Managing diversity and developing common ground: The role of urban regeneration initiatives
The case of Hackney, London

Introduction

At the turn of the millennium Touraine (2000) asked 'Can we live together?'

This question finds its broad expression through the debates around diversity. The issue of diversity – social, ethnic, cultural – and, to be more precise, the way of its management has become one of the 'hot' contemporary debates both on an ideological and on a programmatic level. Diversity is not a new phenomenon. However, the increased movement of people and ideas makes it more visible, and the existing inequalities and poverty along with rising tensions turn its management into a priority. The rise of what was named 'identity politics' or 'politics of difference' and the increased visibility and struggles of differences also inspired the State's need to respond, manage and control diversity as a potential troublemaker.

> *"The rediscovery of ethnicity and cultural identities created an awareness of the need to cope with the management of ethnic and cultural diversity through policies which promote ethnic and cultural minority groups' participation in, and access to the resources of society, while maintaining the unity of the country."*
> *Inglis*

From international to urban development, any form of social/cultural development works through certain aims and priorities. Whatever form they adopt throughout strategies and practices, the key themes for development are (World Bank):
- Area Regeneration
- Capacity building
- Providing opportunities / Sustainability
- Socio-cultural communication / Cohesion

Several approaches and political models have been introduced in managing diversity (such as pluralism assimilation, separatism, multiculturalism.) Most of them signify more than one possible 'worlds', depending on interpretation. What has, up to now, been recognised as prerequisites (at least in theory) for diversity and cohesion through socio-cultural development can be identified as:
- Access to resources; natural, social or political. The current debates on social exclusion on national and international level reflect the acknowledged importance of access and the results of the lack of it.
- Recognition of others – 'the other' – as different and equal, deserving respect. Recognition becomes the first step towards legitimisation of difference on all levels.
- Social co-existence and Inter-group relations, because without them recognition remains abstract and cannot become a reality. Interaction familiarises the one with the other, reducing stereotypes and preconceptions.

The ways forward depend greatly on the areas in question, their past, their characteristics and future potential as well as on the existing country framework. Furthermore, on a broader level, a question that influences the preferred approaches is that of integration versus pluralism including several combinations between the two. These themes also represent key priorities of regeneration programmes in the UK; and several strategies, programmes and projects reflect ways of dealing with them. There are 5 streams through which the above-mentioned themes are addressed:

- Community
- Culture
- Cohesion / Common Ground
- Governance / Participation structure
- Economy

Urban regeneration policy context in England

The reality of social exclusion and the desire for social cohesion or integration have become to priorities, in both EU and UK context, in a context which is constantly defined as multicultural. Healy described planning as "managing a shared existence in space". This shared existence, in accordance to current concerns about social cohesion and integration, reflects the question of managing diversity – in all levels. But in order to be able to manage this co-existence, there is a need for understanding the territory; the components this diversity and the relations between them as well as between the system they exist in.
In the UK context, these issues are among the key aims of the sustainable development agenda. The key element of sustainable development is the idea of "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Consultation on Planning Policy Statement 1, ODPM) and its key drivers are:

- Economic growth
- Social inclusion
- Protection of the environment
- Prudent use of natural resources.

Sustainable development needs the community to be involved with developing the vision for their areas. Communities should be able to contribute to ideas about how that vision can be achieved and have the opportunity to participate in the process for drawing up specific plans or policies to be involved in development proposals. By social inclusion it is aiming to develop "strong vibrant and sustainable communities and promoting community cohesion. Regeneration of the built environment cannot deal with poverty, inequality and social exclusion therefore need for integrated strategies and programmes, partnership working and community involvement" (Consultation on Planning Policy Statement 1, ODPM).
Sustainable development approaches are translated into (in regards to issues of development and inclusion):

- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies and allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds,
- Establishment of Local Strategic Partnerships involving Local Authorities, private sector and community and voluntary sector,
- Community Strategies which reflect the vision for the area and are developed through extensive community consultation,
- Spatial Planning – New Planning Bill introducing Local Development Frameworks and Statements of Community involvement.

Throughout these structural and strategic transformations, run the issue of community cohesion and participation.
National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (2000) is locally translated into Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies (NRS). The reasons identified as crucial in leading to multiple deprivation are (National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, 2000):

- the economic ghettoisation of these neighbourhoods, and the need to help the unemployed to help themselves;
- the erosion of social capital - the contact, trust and solidarity that enables residents to help, rather than fear, each other;
- the failure of core services in deprived areas where public services have been set targets only for improving national averages and not for the outcomes in

> deprived areas, and their accountability has often been upwards, rather than to the communities they serve. The crucial role of private sector services has been almost ignored; and
>
> -   the lack of clear strategy or concerted joint action. It has been no-one's job - at neighbourhood, local, regional or national level - to ensure that services work together behind common goals, and to measure progress.

To reverse the trends, the focus is concentrated at:
-     reviving local economies;
-     reviving communities,
-     ensuring decent services; and
-     leadership and joint working (National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, 2000),

The Neighbourhood Renewal Agenda focuses mainly on the 88 most deprived areas in England – which (at least in the case of London) they seem to be the more ethnically and culturally diverse. According to the percentage of deprivation each of the 88 boroughs is funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to improve services and delivery. The NRF is managed by a registered Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). LSPs are constituted by members of the local public, private, community and voluntary sector and are usually comprised by a core group and several sub-partnerships. While it is essential for all of the 88 boroughs to have developed an LSP, most Local Authorities are also required to have one in place (since 2000 – 2001) in order to develop the Community Strategy.

Community Strategies are statutory documents and Local Authorities are obliged to develop them (Local Government Act, 2000). They aim "to enhance the quality of life of local communities and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK through action to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and its inhabitants". They have a strong spatial involvement since Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks, which replace the Unitary Development Plans, are supposed to work complementary. Moreover, Local Authorities need to be able to provide a Statement of Community Involvement (setting out how the community is to be engaged in the Local Development Framework process). A community strategy must have four key components:
-     a long-term vision for the area focusing on the outcomes that are to be achieved;
-     an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes;
-     a shared commitment to implement the action plan and proposals for doing so;
-     arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing the community strategy, and for reporting progress to local communities.

However, the following guiding principles should underpin all community strategies. They will:
-     engage and involve local communities;
-     involve active participation of councillors within and outside the executive;
-     be prepared and implemented by a broad LSP through which the local authority can work with other local bodies;
-     be based on a proper assessment of needs and the availability of.

LSPs along with the Local Authorities are the body responsible for producing Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Community Strategy, and deciding over the allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, while the Local Development Framework and Statement of Community Involvement are produced by the Local Planning Authorities with increased involvement of the local communities.

Spatial planning, as mentioned earlier, is tightly related to Community Strategies. "Spatial planning represents a new approach that aims to bring together and integrate development policies with other policies and programmes that affect how places are and their function.

- Set a clear vision for the future pattern of development, with clear objectives for achieving that vision and strategies for delivery and implementation
- Consider needs and problems of the communities they target and how they interact
- Help to integrate the wide range of activities relating to development and regeneration.

In conjunction to these policies, other strategies play a part and contribute to the broader regeneration agenda.

Local Cultural Strategies, although non statutory documents, are tightly related to issues of social exclusion, identity and diversity as well as to funding mechanisms such as Community Fund, which funds a great percentage of community projects. Common programmes and projects that Local Cultural Strategies promote and that integrate with Community and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies are:

- Area regeneration through the creation of Cultural Quarters; Area Branding; and Animation
- Economic Regeneration through Creative and Cultural Economy
- Celebrating Diversity through Festivals, Community Funds and Cohesion initiatives and Addressing Exclusion

An over-arching pre-requisite through all policies and strategies aim for sustainable development is the need of policies to consider the impact of development on the social fabric (Consultation on Planning Policy Statement 1, ODPM). Since the success of these approaches depend greatly on community involvement and understanding of local needs, interactions and aspirations, it is useful to draw some examples from the way groups and inter – group relations are formed and influenced.

In all of these approaches there are three key points (associated with lessons learned by several previous top-down / neoliberal approaches in development):

- communities (also the community and voluntary sector) are supposed to become key actors and actively involved both in process and in practice, through community consultation and involvement initiatives, in order to express their needs, aspirations and desires and 'vision' for their areas.
- all depend on partnership working between the key stakeholders of the area. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) were created for this purpose having the role of co-ordinating this change and acting as representatives, as advisory board as well as executive;
- all reflect the increased realisation that cultures and communities are extremely important to the well-being of areas and societies, and they can be an inspiring and creative force in solving local issues in which they commonly have greater knowledge than officers – if they are given the opportunity;

As stated, the success of urban regeneration and planning initiatives depends greatly to the degree the localities and their groups respond and engage to the current and future plans. Their involvement increases sense of ownership and cohesion. Participation and partnership (although introduced almost a decade ago in the Habitat +5 agenda) are still considered the best way forward – both for urban development and for achieving sustainable communities. Urban regeneration's challenge is to achieve sustainable communities. With this term it means that it should provide the opportunities for people to develop their sense of belonging and civic society and social cohesion while taking advantage of the existing and future opportunities. Acknowledging that as a statement is extremely optimistic, the reality becomes more difficult to implement.

Social Cohesion and Inter-group relations

Planning has been described as 'managing a shared existence in space' (Healy, 1997). Under this notion, planning and regeneration bear the responsibility of managing our 'living together', both spatially and socially. On the international level, international development organisations have re-discovered the significance of culture in urban and social development initiatives. In the UK, under the current planning and development context, 'living together' seems to become one of the main themes to be achieved. The acknowledgement that urban regeneration and social cohesion are tightly related has been expressed through various forms in the development field, but its realisation (in the UK) came with the 2001 riots in the North English cities.

The reports of the riots highlighted several reasons behind this sudden upsurge, and identified urban regeneration as a key issue in triggering as well as understanding the causes (Amin, Cantle). Since then cohesion and inclusion have been constantly articulated in urban regeneration and planning and policy guidance has been developed to become part of the broader urban renewal and management agenda (Home Office). Moreover, both cohesion and inclusion has been subject of several heated discussions incorporating debates of multi / inter-culturalism, integration, and cultural identity.

> *A society is cohesive if (a) its members have a common commitment to the well-being of the community and are related to each other in a way that they are not related to outsiders; (b) its members are able to find their way around in it, that is, if they know how to navigate their way through their society, if they understand its conceptual or cultural grammar, and know how to relate to each other; and (c) its members share a climate of mutual trust, and know that were they to make sacrifices today for the wider community, it will take care of them when the need arises. (…) It doesn't rule out differences, and some of these would be deep differences. (…) Second, it cannot rule out disagreements, because we are bound to disagree on how our society should develop. (…) Third, it cannot rule out disobedience either. (…) Social cohesion is necessarily limited in terms of difference, disagreement and disobedience. (Parekh, 2002)*

Understanding the elements of this social collage and their power relation and networks, becomes a crucial step in managing diversity (either aspiring for cohesion or for one of the several forms of integration) and in working within urban contexts. Cultural identities and groups are constantly played upon a need to belong to a group and a need to be somehow a member of society – especially in areas where deprivation and diversity are simultaneously high.

> *"Clifford Geertz, for example, sees culture as the web of signification in which humanity is suspended. ... Stuart Hall offers a similarly generous view of culture as the 'lived practices' or 'practical ideologies which enable a society, group or class to experience, define, interpret and make sense of its conditions of existence. ... Culture, in short, is other people. As Fredric Jameson has argued, culture is always an idea of the Other." (Eagleton, 2000)*

Culture can be defined, both from an individual or collective perspective, as a set of values, beliefs, ideas, way of life, meanings, identities and experiences that one/some carry through their course of life, deriving from background or nurture but also from choice.

In most cases, individuals carry more than one identity and attributes that characterise their belonging to one or several cultural groups. Cultural groups – and groups in general - can be distinguished into 'reference groups' and 'membership groups' (Sherif, 1967). "A reference group is a group to which the individual relates him/herself as a member, or to which s/he aspires to relate him/herself psychologically. A membership group, on the other hand, is a group of which the individual is (actuality) willingly or unwillingly a member" (Yagcioglu, 1996). One can be both a member of reference and membership groups that might be complimentary or oppositional to each other. This distinction can prove to be a useful tool in

the study of cultural groups and inter-group relations because it facilitates the concept of cultural groups as not being solely comprising of origin/tradition characteristics, but also of preference/choice elements and affiliations.

A need for belonging and association still remains the creative force in the formation and structure of cultural collective groups (CCG). Without going into an in-depth analysis of the reasons for belonging or how people choose specific groups, CCG (Safier) can prove extremely valuable in understanding social networks and inter-relations and how specific initiatives affect them and the broader social. CCG 'need' certain preconditions to be satisfied in order for them – their members – to be able to develop socially and individually. These needs – basic instrumental needs (Safier) - can be defined as Respect, Recognition, Resourcing, Representation and Realisation; all equally important and inter-related to each other.

Inter-group relations theory and practice offer useful insights about group co-operation and conflict. Realistic group theory (developed first by M. Sherif, 1966) suggests that competition between groups for achieving conflicting goals could result in hostility and enmity towards the other group(s) and towards the creation of negative stereotypes. This sort of approach becomes tightly related to development and regeneration initiatives, which may (accidentally or not) increase competition and mistrust between the different groups involved (Amin 2002, Kundnani 2002).

Psychoanalytic / Psychodynamic theories translate the self/other divide from individuals to the collective. The development of the self goes hand in hand with the definition of 'other'. During the creation of the self and its differentiation from the other, images and representations are formed that fortify the self and define the other and their in between boundaries. In a similar pattern, group self and identities are formed dialectically (Hegel) and at times seek their identity in opposition to other dissimilar groups (Jackson 1980).

How the above mentioned theories are related to urban regeneration practice?

Besides being extremely useful in understanding inter-group relations and the nature of urban diversity, these analyses are as much social as spatial and reflect diversity's relation to urban regeneration and management. The success of regeneration in managing diversity, through policy and implementation, depends greatly on spatially and socially managing these inter-group relations and mainly on developing a platform where they can meet and negotiate their worldview under equal (or just more equal) terms.

In order for these 'foreign relations' to be able to develop without ending up in the demonisation of the 'other', several key factors – tightly connected to urban regeneration – need to be considered. It is broadly acknowledged that respect and recognition are completely essential in the development of identities as well as in the development of non-conflictual group relations. Other equally important factors can be briefly described as:

Resources: Competition for resources, especially the same ones, intensifies problems of stereotyping and hostility while it potentially triggers a pattern of victimisation and conflict. Transparency becomes crucial if this is to be avoided. (Amin 2002, Jackson, 1980, Power & Mumford 2003, Kundnani 2002). Resources also represent access to opportunities that secure the group's realisation and sustainability.

Strong Civic Culture and Participation: Recognition and representation are as important for internal group processes as for inter-group recognition and appreciation as part of the social. It gives the group confidence, self worth and power to define its future As Parekh (2000) argues 'inter-communal tensions are less frequent and more easily managed when there is an extensive local network of formal and informal cross-communal linkages'.

Proximity / Interaction / Common Ground: Spatial and social proximity, sharing of everyday situations, co-operation in problematic situations, in generally living together and sharing a common ground has had significant effects in the development of social relations, understanding and de-stereotyping (Mumford & Power, 2003).

Bearing in mind the key factors that influence inter-group relation, we can identify certain fields that are crucial in managing diversity and that form part of current regeneration strategies. In regards to the above-mentioned strategic context these fields are:

- Spatial planning
- Access to housing versus fear of eviction / gentrification
- Public and collective participation and life (spatially translated into public and collective spaces)
- Employment and structural disadvantage
- Social cohesion and racism
- Cultural policies (including education, language and freedoms)

While strategies provide the generic vision and mode of action, each locality has its own characteristics, groups, situations and political culture. The translation of strategic vision into local reality is a process formed by several actors and influences. Developing and adopting this process defines to a great degree the everyday and future results and depends in both the strategic picture as well as to local context and understanding.

The case of Hackney

How all these guidance and initiatives, along with the broader regeneration picture affect localities?
Hackney has been on the forefront of news and lifestyle magazines for more than ten years now, adopting both a glorifying and a condemning identity. Hackney is one of the most deprived London boroughs ranking very high on the National Index of Multiple Deprivation. Not only as a general picture, but even on a ward level, all of Hackney wards are among the 10% most deprived wards in England and 7 among the worst 3% (index of Multiple Deprivation 2000).

Hackney is one of London boroughs with the greatest concentration of Council and social housing – some of it in significantly bad condition – and with a significant percentage of households (especially ethnic communities) facing extreme overcrowding. Poverty levels are high, with 40% of households having an income of less that £15,000 per year and 37% of school children eligible for free school meals. The unemployment rates are very high, even more for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, and there is a crucial problem of lack of qualifications and English language. On top of that, several years back the Council has been declared bankrupt and has been in the midst of corruption scandals that brought its services to a standstill (Community Strategy, Hackney Council).

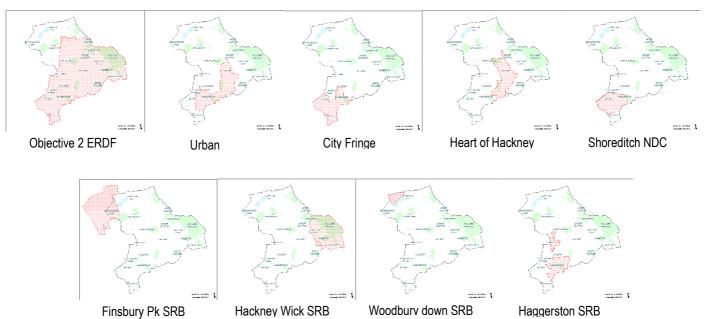| CATEGORY	HACKNEY	INNER LONDON
All people	100.00%	100.00%
People in ethnic groups: White: British	44.12%	50.50%
People in ethnic groups: White: Irish	3.02%	3.37%
People in ethnic groups: White: Other White	12.26%	11.81%
People in ethnic groups: Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1.52%	1.30%
People in ethnic groups: Mixed: White and Black African	0.79%	0.66%
People in ethnic groups: Mixed: White and Asian	0.78%	0.86%
People in ethnic groups: Mixed: Other Mixed	1.11%	1.08%
People in ethnic groups: Asian or Asian British: Indian	3.76%	3.09%
People in ethnic groups: Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	1.07%	1.57%
People in ethnic groups: Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	2.94%	4.64%
People in ethnic groups: Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	0.82%	1.34%
People in ethnic groups: Black or Black British: Caribbean	10.29%	6.87%
People in ethnic groups: Black or Black British: African	11.98%	8.27%
People in ethnic groups: Black or Black British: Other Black	2.39%	1.29%
People in ethnic groups: Chinese or other ethnic group :Chinese	1.17%	1.41%

Table 1: CENSUS 2001 ETHNICITY FIGURES (PERCENTAGES)

CATEGORY	HACKNEY	INNER LONDON
All people	202,824	2,766,114
People stating religion as: Christian	46.56%	54.57%
People stating religion as: Buddhist	1.14%	1.00%
People stating religion as: Hindu	0.81%	1.90%
People stating religion as: Jewish	5.29%*	1.78%
People stating religion as: Muslim	13.76%	11.67%
People stating religion as: Sikh	0.85%	0.51%
People stating religion as: Other religions	0.57%	0.44%
People stating religion as: No religion	19.03%	18.34%
People stating religion as: Religion not stated	11.99%	9.79%

Table 2: CENSUS 2001 RELIGION FIGURES (PERCENTAGES)

Due to the high levels of deprivation and to economic change, Hackney has been at the receiving end of several urban regeneration programmes – from European to UK funded.

From 2001 to 2006 Hackney will have received £61,709,549 as Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

| Objective 2 ERDF | Urban | City Fringe | Heart of Hackney | Shoreditch NDC |

| Finsbury Pk SRB | Hackney Wick SRB | Woodbury down SRB | Haggerston SRB |

Key Regeneration Programmes in Hackney (Hackney Council website)

On the other hand, it is an economically polarised borough where, in contradiction to the above poverty, 10% of Hackney residents earn more than £40,000 per year and the house prices in the area have been rising rapidly over the last ten years (Hackney Council). Hackney is also one of the most diverse London boroughs with 48% ethnic minority resident population of 23 ethnic groups speaking 37 different languages. Hackney claims the largest resident population of artists in Europe and a very strong tradition of social activism. This combination has contributed to the development of an atmosphere characterised by liveliness, diversity and tolerance. Hackney's reputation has changed dramatically from being a slum into being London's new cultural Mecca (mainly South Hackney), with plenty of galleries, bars, lofts and international 'creative' people. Gentrification has largely transformed 'enclaves' of Hackney while others are left into dereliction.

Cultural and artistic activities and events played a great part in Hackney's identity and image. Communities celebrate their culture both within their private worlds, and occasionally in public events. There have been several places and events (addressing a broader audience) where different cultures interacted and co-operated. Some of them still exist (such as Black and Turkish theatre at the Empire and Arcola theatres, alternative festivals at Rio cinema, Mardi Gras and London Fields festivals, Chat's Palace) while others have been taken over. Under the 2020 Vision and the 'Heart of Hackney' Single Regeneration Budget programme, the Cultural Quarter was initiated comprising of the Empire Theatre, Ocean, Hackney Museum and Library, Flowers East gallery, a selection of restaurants and pubs and Free Form's Hothouse for artists.

In between advantages, disadvantages and image, Hackney needed to address the immediate as well as the broader issues concerning its future. Urban regeneration initiatives, along with development schemes were supposed to facilitate Hackney's renewal. Community and culture-led regeneration was supposed to be able to address major issues in the areas social exclusion and cohesion, education and employment, job creation, and built environment. Community, Culture and Diversity, alongside Opportunities, have been the core issues and assets in the development Hackney's future vision.

As set in the current Community Strategy the vision's main focus is:
- A thriving, healthy and inclusive community
- A place where you want your children to be educated
- A good place to live
- A good place to get around
- A good place to work and do business
- A place to enjoy yourself
- A confident and safe place

Besides the Community Strategy, Hackney's Local Strategic Partnership (HSP) was responsible for producing a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and decide over the allocation of NRF. The current structures were put in place in 2000 and since then the HSP priorities have been transformed from funding several small one-dimensional projects to aim at supporting larger and cross-cutting ones. In regards to membership, HSP core Steering Group comprises of 14 members 3 of which are representatives of the Community Empowerment network (CEN), 7 from the public sector, 1 from the voluntary sector and 3 from the private sector. The HSP forum has 50 members and is formed by 11 sub-partnerships including more representatives the communities and the residents. The borough structure is supported by newly formed Neighbourhood Forums that develop and facilitate smaller local partnerships (without any budgetary responsibilities). Along with the HSP, Neighbourhood Forums have a significant role in the Council's process of developing action plans for each area under the New Planning Bill.

Other Hackney strategies (such as the Local Cultural Strategy) also highlight the benefits of culture and diversity in relation to regeneration and inclusion, and suggest action plans for taking advantage existing opportunities and uniqueness. Non statutory strategies might not be directly linked to funding, but they are closely connected to HSP decisions and other funding streams. Apart from the existing borough structure, groups and communities can bid for other substantial sources of funding (such as Lottery or Home office) with each of them having its own priorities and aims. Specifically in regards to Lottery Funding, priorities seems to change from funding identity / group projects to increasing support for cross-cultural initiatives or over-arching themes.

The groups, the actors and their relations in Hackney

In order to de able to manage the existing diversity – especially in deprived areas - , understanding its groups and their 'foreign relations' and networks becomes essential. Hackney presents itself as a multicultural place where differences live happy together. At first glance, this is true. How real it is under the first image?

Hackney is extremely diverse as a borough, without having one or two dominant communities. In its territory several communities co-exist, most of them of substantial numbers and influence. The major distinctive communities and sub-groups of the area are White (young 'creatives' and working class), Black British (Caribbean and African), Turkish (Mainland, Turkish and Greek Cypriots, Kurdish), Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi), Chinese (Chinese and Vietnamese) and Jewish (Orthodox).

Although some groups are better off than others, a significant percentage of people (especially newer immigrants) face a negative environment due to poverty, overcrowding, language barriers and unemployment. Language becomes extremely important, both for children's educational development, for employment and for issues of isolation and insularity. Extended families are common for many groups, which relates to the level of overcrowding, to language barriers and to socialisation issues. On the other hand, over the years Hackney an important – but transient – population of European and international students and highly qualified young people.

What seems like a common observation (Interviews all) is that Hackney, due to its history of immigration, its extensive social housing and its activist past, is and has been quite tolerant in accepting differences. At a first glance, the levels of tolerance and co-existence in Hackney are very high. There is a great mix of people and groups, and walking and living close to each other has been helpful in developing relations (Interview 3). Taking a closer look, apart from those people whose role is to build bridges, there are several tensions and suspicions, as well as a strong insularism within communities and a subsequent fragmentation. Extended families contribute to insularism with some communities socialising only within them (Interview 7).

An interesting observation is that the area has been host to several communities that have been involved in long-lasting conflicts with each other, but managed to actually work together and develop alliances. The existence of the Muslim – Jewish forum (established 2000) as well as of an older association between Greek and Turkish and Turkish Cypriots represents that living together is possible. Several reasons have facilitated this outcome. . Usually it involves communities that share some kind of cultural affiliations, found themselves in need in a foreign country, realised that they have very similar needs and decided that it would be for both interest to raise their voices together. (Interview persons 2, 3, 4)

> *In contrast, there are communities that their strife and hatred has been reached the point of resolution. Black African and Black Caribbean have strong issues between themselves (Interview 1). Certain groups develop issues with each other mainly due to competition for the same resources or due to an unfamiliarity and misunderstanding of the 'other'. Competition for resources of any form has been clearly identified as a problem because it turns groups against each other instead of promoting collaboration (interview 2). So is the case between Black (mainly Caribbean) and Turkish (mainland / Kurdish) groups, which reflects the strong stereotype of some Turkish towards some Black groups, thinking of them as thieves and uncivilised due to lack of close experience (Interview 2, 8).*

New arrivals are usually the first victims of discrimination, commonly accused of getting all the benefits while depriving the locals of what they should have. Crime is another issue that triggers competition and conflict. In a deprived area such as Hackney, with a plethora of illegal activities, there is a strong territoriality and frictions between the groups involved (commonly ethnically formed). This is true for a long established hostility between members of the Black Caribbean and Turkish/Kurdish communities.

Moreover, the issue of youth gangs is gaining popularity. Youth gangs are equally territorial and are highly influential in forming perceptions and opinions, while having an immense impact on inter-cultural contact and on the use of public spaces. Past research has identified that there is significant level of racial harassment, discrimination and violence towards Asian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Kurdish youth and found out that as response, ethnic gangs start to flourish both as belonging and respect mechanism and as protection and answer to fear (Hackney Social Services Report).

Crime and gangs represent only limited aspects of Hackney networks and relations. There is still substantial openness and support – especially to those involved in public and cultural life. The strong artistic and activist tradition of the area has developed places and attitudes that are very open, very mixed and in those intrigued enough to get involved there is a strong welcome.

Urban Regeneration affecting diversity

How the programmes and the actors relate to each other and do they actually have their intended effects?

Building bridges between groups and between actors, providing a space where negotiations and debates can develop while identifying opportunities and visions becomes an essential process in managing diversity and in the broader regeneration agenda. Regeneration and planning, with all their intents, could be a brilliant vehicle for managing diversity and for area development through establishing a platform for negotiations and through providing opportunities. The way that they develop as structures and mechanisms of change, and the way they adopt to localities while keeping a broader vision remains crucial for the 'on the ground' impact.

Integration
Neither forced integration nor homogenization can succeed. In order for a group to be able to make itself visible to the public and be able to interact, liaise and contest/challenge for its needs, there is a necessary precondition of the group feeling that it is strong enough, is internally developed and its identity secured – and then it can reach for the outside / others. Between integration and separate development there are very thin lines that distinguish each practice. Group strengthening and identity focus is essential in the beginning of group realization. On the other hand integration and interaction has to be woven into programme from the beginning and has to be an important goal other wise there is no opportunity for contact, only separatism in the name of pluralism. (Interview 6)

Integration should not be oppressive and forceful; it needs to be more aesthetic as well (in a meaning that this way it increases the understanding and knowledge of each other). There is no standard of the way or the limits of integration. It depends (and should?) on the pace of the community. If it is ready and with relatively certain identity then it works out; otherwise it needs to wait. Integration is more likely to happen through younger generations through education and socialisation. Regarding the question of integration, identity development and integration should go together. One is not against the other. There needs to be an encouragement of joint working, especially through respect. When you put one against each other you usually have none of them. There is a need to find balance. Although the current structures of funding are of putting the one against each other (Interview 5, 7).

Structures
Structures and political culture goes hand in hand. Through structures the initial representation and decision-making can take place and argue for local and broader interests. The LSP concept has been a very interesting effort to connect public bodies and local actors in area decision-making. Although, in every partnership there are differences of power and influence. As many local actors argue (interviews) there is no point in partnership working if it isn't – on some level – equal and provides opportunities for change. In fragmented social with no past of developing alliances, it becomes extremely difficult for groups (not already powerful) to make their voices heard. Almost as difficult as it is for public bodies to share their power.

Where corruption and mistrust has been prevailing in the past, change of the political culture is extremely difficult and requires drastic actions. The advocated transparency and information dissemination is essential both in involving groups, but equally in reducing suspicion and accusations between groups and between actors. Hackney is still struggling to achieve this aim.

Community and voluntary sector
Regeneration has been accused of raising aspirations and expectations that are not going to be fulfilled (Interview 9). It puts a great amount of pressure into people's lives, especially for those that are involved within or live in the area. It creates an enormous emotional pressure for succeeding – otherwise the funding will be gone -, most of the initiatives are very short-term with no real opportunity for continuation, ignorant of group dynamics, focused on quantitative outputs while many issues involved cannot be identified and measured like that (Interview 6).

This sector is extremely active and lively, and has the potential to argue for the groups involved as well as building co-operation between them. Short term funding and constant bidding for more, lack of resources, alienating official jargon and lack of timely information have been identified as the key problems community groups and organisations are facing in regards to regeneration and funding. These problems turn their focus from identification and project delivery for their groups into constant and insecure funding hunting. Although current regeneration and planning has provided this sector with a substantial opportunity for involvement and action, apart from larger organisations, co-operation remains limited while organisations will still argue mainly for their supporting groups interest.

Area regeneration
Area regeneration has been about taking advantage of opportunities, working for the future and building upon local potential and uniqueness. Business development and mainstream attraction has been largely followed in the Heart of Hackney SRB as significant step in changing the area's image. Additionally, the area's artist and creative identity has been greater developed as a driver for regeneration. Within this spirit, the establishment of the Cultural Quarter around Hackney was considered a major move in attracting people and investment.

Creativity has been broadly promoted and used as a driver for regeneration all over the world. It commonly results in the originators being 'priced out' while a young middle class is moving in, accompanied with a subsequent loss of atmosphere and 'vibe' due to mainstream diversification. Hackney's reality is not much different. The area has become more upmarket (and with pricier rents) and the character and liveliness has moved further down the road. The introduction of a very large scale venue (Ocean) has been unsuccessful and highly subsidised by the Local Authority to survive for various reasons. The exact space has increased the tensions between LA and groups and between the groups themselves. The issue of capital regeneration raises the question of who do they address. The Cultural Quarter development reflects this (Interview 9). Culture may be used for visitors benefits, which, unless balanced, cause more resentment and alienation than before (Interview 10).

Culture
Culture has been a major asset for Hackney – both through arts and creative and through the cultural diversity of the area. Culture has been identified as a great way for area regeneration, participation and social inclusion. On the other hand, culture has been used in a homogenising and solely gentrifying way. Both are true for the case of Hackney.
Using art and culture for developing communication channels, for expressing and developing an understanding of identities and of bringing people actually closer has been proven to be a highly successful way (Interview 2, 5, 11).
Gentrification has been obvious as well as increase liveliness, popularity and activity in the area. In regards to the existing diversity two main issues are raised from groups:

The culture that is support is the one that is legitimised; therefore all the others are outsiders.
Events that used to bring cultures together have been taken over and disappeared.
Festivals and events have been very popular and long established in Hackney. Attempts to commercialise and promote a mainstream identity for the area, along with greater control, have stopped several festivals from existing (Interview 11). Moreover, festivals that have been run by more than one groups, have been taken over by specific culture that has shut them out (interview 8). Although festivals and events are only initial points of inter-cultural contact, they are still highly important in inspiring interaction and co-operation and in developing the first initial step toward communication. The public space character along with– commonly – free attendance has the potential to bring several group in the same space.

Public and collective spaces

Public and collective places spaces are extremely important for different reasons. Collective places initially provide the opportunities for belonging and a space for a group to exist while through time – if they open to more than one group – become places of interaction. Public spaces trigger the initial experience and familiarity process – especially when related to collective spaces and activities. Although different groups use space – especially public space – in different ways, the element of contact and realisation of existence in everyday life is still important for people that are living in insular communities. Although no one can expect to be able to create an 'all embracing' place, there are activities that can develop bridges between different groups (not between all but among some). Markets have an amazing potential of providing common ground, both spatially and socially. In highly diverse areas, traders need to provide for their diverse clientele. In doing so, traders and customers, have the opportunity to work and interact with each other at a place that is usually a central feature in most cultures.

Besides focusing on flagship projects, allowing for a great diversity of such spaces to exist and supporting them – in some ways – can be very valuable both for sense of belonging and ownership and for providing a spatial terrain for interaction.

Housing

As mentioned earlier housing and fear of eviction is one of the key factors affecting inter-group relations. Social housing in the form of benefit claims and allocation (initial and due to overcrowding) is the most common theme. Although Hackney has a very mixed housing policy, group tensions continue – especially when related to youth. Strong housing mix that is visibly expressed at street life has been considered as a major asset in accepting 'others' (interview 3). Gentrification, by raising prices, reduces the resources of housing and increases competition (Interview 3). In addition, due to the bad reputation of Hackney's schools, the new classes that move into the area do not use the schools, therefore the expected positive interest and transformation hasn't happened. Hackney's characterised by a transient population that moves out of the social housing as soon as it can, or moves out because it cannot afford to stay in the area.

Negotiating Common Ground

Developing common ground between groups, especially where diversity and deprivation are high, becomes essential in the whole process of regeneration. Common ground embodies the necessities for inter-group relations and for initialising a culture of co-operation and alliance which can potentially reduce fragmentation and increase power of over decision-making.

Identifying where or what can become this negotiatory platform, depends on the actors involved as much as on the area and its political culture. There is a thin balance in managing broader vision and opportunities, local needs and desires, local involvement and diversity. One cannot expect groups to collaborate and produce and consensus vision only with the fact that they are given an opportunity. As highlighted before, group self realisation along with understanding patterns of interaction can provide a terrain where consensus and involvement can be built. In a time where co-operation and alliances between groups are just starting to emerge again, programmes should consider past experiences that instead of partnership working end up in increasing the tensions between groups.

All of the above-highlighted urban regeneration themes have been highlighted as key spheres where common ground for inter/cross cultural communication and integration can be achieved (Interviews 2, 7, 15, 16, 11). Although there are some voices that require more separatism, most groups are interested in being in the existing system, while also being able to carry their cultures. It is not only through shared building or spaces that communication

may develop and common ground established; activities, events and addressing needs have a bigger potential for that purpose. (Interview 6)

The answer to Touraine's question comes with a question: Do we want to live together?
If so, then there are ways of developing common ground between differences. There are no fixed models for that because each diversity has different cultural 'participants', different relations and trajectories. Urban regeneration, especially culture and community-led, has a significant role to play in providing opportunities for establishing a common ground. However, it is something that requires no quick solutions and a platform where the negotiatory process of common ground might take place. Maybe on more equal terms.

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Interviews

Interviews (Interview INITIALS) were conducted personally during the past three months (October – December 2003) with members and representatives of the communities, the community and voluntary sector and council officials.

The people interviewed are working with groups for several years and most of them have important posts in community or voluntary sector organisations.

Person 1: Afro – Caribbean NGO
Person 2: Turkish / Kurdish / Turkish Cypriot Community group
Person 3: Faith Jewish
Person 4: Faith Muslim community group
Person 5: NGO for disadvantage and inequalities
Person 6: NGO for disadvantage and inequalities
Person 7: Faith Muslim community group
Person 8: Caribbean NGO
Person 9: Hackney Council
Person 10: Theatre Director / Producer
Person 11: Afro – Caribbean NGO
Person 12: Hackney CVS
Person 13: Faith Jewish NGO
Person 14: Environment community group
Person 15: HAVE