A bit like watching geology change:

Neighbourhood dynamics in England 1985-2011 and why we shouldn’t expect policy to transform

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Centre for Housing Policy
• The earth is 4,600,000,000 years old
• A week is a long time in politics”
(Harold Wilson, UK Prime Minister 1964-70, 1974-76)
• Ten years is a long time in neighbourhood regeneration policy
• “within 10-20 years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live’


Past regeneration efforts had been too small scale, poorly co-ordinated - and too short-term
Now: longer, multi-dimensional, participatory, targets and evaluation, integrated with public sector reform

Examples:

- Neighbourhood Renewal Fund - 88 local authorities, £0.8bn, £10/resident/year
- New Deal for Communities (NDC) - 39 neighbourhoods, £1.7bn, £4,000/resident/year
Evaluating neighbourhood regeneration

- All neighbourhoods, deprived neighbourhoods and regeneration neighbourhoods experienced improvement in employment, education, and crime 2001-2006/07
- Gaps between deprived neighbourhoods and their local authorities and between regeneration neighbourhoods and their local authorities reduced
- Gaps reduced more where there was regeneration (AMION 2010, Batty et al. 2010)
- NDC areas were ‘transformed’ (Batty et al, 2010 p.6).
- Gaps remained (AMION 2010)
Key sources


• Half full or half empty?
• 2010 - After 40 years of policy, and despite evidence of some positive and additional results, neighbourhood renewal policies were largely abandoned in England.
Evidence of long-term neighbourhood dynamics across all neighbourhoods provides:

- Perspective on the time over which change can be expected, and
- A more complete understanding of patterns of change in all neighbourhoods, not just deprived neighbourhoods undergoing interventions,

- and might provide alternative viewpoints for commentators and for policymakers of all parties
Analysis 1): Neighbourhood dynamics in England 1985-2005 in terms of relative rates of unemployment benefit claims

Data and methods:

- Unemployment a key neighbourhood indicator
- Administrative data: not ILO measure of unemployment
- Neighbourhoods defined as ‘postcode sectors’ (average working age population 4,000) (first part of postcode ie. YO31 0UW)
- Included only places with continuous data 1985-2005 (c75% total)
- Population denominators created by Alex Fenton, LSE
### Unemployment claimant rate decile in 1985 and in 2005 for all neighbourhoods in England and Wales

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Unemployment claimant rate decile in 1985 and in 2005 for all neighbourhoods in England and Wales.
Over 20 years:

30% of neighbourhoods did not change decile
67% of neighbourhoods changed no more than +/- 1 decile

65% of those in the lowest decile remained there
– an ‘escape’ rate of 1.7%/year
1.9% of those starting in the lowest decile reached average levels
– an ‘arrival’ rate of 0.06%/year
Over 70 years (1934-2005): 

In 1934, the Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Act identified high unemployment local authorities as ‘Depressed Areas’

11% of the neighbourhoods identifiable as in ‘Depressed Areas’ in 1934 were in the lowest decile in 2005

– a nominal ‘escape’ rate of 1.3%/year

19% of those starting in the ‘Depressed Areas’ reached average unemployment levels by 2005

– a nominal ‘arrival’ rate of 0.3%/year
Data and methods:

- Social mix a key neighbourhood indicator
- Census data
- ‘Middle class’ defined as top 2 NSSeC categories (37% population in 2011)
- Neighbourhoods defined as census units ‘LSOAs’ (average population 1,500)
- Included only places with unchanged boundaries 2001-2011 (97.5% total)
### Middle class’ population rate decile in 2001 and 2011 for all neighbourhoods in England

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Middle class’ population rate decile in 2001 and 2011 for all neighbourhoods in England
Over 10 years:

47% of neighbourhoods did not change decile
88% of neighbourhoods changed no more than +/- 1 decile

77% of those in the lowest decile remained there
– an ‘escape’ rate of 2.3%/year
0.1% of those starting in the lowest decile reached average levels
– an ‘arrival’ rate of 0.01%/year
Gentrification is unusual

- If defined as ‘a neighbourhood trajectory from under-average to above average proportions of middle class residents, and a change of more than one decile’,
- only 2% of neighbourhoods ‘gentrified’ in England 2001-2011
## Gentrification

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Centre for Housing Policy
Time scales: Political, economic

- 2 years – Gordon Brown as PM (2008-10)
- 5 years – maximum (now fixed) UK Parliamentary term
- 10 years – lifetime of NDCs (1998-2008)
- 11 years – Tony Blair as PM (1997-2008)
- 11 years – economic cycle recession to recession (1981-1992)
- ‘10-20’ years – period over which NSNR was to have effects
- 16 years - economic cycle recession to recession (1992-2008)
Time scales: geologic

- 10 years – 0.1% of small neighbourhoods in the decile with lowest proportion of middle class residents achieve average levels
- 20 years – 2% of neighbourhoods in the decile with highest unemployment benefit claims experience average rates
- 70 years – 19% of small neighbourhoods in 1934 ‘Depressed Areas’ achieve below average unemployment benefit claim levels
We shouldn’t expect many neighbourhoods to ‘transform’ in the short and medium term…

... and we shouldn’t expect policy aimed at the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods to transform them in a similar time period

How this may be interpreted is a matter of choice:

- **Interpretation 1** – Policy effort is fruitless
- **Interpretation 2** – Short-term policy effort is remarkably successful given the context, and results might improve if it was sustained into the longer term
Thanks for listening

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- www.york.ac.uk/chp
- @CHPresearch