problem definition that it arose from, was understood within a wider story of social injustice: other "good" neighbourhoods got decent services, whereas the stigma towards Ferguslie Park and Wester Hailes meant they got poor services. Continued problems with cleaning and refuse collection to this day meant this resentment was still felt 25 years later. The residents of Ferguslie Park still feel the historic stigma of the Craigmuir supervised housing which ended in the 1960s, openly discussed in public meetings by other Paisley residents and referred to as the "back sneddon". Community activists still perceive Ferguslie Park to be a neighbourhood where the Council wants to house "undesirables". Because of this, these activist feel they're: 'fightin' everything we're fightin' against drugs we're fightin' against anti-social behaviour everythin's piling up on tap of us' (Community activist, Ferguslie Park).

This activism, the fightin', highlights the key difference between the problem definition of policy discourses and tools such as indices of deprivation, the objects of the strategic domain, and problems as understood through the local domain. From the perspective of the local domain the problem was the lack of a concerted response to difficulties experienced on a daily basis. As one exasperated community activist in Ferguslie Park

described: '[regeneration] it's not the answer for the people who live here twenty four seven there has to be more what I don't know but there has to be more'. The difference between the strategic domain of policy and the local domain of lived experience meant activists pointedly rejected the labels of regeneration policy: in meetings with local officials they described living in a "so-called deprived area" – with air quotes – or would rehearse policy discourse used in the past such as 'under-privileged' in a dismissive tone, ironically undermining decades of policy that had meant to "solve" the problems they experienced.

Within the local domain, the evaluation of the regeneration delivered by the two partnerships between 1989 and 1999 was therefore quite different. Although the regeneration carried out by both partnerships was recognised as a "broken promise" due to continued problems of concentrated deprivation, the physical renewal that did occur (figures 4 and 5) was seen as an eventual recognition of some of the residents' needs – a success. Before the partnerships began their work, the quality of the housing in both neighbourhoods was some of the worst in the UK (Paisley CDP, 1978c; Gilloran, 1983 and figures 2 and 3). Resident activists in both neighbourhoods had been fighting with their landlord, the local District Councils, for many decades when regeneration began in the 1990s. Community based housing associations or cooperatives had already emerged out of existing community activism (Kintrea, 1996) and were harnessed by the new regeneration partnerships to deliver physical transformation. As explained by one Wester Hailes' resident:

> 'to a certain degree we were almost instrumental in getting a lot of the high flats demolished, building decent housing for people you know houses that people wanted tae live in and I think that's where the biggest changes came'

This feeling that the community 'were almost instrumental' was a vital part of them understanding regeneration as a success. This was also the view in Ferguslie Park, as expressed by someone heavily involved in the housing association:

> 'I would argue that New Life for Urban Scotland pretty much did what it said on the tin…when you look at the condition o' the housing before New Life it was pretty intolerable so you've got a high standard o' housing here'.

In its own terms, to renew the housing stock as agreed with the community in the regeneration strategies (FPP, 1989; WHP, 1989), *New Life* was a successful policy.

This feeling of success was supported because the partnerships in both neighbourhoods heavily engaged with existing community groups, with varying success (Hastings, McArthur & McGregor, 1996; Collins, 1999). Although relationships between the regeneration partnerships body and community groups could be antagonistic, this made the relationship more meaningful (Barnes, 2008) and when stories of this relationship were recalled they were a prominent part of residents' biographies, a central part of their local domain. Activist's biographies began with small-scale immediate acts to improve their lives or neighbourhood: complaining to a local Councillor; getting involved with a tenants' association through relatives or friends; or running summer childcare groups to help lone parents. For some this was extended to heavy involvement in regeneration partnerships and the creation of a new neighbourhood. For the majority, the regeneration was a continuation, at a distance, of their own small activities helping to improve the neighbourhood. These experiences were therefore understood as part of the 'fightin'' described by the Ferguslie Park resident above.

Figure 4 - New housing in Ferguslie Park following the regeneration programme
(image courtesy of Ferguslie park Housing Association)

Figure 5 - Wester Hailes in 2008, with renovated and new housing and the reopened canal (author's own)

This meant the physical regeneration could be interpreted as a “success” by residents. They could enjoy their new homes rather than tirelessly complain

to get their homes improved. Community engagement was particularly problematic in Ferguslie Park due to local politics, continuing stigma, and historical friction (Collins, 1999). However, even the most cynical of activists in Ferguslie Park had to admit that although 'the place is worse off noo than it was before they started urban regeneration, it's an absolute nightmare…we have some lovely new housing'.

Returning to the publication of SIMD 2006 described in the previous section, and Ferguslie Park's datazone ranked number one, will conclude this section. This story highlight the difference between the two corners of figure 1 and how the strategic and local cultural domains, dominated by rationality and local knowledge respectively, can variously understand the same issue as a success or a failure. When the administrative data for this particularly datazone was collected the area contained low-demand tenement flats. As part of a plan agreed in 2002 to diversify housing stock further they had been earmarked for demolition (Renfrewshire Council, 2002). Very few people lived there, and those who were willing to take these unsecure tenancies were those in greatest housing need, with a coincidence of individual problems. This was the local knowledge of the reality of 'the poorest' community in Scotland which could not be revealed by administrative data

The fieldwork for this research was carried out in 2008, and two years on the anger of the community regarding SIMD 2006 was palpable:

> 'then you read in the paper to say this place stinks you know it's worse than it ever was and a' the rest o' it that's only because they knocked doon places in Glasgae that were above us so it made look like we had actually got worse instead o' better but the statistics are the cruellest thing that have ever happened to Ferguslie Park 'cause they're no up to the mark ... it's like you cut them aff at the knees

> when you turn round and yer saying this is great it's getting a lot better and then you read that in the paper and everybody goes an' their wee project's getting better see they're sticking wi' their belief you know what I mean so then you get mare people want to get oot o' it do you know what I mean but anyway that's Ferguslie Park'.

Two key points must be highlighted from this quote. Firstly, this resident demonstrates a greater and more nuanced understanding of the *relative* nature of the SIMD and the problem it purports to explain than any of the national media reporting. The result occurred 'only because they knocked doon places in Glasgae that were above us'. Secondly, it reveals another understanding of policy success within the local domain: all those 'wee projects', the daily, domestic exercise of a deep sense of moral duty and social justice are being 'cut…aff at the knees.' Without this fine-grained knowledge of the neighbourhood (including basic things such as the existence of houses) the rational knowledge of policy actually did more harm than good, feeding into ongoing stigma of Ferguslie Park through the news stories referenced above.

8. Conclusion – a new understanding of success in regeneration policy

The evidence above shows that problem definition and evaluation, judgements of policy success and failure, are closely intertwined. The rational policy cycle sees evaluation as an objective act changing problem definition for the better. This happened in this case as the official evaluation, the rational interpretation that ABI-type regeneration policy had failed, was powerful and resulted in dramatic changes to policy (Colebatch, 1995; Dabinett, Lawless, Rhodes & Tyler, 2001). The official evaluation of *New Life for Urban Scotland* (CPC, 1999) formed part of a policy narrative developing across the UK in favour of a strategic approach to regeneration

(Carley & Kirk, 1998) implemented by the UK Government's *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001) and the Scottish Government's *Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the Gap* (Scottish Executive, 2002). On the left hand side of figure 1, rationality defined policy failure. In the case of SIMD 2006 for Ferguslie Park, this was a double definition of failure, when it became the 'poorest' community in Scotland.

This rational evaluation failed to acknowledge that the problem definition was also framed by stigma. As such the regeneration policy, whether the physical renewal of *New Life for Urban Scotland* or the strategic approach implemented in response to failure, could never be successful. The judgements were always going to be based on discourses of stigma towards deprived neighbourhoods (Hastings, 200a; Watt & Jacobs, 2000; Matthews, 2010). Ferguslie Park would always have notoriety as the "poorest" neighbourhood in Scotland no matter how rational and objective measures such as the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation were. The stigma of wider society towards deprived neighbourhoods meant regeneration could not be successful so long as they had the same name (Robertson, Smyth & McIntosh, 2008).

Moving to the right hand side of figure 1, local knowledge provided different problem definitions and therefore interpretations of policy success. The degeneration, understood pathologically within policy and wider society, was understood as a problem of social injustice and poor services. After decades of fighting for improvements to their environment and homes, the capital investment of the regeneration period met a need for better housing. The physical renewal brought about by the *New Life for Urban Scotland* regeneration was interpreted as a success and something that community activists could continue to be proud of. The double-standard of

the views of wider society and the media demonstrate the limited scope of this policy success. It was still the case that these communities did not "deserve" this success because they were different, or at worse feckless. As the residents were actually challenging a wider discourse of stigma, their interpretations would rarely be heard.

This could mean that any success in regeneration could never be captured by evaluations because of stigma. Efforts to remove the stigma from neighbourhoods can nevertheless be successful (Dean & Hastings, 2000a). The efforts of campaigning activists in places such as Wester Hailes and Ferguslie Park have made the mainstream media slightly more careful about reporting deprived neighbourhoods. Similarly, the Scottish Government was much more careful in its language when the SIMD was launched again in 2009 and the datazone that was bottom of that index was not 'the poorest in Scotland'. Recognising how intertwined evaluation and policy definition are provides another means to challenge this stigma. If evaluators are attentive to the ways policy problems are defined, and how this is linked to measures of success across different cultural domains, then they can capture a more nuanced and rich picture of success and failure. Focusing on different interpretations of success, such the understanding of the physical regeneration from the perspective of the local domain could challenge this stigma (GoWell, 2010).

Taking an interpretive approach has allowed us to understand the policy problem differently by focusing on the social justice issues dominant in the local domain. To meet the challenge set in the introduction, how can it then make regeneration policy more just, more equitable and more effective? In this case, to be more just and effective the strategic approach to regeneration could be more explicit about how the policy problem is defined and what it aims to do about it: namely that concentrations of deprivation such as

Ferguslie Park and Wester Hailes exist because concentrations of affluence, which are lauded as "good" or "normal" places to live, also exist. Ultimately there needs to be a spatial shift in resource allocation across towns and cities to "cure" the problem of deprived neighbourhoods. This would involve greater policy change and difficult political choices to create spatial equality (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2002).

A more palatable alternative, emerging from the interpretation of success is the local domain, would be to switch from the other side of figure 1 and change our understanding of degeneration and what we mean by a "good" or normal neighbourhood. A "good" community could still have a concentration of deprivation and simultaneously be a focus for effective public services and support to improve individuals' lives. Rather than being portrayed as "dumping grounds", these neighbourhoods could become "elevators" that people stay in for as long as they want to and need to before moving onto other neighbourhoods. This would recognise the dynamic function of the neighbourhood within the urban economy, while simultaneously respecting residents who wish to remain (Robson, Lymperopoulou & Rae, 2008).

Glossary of local dialect terms

A' the rest o' – all the rest of
Aff – off
Aye – yes
Back sneddon – back alleyway
Doon – dwon
Glasgae – Glasgow
Noo – now
Mare – more
Oot – out

Tae – to

Tap – top

Waster – derogatory term for a layabout, usually referring to someone with drug and/or alcohol abuse problems

Wee – small

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[i] The term deprived neighbourhoods is used in this paper even though it is recognised that it is problematic and part of the pathologising of spatial inequality that this paper seeks to challenge.

[ii] In 2007, during the course of the research the name of the executive part of Scottish devolved institutions changed from the Scottish Executive to the Scottish Government. For ease of understanding the organisation is referred to as the Scottish government throughout the text.

[iii] Within quoted data local dialect is used throughout to respect the cultural domain of the participants. A glossary is provided at the end of the article to help with understanding.

[iv] A datazone is a standardised geographical area used in the SIMD with an average population of 1,000, similar to census super output areas in England and Wales and census tracts in the United States.