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URBAN REGENERATION AND POLICIES OF 'SOCIAL MIXING' IN BRITISH CITIES: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

Over the past fifteen years, urban decision-makers in several countries have experimented with specific policies which seek to increase the *social mix* of particular urban areas, specifically via interventions in the housing mix, in order to tackle socio-spatial segregation, concentrations of deprivation and social exclusion. These interventions are based on the notion of the *neighbourhood effect* (or *area effect*), which hypothesizes that a high concentration of poor, or ethnic minority, people in specific areas reinforces and perpetuates poverty and exclusion. This contribution briefly analyses the policy initiatives set up in the United Kingdom by the New Labour government between 1997 and 2010 to encourage so-called *mixed communities*. The key assumption was that mixing different types of housing tenure would lead to greater *social mix* and to positive effects for (poor) urban residents and for deprived neighbourhoods at large. The paper reviews the arguments and approaches used to encourage such *mixed communities* and summarizes the state of academic research on the impacts and effectiveness of such policies. There is, to date, rather limited evidence that interventions in the housing mix alone can lead to greater social mix and to positive effects for deprived urban neighbourhoods and their residents. In the conclusion of the paper, succinct lessons are drawn for urban policies and area-based interventions in Spain and Catalonia.

1. Introduction

Economic restructuring, growing inequalities, the changing role of the state, and changing housing markets dynamics have combined to produce new or increasing forms of socio-spatial segregation within cities of North America and Europe, expressed through increasing self-segregation by the rich, residualisation of social housing areas and the gentrification of inner city neighbourhoods. In various countries policy-makers have consequently begun to adopt a policy discourse on the necessity to address socio-spatial segregation via interventions which

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seek to modify the social or ethnic composition of an area, i.e. to promote a form of (greater) mix. This is based on the notion of the neighbourhood effect (or area effect), which hypothesizes that a high concentration of poor, or ethnic minority, people in specific areas reinforces and perpetuates poverty and exclusion. The policy implication of the idea of the neighbourhood effect is that intervention is needed to deconcentrate poverty, i.e. dissolve concentrations of deprived (and/or minority ethnic) urban residents, by introducing a form of social mix in poor areas. Several countries have experimented with specific policies to increase the mix of particular urban areas, specifically via interventions in the housing mix: in the Netherlands, with programmes of differentiation of the housing stock in social housing areas; in France, with the *Loi Solidarité et Renouvellement Urbain* (2001) which imposed quotas of social housing construction to municipalities; in the USA, with the *Home-Ownership-and-Opportunities-for-People-Everywhere VI* (hereafter, HOPE) and *Moving to Opportunity* (hereafter, MOT) programmes which gave low-income households vouchers to rent private dwellings in richer areas. Across countries and history, “the manners in which governments have sought to bring about a balanced social and ethnic mix demonstrate enormous diversity, ranging from a belief in free-market processes to the draconian use of state power” (Sin, 2002: 1347). This contribution focuses on the case of the United Kingdom, in which initiatives to encourage so-called ‘mixed communities’ formed a central part of the policies led by the New Labour government between 1997 and 2010.

The idea of mixed and balanced communities is an old one in English urbanism (e.g. already present in the models of Garden Cities or New Towns) (Cole and Goodchild, 2001). Yet the concept of mixed communities only explicitly became a central objective in the urban regeneration and housing policies of the New Labour government between 1997 and 2010 (Lupton and Fuller, 2009). The mix is supposed to be achieved through tenure mix (i.e. a mix between different types of housing e.g. private rental, public rental, or private ownership). The key assumption on which policy interventions were based is that mixing different types of housing would lead to greater social mix and to positive effects for (poor) urban residents and for deprived neighbourhoods at large. Over the past decade several studies carried out in the UK (and in other countries) have provided contradictory evidence about the extent to which housing mix can lead to greater social mix and to positive effects for deprived urban neighbourhoods and their residents.

This contribution summarizes the social mix policies implemented in the UK over the past two decades and the state of academic research on the impacts and effectiveness of such policies. Following a brief discussion of contemporary socio-spatial and ethnic segregation in British cities, the urban policy agenda of the New Labour government (1997-2010) is presented, with particular attention paid to the concept of mixed communities. The rationale and instruments used to encourage such mixed communities are then analysed. A synthesis of the research evidence to date on the impacts and effectiveness of *tenure mix* policies is then offered. The conclusion, finally, draws succinct lessons for urban policies and area-based interventions in Spain and Catalonia.

2. Socio-spatial and ethnic segregation in British cities

Spatial differentiation and segregation are the spatial expression of the social and economic inequalities prevalent in capitalist societies. The UK is a highly unequal nation and its cities – London in particular – are highly unequal. In 2009, 13.1 million people were living in poverty in the UK (i.e. one fifth of the population)². Of these, 5.8 million were in deep poverty (i.e. with a household income below 40% of the median, i.e. £80 a week for a single adult) (Parekh *et al.*, 2010). An extensive study of social inequality in the UK published shortly before the New Labour government lost power in 2010 concluded that the richest 10 per cent of the population are now a hundred times richer than the poorest 10 per cent (Hills, 2010). The level of income inequality is at its highest since the Second World War, in large part due to a dramatic sharpening of income inequality and a substantial increase in poverty rates between 1979 and 1997. The post 2008 economic recession has led to rising unemployment and increasing poverty levels. Taking into account the changes to the UK tax and benefit systems announced by the new government elected in 2010, poverty is forecast to rise by 2014 (IFS, 2010). More worryingly, intergenerational mobility appears lower in the UK than in many other West European societies. Patterns of economic advantage and disadvantage reinforce themselves across the life cycle and are carried from one generation to the next (Hills, 2010).

Spatially and geographically there are significant variations in income, employment levels and other indicators between UK regions and cities and within them. Rising income inequality, residential choices, housing policies and housing market dynamics combine to produce increasing socio-spatial segregation and growing concentrations of deprivation in particular areas within cities (Berube, 2005). Inner London, in particular, is deeply divided: it has the highest proportion of people on low income in the UK, as well the highest proportion of people on a high income. Two out of five London children live in households under the poverty line; one quarter lives in households where no one works.

Additionally, there are deep-seated and systematic differences in economic outcomes between different ethnic groups (Hills, 2010). Two-fifths of people from a black and minority ethnic (hereafter, BME) background in the UK³ live in a low-income household, which is twice the rate than for white people. There are, nonetheless, big variations amongst BME groups in terms of income levels and educational achievements (Parekh *et al.*, 2010). More than half of people

² In the UK the threshold of low income used to measure poverty is defined as a household income inferior to 60% or less of the average (median) British household income in that year, measured after deduction of income tax, council tax and housing costs (i.e. rents, mortgage interest, buildings insurance and water charges) (see Parekh *et al.*, 2010). The annual reports on *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion* published by the independent Joseph Rowntree Foundation since 1993 give a good picture of the evolution of patterns of deprivation in the UK on the basis on 50 statistical indicators related to income, health, education, access to services, working conditions, social participation, etc.

³ In the UK, ethnic group membership is defined by the individuals themselves on the basis of self (identification) a system quite different from those used in other European countries. This means that in official questionnaires and administrative proceedings, individuals are asked a question about their ethnic group membership and are given a list of options to choose from, which do not reflect nationality or place of birth. In the 2001 census, 4.6 million residents defined themselves as coming from an ethnic minority (e.g. non White British), i.e. 7.9% of the total population. Many of these are British nationals. Data from the 2011 census was not yet available at the time of writing. The large part of the BME population of the UK comes from the mass immigration from the former British Empire after World War II: the West Indies, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Half of the total minority ethnic population in the UK are Asians of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other Asian origin; 25 per cent describe themselves as Black. The 2000s saw the arrival of a large wave of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe, said to be the largest single wave of migrants in British history. For an overview of the system of ethnic group classification in the UK, see <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Ethnicity+and+Identity>.

from Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds live in low-income households (a third of working-age Bangladeshi households are workless; half of the working Bangladeshis and Pakistanis earn less than £7 per hour). By contrast, a quarter of people from an Indian background lives in low-income households, a proportion only a bit higher than the rate for white people. Black Caribbean pupils are three times as likely to be excluded from school as white pupils. Nonetheless, overall the gap in the educational qualifications of different BME groups has narrowed in the last decade (Hills, 2010).

About half of the UK BME population is concentrated in London which, as a city, has about half of its population from a BME group. The geography of ethnicity in London shows clear areas of concentration of BME populations: in other words BME individuals tend to live in wards where the proportion of BME population is higher than average. However these areas remain usually very ethnically mixed and not dominated by one single ethnic group (unlike cities in the USA). Patterns of clustering and concentration differ between BME groups, with some (e.g. the Bangladeshi or Indian) displaying stronger patterns of concentration than others which are characterised by more spatial dispersion (e.g. Black Caribbeans and Black Africans) (GLA, 2005). This ethnic geography is explained by a combination of structural-economic factors (income, position in the labour market and characteristics of the housing supply), of ethnic-cultural preferences and of a legacy of ethnic discrimination in the job and housing markets:

“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 substandard 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 (...). This led to an 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” (Phillips and Harrison, 2010: 222-223).

Overall, BME groups suffer from higher rates of unemployment and have lower incomes than the rest of the population, which constrains their housing choice. A discriminatory practice in the private and public housing market and in wider society compounds the problem: “racial sorting exists on top of class sorting” (Bottero, 2005:178). In the 1960s and 1970s, for example, there was evidence of discriminatory practices in processes of council housing allocation, whereby BME households were put in the least desirable housing units and segregated in particular estates. The growing shortage and increasing costs of housing in the UK over the past two decades have exacerbated social, economic and spatial disparities across the whole population and between ethnic groups: over the last decade, the poorest tenth of the population have, on average, seen a fall in their real incomes after deducting housing costs (Parekh *et al.*, 2010). The privatization and stock transfer policies affecting public housing in the 1980s have led to a decline in the public housing stock which represented 31% of the national housing stock in 1981. Whilst in the post-war years public housing (built by local councils, thus called council housing) was a privileged tenure, social housing (which at present includes housing owned by local councils as well as by private housing associations) is now widely seen as the shelter of last resort for those unable to gain entry to owner-occupation and those at the bottom of society. This process of residualisation, as it is named, finds its expression in the fact that half of the

people living in social housing are in low-income households, compared to one in seven households in other types of housing tenure.

In the private housing sector, the decade prior to 2008 had seen huge increases in house prices due to various factors which cannot be discussed here. The steady rise of home ownership since the 1950s (representing now approximately 70% of the UK population), and since the 1970s gentrification processes in various British inner cities, have reduced the available housing stock in the rental sector in certain neighbourhoods with high BME population and have led to the rapid displacement of low-income tenants. All those changes in the housing system and market have particularly affected ethnic minorities, who at present tend to be disproportionately concentrated in (the least popular) social or (sub-standard) privately rented housing, to be under-represented in home ownership, and to suffer higher rates of overcrowding and poor housing conditions. According to the English House Condition Survey of 2001, 27% of BME households “live in districts with multiple problems of environmental quality, socio-economic deprivation and over-burdened or under-resourced services” - that is, three times as for white households (10%) (Phillips and Harrison, 2010: 223).

3. Urban regeneration, area-based initiatives and *social mix* policies: assumptions and instruments

Since the 1970s various policies and programmes of urban regeneration have been set up by successive British governments to address the economic decline of UK inner cities and the concentrations of deprivation in urban areas. There is no space here to give an overview of the history and transformation of UK urban policies (see Atkinson and Moon, 1994; Cochrane, 2007; Tallon, 2009), although it is important to briefly summarize the ways in which policy-makers have addressed the issue of the concentration/segregation of BME and of poor people in particular urban areas. Britain, altogether, has relatively few examples of formal housing or urban policies that could be termed desegregationist (Bolt, 2009). There is “little evidence from British literature to match the US experiences of *racial* de-concentration policies or the directly racialised nature of urban renewal” (Phillips and Harrison, 2010: 225). Phillips and Harrison (2010) identified several phases in the history of the discursive positions and strategic interventions of UK policy-makers with regard to the issue of ethnic segregation/concentration. These discourses and interventions have been shaped by changing views on what causes ethnic concentration and segregation: choice versus constraint, the power of individual agency versus institutional discrimination (Phillips, 2007).

In the early post-war era various dispersal initiatives sought to “hide the presence of black and minority ethnic households, and to minimise their anticipated impact on the white population, rather than improve the life-chances of the minorities” (Phillips and Harrison, 2010: 224). Dispersal ideas were first implemented in the late 1960s and early 1970s in various national and local policies, in order to “spread the burden of resource allocation, and to avoid accusations from the indigenous population of favourable treatment of migrants in housing and welfare provision” (Phillips and Harrison, 2010: 224). The city of Birmingham, for example, had an explicit dispersal strategy between 1969 and 1975 in its Council housing allocation procedures, which was eventually outlawed.

From the late 1970s onwards, there was increasing recognition of the cultural preferences of BME groups and of the structural constraints on BME housing mobility, including racial discrimination. Successive UK governments have developed extensive anti-discrimination legislation following the first Race Relations Act passed in 1968. This, alongside a race equality and diversity agenda in housing, has helped to address the most blatant forms of discriminatory processes in the social rented and private housing sectors and has widened the possible housing trajectories for BME groups⁴. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the dispersal-oriented approaches were gradually superseded⁵ by initiatives directed at institutional barriers to social and spatial mobility and by strategies of neighbourhood renewal or regeneration. These area-based strategies⁶ did not have an explicit focus on BME populations, but were rather targeted at deprived neighbourhoods defined on the basis of statistical indicators (e.g. the Index of Deprivation). No government was willing to openly favour BME populations in urban areas through dedicated funding, for fear of alienating their white electorate (Moon and Atkinson, 1997). In many cases, the neighbourhoods targeted by area-based policy initiatives were also those with high levels of BME residents, so it was hoped that BME groups would benefit from the programmes put in place, even if these programmes did not, with a few exceptions, encompass any specific concern or provisions for BME-specific issues. In the 1980s, urban regeneration initiatives were driven by logic of property-led regeneration which was assumed to have trickle-down effects for social groups most in need. Many studies have shown that the trickle-down process did not work, in particular for BME groups who continued to face significant barriers to economic participation. In the late 1990s “it was widely agreed that decades of initiatives to combat urban poverty and deprivation in British cities had done little to address the way racial discrimination adversely affected the life chance of black and ethnic minorities” (Thomas, 2008: 9; Munt, 1991; Moon and Atkinson, 1997; Harrison *et al.*, 2005).

In 1997 the arrival of the New Labour party changed the orientation of urban policies significantly after 19 years of Conservative government (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Johnstone and Whitstead, 2004; Cochrane, 2007; Colomb, 2007). First, new area-based policy initiatives were set up to address social exclusion in the poorest neighbourhoods of England (the *New Deal for Communities* and the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal*). Second, a new agenda for the *Urban Renaissance* of British cities began to be promoted by the New Labour government (UTF, 1999; DETR, 2000) in order to attract the middle class and investors (back) into inner cities (Colomb, 2007). The key ingredients of the Urban Renaissance were to be high quality public spaces, the redesign of city centres, public transport improvements, and high density, mixed-use housing developments of good architectural quality. In 2003, two further policy initiatives were launched by the New Labour government. The *Sustainable Communities Plan* (DCLG, 2003) planned the construction of four new settlements in the Southeast of England to accommodate a burgeoning population. By contrast, the *Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders* was a programme designed to tackle the decline of specific urban areas in cities of the North of England (as explained below). The notion of mixed communities permeated both initiatives, i.e. communities which would mix households of different income and socio-

⁴ In the 1980s some local councils (e.g. the London Borough of Tower Hamlets) attempted to redress the past discriminatory practices in council housing allocation by promoting wider choice for ethnic minority tenants and encouraging *dispersal*, but ethnic minority tenants refused to move to *white dominated* estates for fear of racial harassment (and vice versa): the legacy of past discrimination coupled with the council's failure to tackle racial harassment, brought only a minimal redistribution of tenants (Phillips, 1998).

⁵ The exception is the mandatory spatial dispersal policy which is still applied to asylum seekers arriving in the UK.

⁶ *Area-based* means that programmes are geographically focused on areas or neighbourhoods defined according to specific characteristics (e.g. levels of deprivation or unemployment) according to a number of indicators.

economic status. The notion of mixed communities was eventually explicitly brought centre stage into the national policy discourse via the *Mixed Communities Initiative* announced in January 2005 (MCEPT, 2009 and 2010). This initiative was in fact a repackaging of existing or planned housing and neighbourhood regeneration schemes, the majority located in areas dominated by social housing. As part of this initiative, twelve demonstration projects were to be monitored and evaluated to ascertain the validity of the approach (MCEPT, 2009 and 2010).

The objective of mix (of different income or ethnic groups) is perceived as desirable by UK policy-makers for various reasons. It is based on the sociological notion of “neighbourhood effects (or area effects)” (MCEPT, 2009: 9), which hypothesizes that a high concentration of poor, or ethnic minority, people in specific areas (e.g. social housing estates) is bad, as it reinforces and perpetuates poverty and exclusion and reduce opportunities for social mobility⁷. Several neighbourhood-related factors are mentioned in the literature as reinforcing deprivation and exclusion over and above individual characteristics: poor or inadequate access to crucial social goods such as health, education, employment or leisure in particular areas; lack of social capital; peer pressures and bad role models leading to criminal or deviant behaviour; stigmatization (e.g. through post-code discrimination).

It should be noted here that the New Labour discourse on mixed communities was not explicitly targeting ethnic mix, in part because the segregation/clustering of BME groups was not, initially, perceived as an issue within the overall multiculturalist agenda of New Labour. The urban policy initiatives and neighbourhood regeneration programmes set up by New Labour were consequently not explicitly aimed at ethnic desegregation, although they, like their predecessors, sought to improve the life and opportunities of all the residents of the deprived urban areas they targeted, including BME residents. However over the past decade, in the aftermath of the race riots in Northern English cities (2001), the bombings of 11th September 2001 in the US and 7th July 2005 in London, the War on Terror and the rise of right wing political parties (Amin, 2002) led to increasing negative perceptions of Muslim residents. There have been growing debates in the British media and political sphere on the spatial clustering/segregation of particular BME groups (specifically Asian Muslims and Blacks), its causes, its potentially negative consequences and the potential need for intervention into the process of geographical concentration. The report of the Community Cohesion Review Team (Cantle, 2001) called for the breakdown of ethnic concentration/segregation to end the phenomenon of what was termed parallel lives or worlds between British Asian and white people. This marked the resurgence of an assimilationist discourse (which had been replaced by the multiculturalist agenda of the 1990s) which, through a culturalist interpretation of ethnic segregation, re-apportions some of the blame to BME communities (Philipps and Harrison, 2010) and tends to obscure the contribution of other factors such as racial discrimination and poverty. This matches trends in other Northern and Western European countries, where “there seems to be a growing consensus in policy circles that residential segregation of ethnic groups is undesirable. Ethnic segregation is believed to have a negative effect on the integration of minority ethnic groups and to augment the social problems in certain neighbourhoods” (Bolt, 2009: 397; Musterd, 2003). The new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government elected in the spring of 2010 in the UK has shown a clear affinity with this discourse, as

⁷ For a good discussion of the sociological assumptions and debates surrounding neighbourhood effects, see inter alia Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Buck, 2001; Ostendorf *et al.*, 2001; Lupton, 2003, 2005; Musterd and Ostendorf, 2005; Friedrichs *et al.*, 2009.

illustrated by controversial declarations by Prime Minister David Cameron (Helm *et al.*, 2011) and by the government's reactions to the urban riots of the summer of 2011.

The policy implication of the idea of the neighbourhood effect, if one accepts its validity, is that we need to deconcentrate poverty (or in the case of ethnic minority groups, concentrations of residents from the same ethnic group), i.e. dissolve concentrations of deprived urban residents, in order to improve the life chances and actual situation of the poor. One way of doing that is by introducing a form of social mix in poor areas, e.g. getting higher income groups to live there (more rarely does the political discourse talk about the necessity to bring lower income residents to rich neighbourhoods). In many cases the objective of encouraging mixing is accompanied by a discourse on the necessity to improve public services and the built environment so that residents of areas perceived to be lagging behind are not disadvantaged by where they live.

In a democratic society and market-based economy, there is no means to force the mix and impose patterns of residential location upon urban residents. But housing and planning policies, as well as fiscal incentives, can encourage the diversification of the housing stock in particular areas. Bolt identified five types of housing measures aimed at (ethnic) desegregation: (1) scattered-site programmes (to disperse public housing by building it in white, non-poor neighbourhoods), (2) rental subsidy/housing vouchers (to expand the housing options of households with a low income), (3) housing allocation procedures (to disperse ethnic minorities across the social housing stock), (4) mobility programmes (which combine rental subsidies with mobility counselling), and (5) housing diversification (to build a mix of tenures in a particular area, hoping this will attract white and more affluent residents). In Northern and West European countries, housing diversification and housing allocation measures have been the main instruments used. In the UK the objective of mixed communities pursued by New Labour until 2010 was to be achieved through initiatives (briefly described below) which promoted the mix of housing tenures in areas previously dominated by one type of tenure (DETR, 2000)⁸. Mixed tenure has been perceived by policy-makers as a proxy for income, class and ethnic mix. The rationale for mixed communities is thus that substantial diversification of housing type and tenure, combined with improvements to facilities, services and opportunities will both improve life chances for disadvantaged residents and attract new wealthier residents. This will lead to a new dynamic including increased land values and a better-functioning housing market, reducing overall concentrations of deprivation. Lower income residents will benefit from increased resources and social interaction with better-off residents (Tunstall and Lupton, 2010).

The objective of creating mixed communities via a mix of housing tenures is based on two assumptions about causal relationships and about the mechanisms by which low income residents might be expected to benefit (Musterd and Andersson, 2005; Tunstall and Lupton, 2010): first, that more housing tenure mix will lead to more social mix through the physical proximity and enhanced contacts and interactions between residents of different income groups, social classes or ethnicity, and to an increase in area resources. Second, that this will then lead to an improvement in the life chances and actual situation of the disadvantaged residents and an overall decrease in deprivation levels in the targeted area. This is supposed to happen

⁸ Whilst the UK New Labour government has understood the notion of *mix* in terms of income or tenure mix, residents of areas targeted by *mixed communities* initiatives interpreted mix as ethnic mix, and mix of household types, of generations and of places of origin around the UK (MCEPT, 2010).

through the influence of middle-class role-models and exemplary behaviours; through pressures by the incoming middle class for the improvement of local services, public spaces, and schools (which would benefit the local population at large); through increasing social interactions leading to better information about jobs and employment opportunities; through increased (middle-class) investment in a particular neighbourhood creating jobs for various types of local residents, including low-skilled residents.

In practical terms, three main types of programmes and instruments were supported by the New Labour government after 1997 to promote and increase tenure mix with a view to create mixed or sustainable communities in UK cities:

- The main target of the mixed communities policy rhetoric have been areas of concentration of public (council) or social housing. Residents in those areas suffer considerably worse outcomes than the national average for selected indicators of deprivation (e.g. income, general and mental health, educational attainment, benefit claims) (MCEPT, 2009). With funds from several policy initiatives, various regeneration programmes were launched in large-scale housing estates perceived and presented as problematic (this definition being in itself a contested process) (Darcy, 2010). Two emblematic cases in London are the Aylesbury estate (built in the 1960s and 1970s and housing 7.500 people) in South London (Southwark Council, 2011) and the Woodberry Down estate in North-East London (Hackney Council, 2011). The regeneration programmes included the demolition of part or most of the social housing blocks, the rebuilding of private (owner-occupied and rented) housing, mixed with the remaining or newly built social housing units, and the promotion of owner occupation to attract middle class households (Allen *et al.*, 2005). Such programmes have been criticized on various grounds - both in terms of the process and the outcome of regeneration: insufficient community participation, overall net loss in the number of social housing units after regeneration (MCEPT, 2009), decanting of the original population and gentrification⁹.

- In nine designated areas in cities in the North and Midlands of England (in the urban fringes of Liverpool, Manchester or Newcastle), a programme called *Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders* attempted to address so-called housing market failure in areas where housing market value was very low and significantly below the build cost, making renovations uneconomic. The programme funded large-scale demolitions of (private) terraced housing in working-class areas perceived as declining and suffering from low demand. Demolitions were to be followed by a diversification of the housing stock via the construction of new, more upmarket housing targeting more affluent income groups. By the end of March 2008, the *Housing Market Renewal* programme had demolished 16.000 properties, refurbished around 59.000 homes, and built 3.700 new properties.¹⁰ Average house prices in the nine Pathfinder areas have doubled since 2002 (HCA, 2011). In most areas the process of clearance and demolition has been very conflictive and has raised a lot of controversies (Cameron, 2006; Allen, 2008). Many properties were vacant, but others were not: some residents refused to leave their homes and the neighbourhoods in which they spent all their life and had to be evicted through Compulsory Purchase Orders. The compensation money they received often did not match the price of

⁹ For a critical analysis of the London case see Watt, 2008 and 2009.

¹⁰ The post-2008 crisis left many redevelopment projects stalled. The *Housing Market Renewal* programme was stopped by the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat government that gained power in May 2011. The new government allocated a £30 million contribution to help families trapped in abandoned streets due to stalled housing demolition schemes in Merseyside, East Lancashire, North Staffordshire, Hull and Teesside.

properties in other surrounding areas (Cole and Flint, 2007). Displacement and lack of democratic participation thus characterised many of the programmes. In some areas, this has strong implications for the BME (especially British Muslim) populations who lived there (Phillips and Harrison, 2010). While “minority ethnic desegregation has not been explicitly articulated as a policy objective in multi-racial neighbourhoods designated for housing market renewal” (Phillips and Harrison, 2010: 229), the (forced) relocation of residents may lead to that, whilst some of the programmes have explicitly provided support for BME households wanting to move to non-traditional areas.

- The production of public housing by public authorities in England was stopped by the Thatcher government in the 1980s. Since then, the production of social and affordable housing in the UK is nearly entirely dependent on agreements between local authorities, private developers and housing associations or registered social landlords. In privately-built new housing developments, an instrument in the UK planning system (Section 106 agreements) has been used by local authorities to negotiate with private developers for a certain amount of affordable units in new developments in exchange for planning permission. Targets for social housing quotas in new build developments were integrated into Local Development Frameworks (the name of the local plans following the 2004 reform of the planning system). A London example in The Millennium Village in Greenwich, in which social housing (about 30% of the final development) was mixed with market-rate units for owner-occupiers (about 70%). This mechanism worked relatively well during the period of building boom¹¹ (although not matching the high demand for affordable housing: in the first years of the 2000s social housing accounted for only 11 per cent of new housing development in England). But it has blatantly showed its limits with the abrupt slowdown in construction activity following the 2008 global financial crisis. The quantity of new housing built in England decreased by 50% in 2009 (to 1921 levels).

By contrast to the above, it should be stressed that in the UK, and in London in particular, few policies were put in place to ‘protect’ the existing social composition of urban areas which were relatively mixed but have become rapidly gentrified (as in many parts of London). Few public policy tools are available to slow down the rapid displacement of lower (and more recently middle) income groups in London.

4. Social mix policies: do they work? Inconclusive and controversial evidence

Whether such practices of tenure mix lead to greater social mix and to positive outcomes for deprived residents and neighbourhoods has been a controversial theme in urban sociological research over the past decade, in the UK and elsewhere. Such policies and interventions have received increasing attention on the part of researchers who have analysed their rationale, implementation and impacts, and have often reached rather critical conclusions. The evidence

¹¹ The practical problems of implementing mixed tenure schemes on the ground are not discussed here (e.g. potential reluctance of private developers and of prospective middle-class buyers, physical design of the mix of tenures within developments) (see DCLG, 2009 and 2010).

from various countries and programmes varies from one place and one author to another¹². A number of UK studies has shown evidence of positive impacts in specific neighbourhoods where the housing stock has been improved and diversified (Allen *et al.*, 2005; Tunstall and Fenton, 2006). Particular housing estates became less stigmatised within their own city; reinvestment by public and private investors led to an improvement of the housing stock, of public spaces, and sometimes of public services, which have benefited all residents (old and new) and thus increased residents' satisfaction. Yet a large number of studies point towards the scant evidence that there is to support the two assumptions on which 'social mix' policies are based (referred to above): that the physical proximity of different income, social class or ethnic groups will lead to more contacts and interactions and that this will lead to an improvement in opportunities, life chances and ultimately upward social mobility for the poor or socially excluded.

There has been little, or no evidence, of increased social interaction between residents of social housing and the owner occupiers of the newly built housing units, for example (Jupp, 1999), as well as "no specific evidence of role-model effects or increased social capital" (JRF, 2006: 2). Often residents live parallel lives side by side with little contact. Social worlds, places of consumption and socialisation are markedly different (different supermarkets and pubs, for example). Lees (2008: 2449) stresses that "despite the new middle classes desire for diversity and difference they tend to self-segregate". New middle class residents perform exit strategies by sending their children to private schools within or outside the local area. School mix is a crucial issue in any discussion of social mix: in the UK school segregation (along class and ethnic lines) remains very strong - often the degree of class or ethnic segregation within a school in a particular area is much higher than that of the neighbourhood around it (Burgess *et al.*, 2005; Journal of Education Policy, 2008). Additionally, mixed-tenure neighbourhoods do not necessarily lead to an improvement in the quality of local services and amenities if there is no parallel public investment and if the incoming middle-class households consume such services outside the neighbourhood or recur to the private sector. There is no evidence that "the new resources that may come with higher income residents (e.g. shops) either materialise or are beneficial to people on low incomes" (Tunstall and Lupton, 2010:3), for example through job opportunities.

Most authors have thus concluded that the mix of tenure, and thus of income groups, in short, does not make the life chances of the poor any better (Kleinhans, 2004; Galster, 2007; Cheshire, 2007 and 2009). Housing tenure diversification or mixed-tenure neighbourhood policies do not, as such, lead to better socio-economic opportunities, better access to resources and social mobility (Arbaci and Rae, forthcoming). What seems to be a more crucial factor is the integration of area-based and people-based policy interventions backed by a de-commodified access to welfare services, such as education, training and employment opportunities (Arbaci and Rae, forthcoming). This is because individual and family characteristics are more important than the *neighbourhood* in explaining individual life trajectories. Altogether, in the UK, there is thus "substantial evidence that areas with more mixed social composition tend to be more popular, more satisfying to live in, and have better services than poorer areas", but "to date the evidence is limited that neighbourhood has a large effect on individual outcomes, over and

¹² See, for example, some of the assessments of the outcomes of the *Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing* programme in the USA (Goering and Feins, 2003; Feins and Shroder, 2005; Kling *et al.*, 2007; Clampet-Lundquist and Massey, 2008; Ludwig *et al.*, 2008).

above individual and household factors. Nor is there robust evidence that neighbourhood mix per se or changes to mix (over and above other neighbourhood characteristics) is influential” (Tunstall and Lupton, 2010: 3).

In some cases, some researchers have even argued that mixing policies can have negative impacts on low-income or BME groups, because, through the influx of new residents and new services, such interventions may break social networks and endanger businesses catering for a low-income population or for specific BME groups, leading to more class or ethnic conflicts. Many sociological studies have since long shown that a degree of concentration may benefit particular social or ethnic groups, which means that an imposed de-concentration may break crucial community ties. The presence of family networks, small businesses, support organisations and informal networks can support the process of survival and of socio-economic integration or social mobility. Evidence from the American Moving to Opportunity programme has shown that poor people may suffer more if they move to richer neighbourhoods (Cheshire, 2009). In the particular case of ethnic minorities, moreover, policies of tenure mix ignore the problem of discrimination and racism: “there is an absence of any discussion of how to achieve social mix in a context where allocative mechanisms for housing and employment can compound injustice in general, and racial discrimination in particular” (Thomas, 2000: 10). In the public and social housing sector, past studies have shown that racial harassment plays an important role in maintaining racial segregation (Phillips, 1998), something which tenure mix policies alone cannot resolve. Desegregation policies thus seem to have had a limited effectiveness in reducing segregation by income or ethnicity and in improving the life chances of BME groups, because they fail to address the main causes of segregation (Bolt, 2009). Moreover, tackling areas “where minority populations are concentrated can do little to alter one causative factor of segregation: the locational choices exercised by better-off white households” (Phillips and Harrison, 2010: 232).

British urban geographers and sociologists have additionally argued that policies of tenure mixing in areas formerly dominated by social housing or declining housing markets leads to the displacement of many of the initial low income residents (Davidson and Lees, 2005; Porter and Shaw, 2009; Watt, 2008; Urban Studies 2008), to a loss of social housing and public assets, to a transformation of local services and retail for the benefit of higher income groups and to increasing control and surveillance of urban spaces as part of renaissance strategies geared at attracting middle-class consumers or residents. This has led a number of critical researchers to label social mixing policies as state-sponsored gentrification, gentrification as explicit policy strategy or revanchist urbanism (Lees, 2003; Porter and Shaw, 2009).

The scarce evidence about the positive effects of tenure mix and social mix policies for low income or marginalised BME urban residents has led several researchers to question the very rationale behind them and to suggest that they should be abandoned altogether. Social mix policies were provocatively labelled “faith-based displacement activity” by the economist Paul Cheshire (2009), who argued that they treat the symptoms of urban deprivation and inequality rather than tackling its causes (Cheshire, 2007; Cheshire et al., 2008). The logical outcome of such a conclusion is one which many politicians, urban planners, and urban regeneration professionals are unhappy to hear: pursuing social mix policies could be a useless and an inefficient use of public resources, one which shifts the focus of public intervention away from the fundamental question of structural inequalities (Musterd *et al.*, 2006; Beaumont, 2006;

Arbaci, 2007; Cheshire, 2009). In that regard, Tunstall and Lupton (2010) conclude that it is *not* evident that mixing communities are a more effective strategy for the regeneration of disadvantaged neighbourhoods than traditional neighbourhood renewal approaches – i.e. those which target public resources to particular areas to support integrated strategies of social, economic, and physical regeneration in partnership with local residents.

5. Conclusion and lessons for Spain and Catalonia

“While social processes may become manifest in a certain residential stock in a neighborhood, as rising levels of social segregation or as local spatial concentrations of poverty, that does not necessarily imply that they are also caused by or being problems of the housing stock or of the neighborhood composition” (Musterd, 2002: 140).

Thirty years of area-based urban regeneration programmes in the UK have improved the physical and economic conditions of many inner cities and neighbourhoods. However such programmes have altogether had a relatively small effect on the reduction of socio-spatial inequalities between places and between people¹³. The urban riots which took place in the summer of 2011 in London and other large cities revived debates about social and ethnic segregation in the media and in the political sphere. The new Conservative-Liberal Democrat government’s agenda for a Big Society and a new localism is significantly changing the form and scope of public intervention in planning, housing and urban policies. Compounded with the on-going reforms of the welfare system and the impact of the economic crisis, it is most likely that concentrations of deprivation and social-spatial segregation in UK cities will increase in the coming years.

Within the wide range of urban policy interventions which have been tested over the past decades, the specific policies of tenure mixing which have been carried out from the end of the 1990s onwards seem to have had, at best, small positive effects, and more often no effects in terms of improving the life conditions and opportunities of poor urban residents or BME groups. If and when they have had, it was most likely caused by the improvements to facilities and services (health, education, training or retail provision) which accompanied interventions for more mixed tenures. They may even have had negative effects if they formed part of a larger process of (forced) transformation of existing social bonds or of displacement through urban regeneration. New policies of social mixing thus “require critical attention with regard to their ability to produce an inclusive urban renaissance and the potentially detrimental gentrifying effects they may inflict on the communities they intend to help” (Lees, 2008: 2449).

Does it mean we should give up area-based initiatives and programmes of neighbourhood regeneration seeking to increase tenure, social and ethnic mix? The debate on the effectiveness and desirability of mixed tenure and mixed communities policies in the UK is part of a wider debate on place-based policies which revolves around a fundamental question at the heart of public (urban) policy and urban research: the extent to which we can produce positive

¹³ Inequalities between cities and neighbourhoods in the UK are monitored by using Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Over the past 30 years there has been no significant change in the relative ranking of the most deprived areas in England on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

social and economic changes through physical interventions, and the extent to which place- or area-based interventions can fundamentally help to address (or redress) the root causes of socio-spatial segregation: socio-economic and racial inequalities in capitalist societies. One of the main problems of area-based initiatives is that they seek to solve problems which often have their roots outside the neighbourhood or even outside the city: labour market dynamics and structural economic change; the changing role of the welfare state; the dynamics of the national housing market; or ethnic discrimination in various spheres. The Hills report (2010) on inequality in the UK concluded that effectively achieving equality of opportunity has become a serious challenge in a society where there are such wide differences in the resources which people have, but that public policy intervention does work: it has narrowed gaps in educational attainment, narrowed the gap between men and women's pay and tackled poverty in retirement. Key sectors for interventions were, not surprisingly, identified as education, labour market, taxation, and, last but not least, neighbourhood renewal.

We should therefore not give up area-based policies, but rather be aware of their limits and anticipate and prevent their potential negative effects on existing residents (e.g. gentrification). They should, additionally, not replace, but work alongside people-based and redistributive policies which address the root causes of inequality and deprivation through income redistribution and changes in the factors which make and keep people poor (Cheshire, 2009), and in those which encourage ethnic and religious discrimination. Tunstall and Lupton conclude their review of the evidence for mixed communities policies in a clear way:

“(...) if there had to be a crude choice between traditional urban and neighbourhood renewal and mixed communities policies to address the top quarter most deprived local authorities (as Neighbourhood Renewal Fund did) or even the most deprived 10% or 5% of wards, the evidence suggests the former offer more limited but better-evidenced benefits at lower costs, and are also more achievable during a recession. If there is a choice between doing nothing in deprived areas and doing something, the evidence suggests doing something. The evidence suggests that:

(a) There should be continued support for ‘traditional’ urban and neighbourhood renewal, which might include a modest mixing element.

(b) On the precautionary principle, and on the grounds that the costs of preventing non-mix are lower than those of altering it, mix should be encouraged in new developments, and through any schemes to support developers and registered social landlords during the housing market downturn.

(c) Mix should be considered in existing areas through methods such as pepper potted-tenure change, tenure blurring, sensitive allocations policy and targeted fiscal stimulus”.

What lessons can be drawn from this brief review of the UK experience for Spanish urban policies, and in particular for Catalonia, the Autonomous Community which has pioneered the *Llei de Barris*, a novel approach to integrated urban regeneration? With regard to the situation of migrants and ethnic minorities in Spanish cities, it may be crucial not to over-rely on area-based regeneration programmes to solve the problems of migrants in the city. Mainstream welfare and integration measures are the strongest tools to reduce inequalities in the long run – and the Catalan government and the city of Barcelona have, up to the regional and local

elections of 2010 and 2011, been leading very progressive local policies for the welcoming and integration of newly arrived migrants. Whilst local practitioners should not give up area-based programmes, they need to be very aware of the limits and potential negative effects of differentiation, desegregation and mixing via housing and physical renewal. Policy makers must not lose sight of the “link between causes, remedies and expected outcomes” (MCEPT, 2009: 18). In the case of the *Llei de Barris*, it is important to analyse which type of neighbourhood transformation is aimed for, how it is supposed to happen, and to monitor carefully the impacts of the interventions implemented so far (do they lead to improvements for the existing population or do they pave the way for gentrification?). Finally, it is important to stress that Spanish and Catalan cities are generally characterised by a high degree of functional and social mix within historical neighbourhoods and sometimes within buildings. So in a city like Barcelona, the challenge is to set up instruments and regulations which preserve the mix where it already exists. This is a topic of crucial importance, as reflected in the current debates on who has the right to live and use the city in the historical District of *Ciutat Vella* in particular.

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