# Academic papers

# Regenerating the urban: Evaluation of policy actions for strategic urban changes in the UK cities of Derby and Nottingham

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**Abstract**    Many in the field of urban studies have analysed urban policy. This analysis can be used to evaluate the impact of policy in the face of continuous and rapid urban change and to help elaborate strategies that might reverse decline and propose effective regeneration programmes. Although challenges to achieving good governance structures and enabling urban regeneration remain, policy frameworks still depend on policy actions and outcomes as the key indicators for strategic urban change and development. With a focus on UK cities, this research paper explores the role of policy-driven urban strategies, and identifies the successes and failures in regenerating the city. As a result, this study aims to identify policy actions and creative initiatives that conceive mechanisms and approaches to regenerating the central cores of the cities (particularly small and medium-scaled cities). The comparative study of two urban regeneration case studies will help to identify how the UK cities deal with strategic urban changes and development of policy actions. The paper concludes with development of strategic urban change and how urban regeneration programmes help to reduce urban pressures.

**Keywords:** *regeneration, urban change, urban policy, strategy, policy action*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the growing race towards urbanisation and rapidly approaching socio–economic interventions, cities often experience decline, deprivation or decay. In such processes, cities often face various challenges, with major impacts on society and the economy, which then lead to delivery of overall urban growth and stability. In urban studies, it is crucial to identify such urban pressures or problems and propose solutions to help improve urban policies and development of policy actions (see Figure 1). As a result, this study exploits directions that policy makers and planners can consider in order to enhance quality of life and (potentially) revive a city's socio–economic values (to sustain urban growth). In this respect, the foremost aim of this paper is to analyse
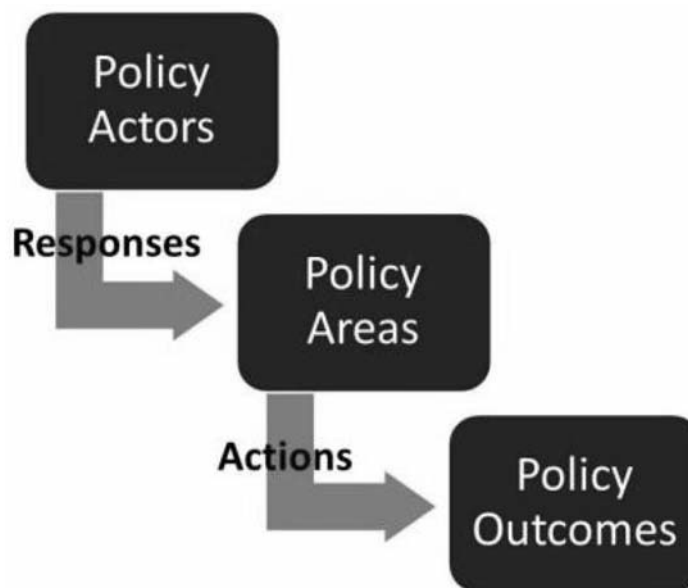
**Figure 1:** Relationships between policy responses and policy actions
*Source:* Adapted from Ref. 36

policy actions through the analysis of two urban regeneration case studies and to identify policy indicators and initiatives that maintain and develop strategies for urban growth. Although challenges to achieving good governance structures and enabling urban regeneration remain,[1] policy frameworks still depend on policy actions and outcomes as the key indicators for strategic urban change and development. Oatley[2] points out that the persistence of contemporary problems is due to the lack of response to societal needs and short-term strategic actions. Thus, the paper aims partially to meet the policy dimension of urban change by suggesting development of policy actions for regeneration of the city. This study briefly analyses two regeneration cases for their policy actions and implications for recent urban change. The information for the case studies is extracted from local plan reviews and other relevant policy documentation, as well as professional observation and research. In light of these, the following research questions have been posed to analyse this topic:

— How can urban regeneration programmes improve the design and planning of cities and reduce urban pressures?
— What measures and mechanisms enhance quality changes in respect of urban change?
— How can policy-driven strategies promote successful urban regeneration programmes?

Although there is increasing awareness of the implications of urban regeneration in planning and urban studies, and the term is significantly politicised, the study of policy action in regenerating the city has remained inadequate. What is striking is that, in urban policy studies, 'urban regeneration' is often not considered a multidisciplinary programme. Yet, as argued by Hastings,[3] 'there is a political consensus that a multi-sectoral partnership approach is essential to achieve urban regeneration'. Thus, it is essential to understand 'the relationship between political hierarchy and the complex webs of political organisation associated with urban governance' and

understand policy reforms, policy responses and actions that are required for the process of urban change and development. With empirical analysis and comparison of the two selected case studies, this study develops on existing policy actions and responses to explore the potential of urban regeneration towards urban growth and reversing urban decline. This study, in particular, touches on policy measures and mechanisms to achieve successful methods of regenerating the city. The final aims of this study are not to weaken the role of planners and designers, but rather to enhance their role in contributing to policy actions that produce effective strategies towards successful urban changes.

## UNDERSTANDING THE URBAN: POLICY FRAMEWORK AND URBAN CHANGE

Urban policies, through both traditional and enhanced urban programmes, generally aim to promote growth and reverse decline. Traditionally, they have been inputs for economic restructuring and are currently envisaged as enhancing social, political and economic factors of urban change.[4,5] Similarly, Atkinson and Moon argue that urban policy — successful or not — always participates as rudiments of urban change:

> 'Cities are continually changing and adapting in the face of economic pressures; at times they prosper, and at other times they decay. Urban policy is centrally involved in these changes. It seeks to foster prosperity or, more often, to bring about a return to prosperity and moderate the impact of decay.'[6]

Yet, in studying contemporary urban policies, it appears that prospects for future urban development and planning are no longer towards economic growth of cities, but are towards other dimensions of

regeneration,[7] with a reflection on integrated planning. Thus, one can argue that the impact of urban policy on urban change(s) is significant, and these are, as argued by Hambleton and Thomas,[8] based mainly on two fundamental objectives of 'employment opportunities' and 'residential attractiveness' (Figure 2). In this categorisation of objectives, three overlapping elements of 'security', 'access' and 'coordination' are essential to any policy framework. Correspondingly, Berg *et al.*[9] identify the following five elements as the main concerns for urban change:

1. economic competitiveness and social cohesion to be encouraged
2. transport to create prosperous linkages
3. retailing to enhance industries and economy
4. residential to promote quality of life
5. cultural/heritage to revive the sense of place.

In this respect, one can argue that urban policy and urban change are so interlocked that separating one from another can cause failure to achieve growth.

With the development of Keynesian policies, planning professionals and policy makers have been involved with regulating trends of urban change. Since then, many programmes and themes (ie privatisation, sustainability, regeneration and renewal) have been introduced and developed within a similar policy framework. Yet, in each programme, policy actions and policy outcomes have had different implications for urban change. Thus, these policy-driven interventions are inclined to differentiate and imply various strategies and effectively shape policy agendas.[10,11] But in general, their policy frameworks are socio-economically formed and are envisioned to tackle the crises of their times.[5] In the process of deindustrialisation from the 1960s to the
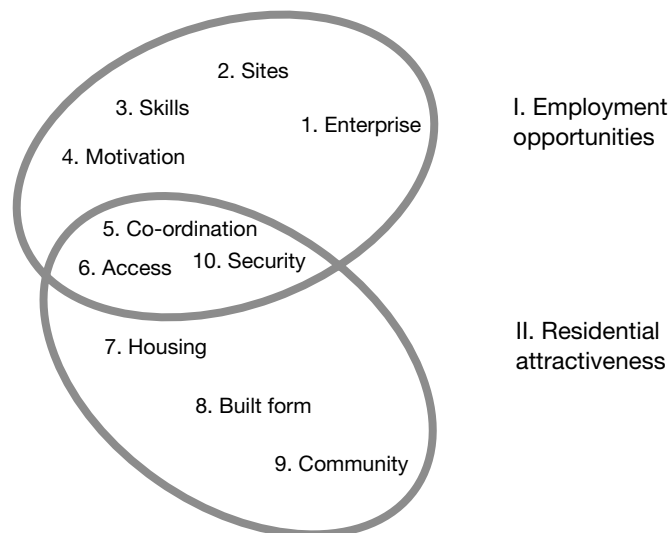
**Figure 2:** Higher-level and lower-level policy objectives
*Source:* Adapted from Ref. 8, p. 42

mid–1990s, and owing to rapid urban and economic restructuring, many cities faced new challenges, and many urban regeneration schemes were introduced throughout the UK. The significant population loss in most UK cities (or the so-called 'counter-urbanisation') and the rapid urban population change in major cities then became a challenge, as they affected urban living quality and demands. Since the mid–1970s, social polarisation, as one of such effects on social restructuring, maximised urban decay and deprivation.[9] This was at a time when many UK cities were faced with new challenges resulting from the international economic downturn and national recession.

From the mid–1970s to the late 1990s, there was an increasing economic emphasis on social balancing, and urban policies reflected these emerging challenges. For instance, since the mid–1970s, social equity issues have dominated urban spatial strategy, reinforcing the implications of socio–economic and land-use dynamics on urban policies. The need to maintain a secure economic base was increasingly critical to enhance the socio–economic potential of policy actions towards reversal of urban decline and deprivation. Since the 1990s, long–term socio–economic strategies and infrastructural demands (such as urban transport) have become dominating issues for many local governments. These were later the main inputs in the shift towards structuring urban locality and urban sustainability.[11,12]

In the UK, the growing globalisation movement and socio–economic integration have influenced the contents and objectives of policy framework and have initiated new strategies and policies towards the revival of urban democracy. These inputs were proposed to boost economic, environmental and social enterprises in order to articulate societal needs and achieve a significant degree of societal participation.[8] Moreover, it is argued by many authors[5,11,13] that effective policies and integrated strategies produced demonstrable progress for development of policy tools and enhancement of qualities for the rapid societal changes and urban transformation.
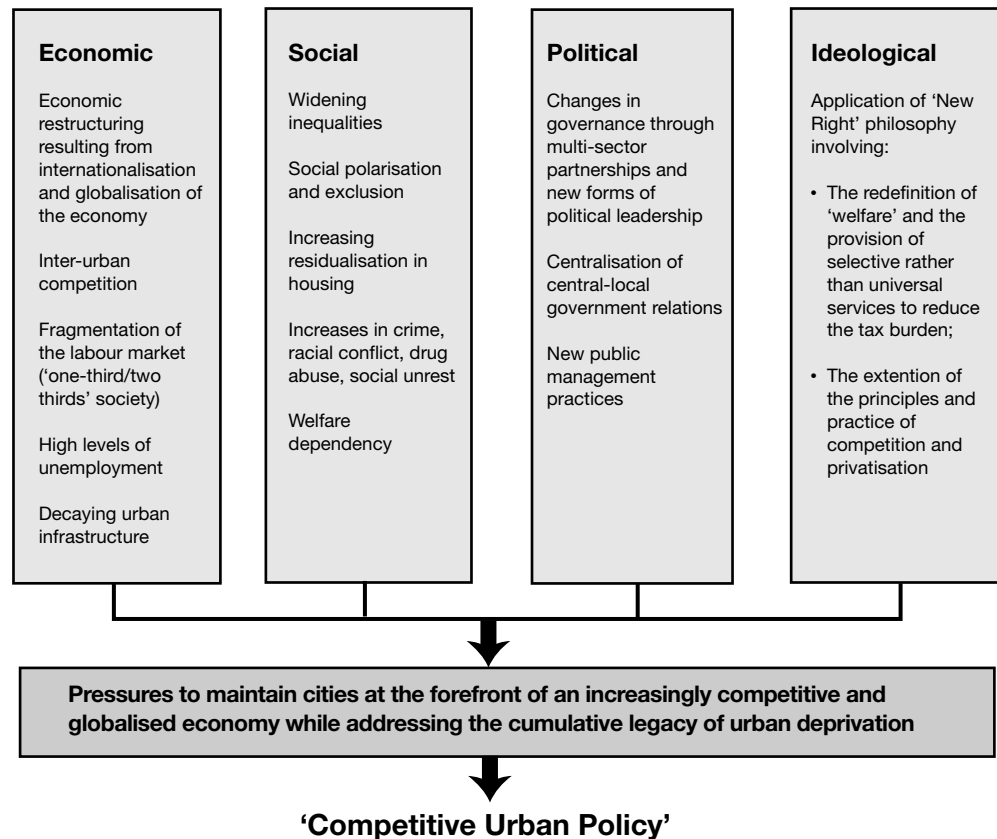
| Economic | Social | Political | Ideological |
|---|---|---|---|
| Economic restructuring resulting from internationalisation and globalisation of the economy | Widening inequalities | Changes in governance through multi-sector partnerships and new forms of political leadership | Application of 'New Right' philosophy involving: |
| Inter-urban competition | Social polarisation and exclusion | Centralisation of central–local government relations | • The redefinition of 'welfare' and the provision of selective rather than universal services to reduce the tax burden; |
| Fragmentation of the labour market ('one-third/two thirds' society) | Increasing residualisation in housing | New public management practices | • The extention of the principles and practice of competition and privatisation |
| High levels of unemployment | Increases in crime, racial conflict, drug abuse, social unrest | | |
| Decaying urban infrastructure | Welfare dependency | | |

**Pressures to maintain cities at the forefront of an increasingly competitive and globalised economy while addressing the cumulative legacy of urban deprivation**

**'Competitive Urban Policy'**

**Figure 3:** Processes shaping contemporary urban policy
*Source:* Adapted from Ref. 2, p. 202

## A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: TOWARDS STRATEGIES FOR URBAN REGENERATION

Since the late 1980s, trends in societal change and urban transformation have been mainly due to the rise in city competitiveness.[5] Some perspectives, such as improvement in the social and physical environment, have led to economic competitiveness (nationally) and, for the larger cities, towards possible entrepreneurialism (internationally).[2,10] Thus, a majority of the newly adapted urban policies were restructured for further development of policy-driven — yet integrated — urban changes (see Figure 3).

In the past three decades, regeneration has been one of the most effective tools of urban policy[11] and has developed into a market-led programme for the purpose of urban change (ie since the 1980s). It has also developed with four main objectives:[11]

1. To revive the economy of the urban, and in particular local economies and industries as the key assets.
2. To improve the social and physical qualities of the urban and to revitalise structural, functional and image obsolescence.
3. To enhance accessibility and connectivity and to promote well-organised circulation within urban areas.
4. To influence land-use, housing stock and planning targets for future development.

Furthermore, in both theory and practice, urban regeneration's concern for the concept of revitalisation is principally through recreating the urban structure by and within the available assets of the urban environments and society. As a result, for the past two to three decades and before 2010, a new set of urban policies (ie predominantly Labour-based policies) have reflected on changing social standards to promote innovative dynamics or to enhance adaptive ways of living.[2] Nevertheless, such interventions developed into regional demands, and less has been undertaken to promote quality of life. Since the new Coalition Government took office in 2010, regeneration policies have been closely linked with economic growth.[14,15] Since then, an approach towards pro–growth localism[15] has been developing rapidly in the form of so-called 'sustainable development'. It is pointed out that, under the Coalition Government, local growth has become a central matter, 'both in relation to planning and urban regeneration'.[16] In this respect, less focus has been given to longer-term urban regeneration, indicating a significant reduction in 'annual spending on core regeneration programmes' in the UK.[17] Therefore, in this situation of rapid change for urban regeneration policies in the UK, it is crucial to investigate approaches that can demonstrate measures and mechanisms of success and/or failure.

The proposed conceptual framework for this research paper is to evaluate policies and their outcomes in the face of urban change and regeneration. With a focus on approaches to urban regeneration in the UK, it is important to identify how the concept can be useful for the policy and management of the cities.[18] With such scope, and the growth of a bottom–up approach to urban regeneration,[19] policy frameworks are no longer wish lists, and policy actions are no longer criteria for

the city's urban growth and development. The analytical understanding of urban regeneration, through a comprehensive understanding of its political structure, process and development, can therefore lead towards a better evaluation of applying it as a catalyst for change beyond policy actions.

## CATALYST FOR CHANGE: BEYOND POLICY ACTIONS

Many systematic attempts have been undertaken using various policy actions and interventions, but none has yet managed to measure up to notions of well–being and liveability in the face of overwhelming deprivation and urban decline. For some cases of major multicultural cities, certain strategies (such as socio–economic interventions) have confronted urban decay, but for many small and medium–sized UK cities, urban decay and deprivation still remain the major urban pressures. Since deindustrialisation, social depression and perceptible social segregation, such as unemployment and social inequity, have become the most challenging urban problems. Thus, when the Labour Government gained power in 1997, they proposed policy actions to sustain the prominence of private–public partnerships and community integration. This proposal, strengthened land use and pro–planning schemes for the re-creation of the national economic foundation, but cities were faced with further unforeseen inequalities (mainly social) in this process.[13] The inclusive physical and structural system, as one of the well-known approaches since the end of World War II, could not fulfil the substantial needs of urban growth and development. In this context, Ward[10] refers to the main cause of urban decline as structural, rather than social: 'The main source of decline was broadly structural, so that inner-city areas contained older

industries and less efficient plants, more vulnerable to closure or job loss.'

This argument also reflects on the theory that policies, acting as restrictions, have often fragmented the possibility of re-using the vacant and deprived areas.[13] They simultaneously undermine the process of renovation and revitalisation of the key urban environments. Therefore, during the process of urban change, lack of integration between structural and socio-economic inputs became increasingly critical. Yet, in recent years, there has been a significant development of sustainable (urban) development and urban regeneration in British urban policy, but despite this emergence, little has been done to achieve sustainability.[20] With the lack of coordination between the two and the emphasis on urban regeneration, but mostly economic regeneration, there are conflicting points on how cities are structured, redeveloped and regenerated to fulfil both social and economic demands. Such matters, over a period of a time, emerge as urban pressures or problems that require further policy actions at later stages of growth and development.

The main urban problems in the UK since the Keynesian policies can be simply divided into six systematic — but interlocked — stages:[10,13,21]

1. Post-war immediate needs to rebuild and recreate the whole nation as well as re-establishing the economic stability through industrial sector and immigration.
2. Lack of quality for the rebuilt and revived areas in face of the fragile private–public partnerships.
3. Lack of renovation progress and secured funding for major urban developments.
4. Urban and physical decay as part of the growing economic decline.
5. Cultural decline, socio-economic pressures and lack of liveability in the urban environments.
6. The emergence of urban sustainability and, finally, the recent economic recession.

Of all urban problems in the past half century or so, there has been a continuous 'urban decline' (or lack of sustainable urban growth). Consequently, many researchers[9,10,13,22] and professionals (such as, urban designers and planners, urban geographers and urban economists) consider urban decline as the foremost failure of the urban. Owing to the fast-advancing technology and socially related factors adapting and changing rapidly, it has become even more challenging to take control of urban growth and development (eg for policy makers and planning professions). In addition, in the face of unpredicted urban changes, political parties and local governments test various theories and consider policy actions and programmes as catalysts for urban growth and urban change.

Some interventions and policy responses to socio-economic needs have created a period of success, and some have left urban failure untouched. For instance, foreign migration (mainly urban) proposals, with concerns for urban growth, once revitalised many of the UK's inner cities. While vast areas of the UK's major cities became vacant as a result of deindustrialisation, the political response to such rapid transformation supported many against decline.[10] In subsequent decades, such radical political decisions supported different approaches to the growth of enterprises within those newly created societies. Thus, it is hard to imagine cities without change, and one can argue that the city's requirement to regenerate is beyond its policy remit. Thus, in urban regeneration, both policy framework and policy continuity play major roles in structuring policy actions for urban change. Furthermore, by

discussing urban regeneration, one is required to explore the 'policy context in which it operates'[22] and contextualise the need for such initiatives on both city and community levels.

## CASE STUDIES OF URBAN REGENERATION: CITY CENTRES OF DERBY AND NOTTINGHAM

For this research study, the central urban areas of two neighbouring cities — Derby and Nottingham — are selected as comparable case studies. This selection is due to both cities' diversity, multicultural structure and policy frameworks. The competitiveness between these neighbouring cities is believed to be affecting the major sectors of their urban design and planning process (eg in political, economic and social dimensions). Cullingworth[23] argues that regional economies generally grow in a similar and comparable way within the sense of competitiveness, even though their strategies aim for different solutions. Therefore, this objective adds intellectual significance to the value of both case studies through the analysis of their strategies for regenerating the city. Since the rise of the industrial revolution, the city centres of Derby and Nottingham have experienced constant change and have been performing as integrated parts of the city. Nevertheless, since the period of deindustrialisation, both cities have undertaken various approaches to regeneration. This has commonly occurred as a result of rapid urban change happening predominantly in urban cores and in the inner cities of the UK.

The empirical value of the study focuses on the novelty of the proposed conceptual framework towards policy evaluation. By analysing the regeneration of both city centres over a certain period of time, the study is structured in a case study comparative model. This analytical

overview of two different policy actions on urban regeneration programmes will offer broad knowledge of how policies may fail or succeed in the face of urban change. The author suggests that this assessment will then contribute to further analysis of policy-driven strategies and urban changes that may support development of policy actions for successful urban regeneration. Further elaboration on policy implications and urban regeneration methods will help designers and policy makers to consider contextualised methods of regenerating the city.

### Introduction to the City of Derby: Policy actions and strategies

The City of Derby, as one of the major urban districts in the East Midlands, is one of the most vital centres of the UK's central region. It was once one of the main cores of the industrial revolution and still embraces several major manufacturers and industries. Derby gained its city status at a very late stage in June 1977,[24] and as a result, it faced rapid transformations from the early 1980s. The most recent major urban change for central Derby is the recently built shopping centre (Derby 'Westfield Shopping Centre' from 2007 to 2014; and now renamed to 'Intu Derby' since 2014), which was completed in autumn 2007.

The local government's approach towards new developments and regeneration has been in favour of pro-planning schemes and has been developed concurrently with the economic competitiveness of the region. In recent years, this approach has developed strategies to enhance urban living quality and secure an urban renaissance. Derby's major programmes, generated by the preceding Labour Government, are mostly long-term schemes, and often face radical changes in
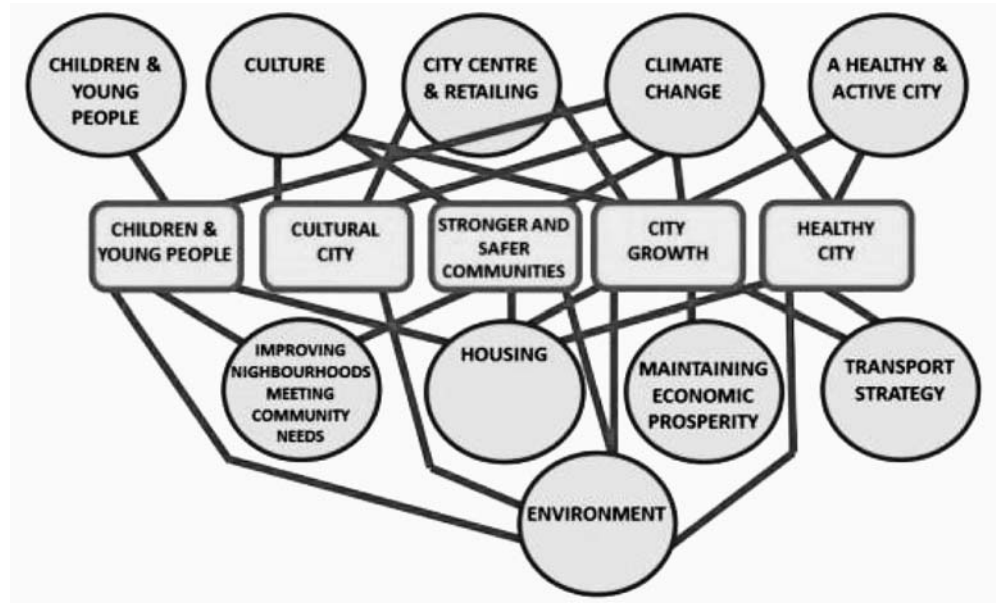
**Figure 4:** Relationship between Core Strategy Chapters and Sustainable Community Strategy 'Cities'
*Source:* Adapted from 'Development Plan Document: Core Strategy Issues and Ideas Paper', by Derby City Council — February 2009

the policy framework. Under the Coalition Government, however, urban regeneration policies are weakening, and long-term development plans are either on hold or are in the phase of (another) change. The recent redevelopment proposals for Derby's central urban areas have significantly decreased the effect of private–public participation on the city's rapid urban changes. But urban sustainability programmes have consistently encouraged some of the Conservative-based policy actions to maintain liveability and social cohesion.

Protection of the socio-economic equalities in the society has always been a challenge for the city's policy makers (see Figure 4). The socio-economic differences between southern and northern parts of the city centre do not represent the hierarchy, but the inequalities within the urban areas and the overall urban economic structure. Berg *et al.*[9] refer to such unbalanced economic restructuring as a result of the process for urban renaissance:

'The process of urban renaissance has begun and core cities have come through the worst of economic restructuring. However, national policy is intended to make English cities as economically competitive as the most successful cities in Europe.'[9]

Urban policy actions, however, are not only to impose economic regeneration, but are also developed to restructure the city socially for better management and growth. This is expected to halt the city's decline at certain times and with certain environmental dimensions.[6] Nevertheless, Derby's local government plans to move gradually by responding to the community's need first and solving the problems later. Thus, the policy actions from the last Labour Government have rapidly restructured the city's economy and have developed a breakthrough for the city to grow into a self-efficient city. Although pro–growth localism is central to the Coalition Government's plan, it is not necessarily showing any major innovation or indication of regeneration plans. This may ultimately cause another decline in

the development and regeneration of cities like Derby:

> 'The Government may have good reasons for its proposed reforms to the planning system, but it is not clear that they will have a significant bearing upon regeneration … Planning has in fact brought significant benefits to regeneration, in terms of coordination, community involvement and town centre preservation.'[17]

Undoubtedly, the 'vibrant economy' has been the most fundamental concept in Derby's recent changes. Similarly, economic prosperity is central for the city's future planning and development.[25] Derby's local government has reflected on the government guidance on 'Quality of life' to assess the city's poor fabric and deprived urban environments, which are causing damage to urban quality and community well-being.[25,26] In the face of inevitable urban change, this creates a new challenge to differentiate between the substantial and unworthy urban values.

### Urban change and policy: Derby city centre

The recent urban changes in Derby's city centre are mainly due to the policy responses to the city's demand for urban competitiveness (ie mainly economic). Cochrane refers to such urban changes as activities undertaken by the essential components of the city's image:

> 'The city is being reimagined — or reimaged — as an economic, political, and cultural entity which must seek to undertake entrepreneurial activities to enhance its competitiveness.'[5]

Other major aspects, such as structural inequality and economic depression, are also considered the most influential factors for policy responses to Derby's city centre redevelopment. As Morris[27] argues, cities with sole industry or no specific dedication to industries are more likely to experience long-term decline in their major urban environments. For Derby, this was no exception, as socio–economic pressures have been the major inequality since the mid–1990s.

Derby's new shopping mall, also known as the 'Intu Derby' (previously 'Westfield Shopping Center' until early 2014), is a new development completed in 2007 (see Figure 5). The city's provision of retailing and shopping units has been regenerated since then, but the city centre's new image is focused on new retailing units and is less towards the cultural quarter of the city. The city's lack of industry, despite having the Rolls–Royce factories (a huge complex in the southern part of the city), has resulted in the economic regeneration of the city towards such provision in regional competitiveness. The new shopping centre's opening overlapping with the economic recession of the year 2008 resulted in the local economy's downfall and a decline in the socio–economic qualities of the city centre. The overprovision of retailing, on the one hand, and the conceptualisation of partnership and the urban regeneration approach in Derby, on the other, both demonstrate the lack of response to existing values among the economic and societal demands.

The regeneration schemes, since the evaluation of such problems, have addressed the economic depression in the cost of cultural values. Nevertheless, activities undertaken as policy responses to regeneration demonstrate a tangible approach to urban development:

> 'While policies of regeneration have focused on the recycling and modernisation of adjacent and deprived areas … the reality has often been … to retain private developer interests as well as prospective buyers.'[21]

But securing the urban renaissance has not been effectively integrated within the
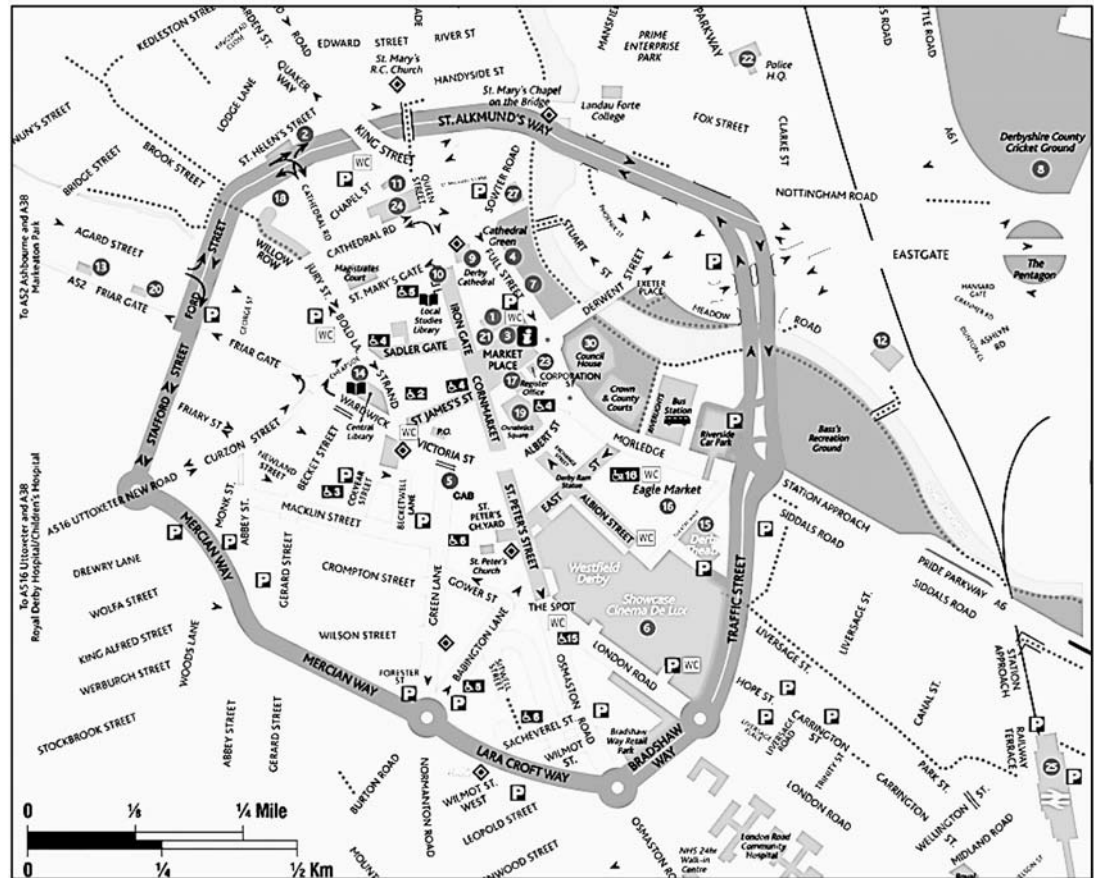
**Figure 5:** The spatial layout of Derby's city centre: towards the north, is the Cathedral Quarter and towards the South (within the dotted lines) is the Intu Derby Shopping Centre, previously the 'Westfield Shopping Centre'

*Source:* Derby City Council map

framework of policy actions in Derby. Problematic systems, such as emphasising the wrong focal point, deficient transport management and lack of adequate distribution of commercial values within the core of the city, have introduced further challenges and newer urban inequalities to the City of Derby.

## Introduction to the City of Nottingham: Policy actions and strategies

The City of Nottingham, renowned for the Robin Hood legend as well as its esteemed lace-making production, is both a unitary authority and a city. Nottingham's urban areas cover all adjoining suburbs and districts beyond the

city's historical boundary.[28] The City of Nottingham obtained city status in 1897 and is now known for its thriving city centre, which includes the fifth most popular shopping hub in the UK. Nottingham is a city of creative industries and has many liveable areas where local people are part of the social life of the city. The City of Nottingham, alongside its neighbouring cities, has experienced many changes in the past few decades. In general, the foundation of the policy framework (including the major urban programmes in Nottingham) has focused mainly on regeneration schemes and social inclusion to enhance the city's developments in a sustainable approach.[29] In recent years, in particular, the local

government has developed a series of mixed strategies and approaches towards the city's socio-economic growth.

Over the past three decades, the major objectives of different local governments have changed throughout the city's growth. These objectives were often towards the reduction of inequalities (both social and economic) and development of economic efficiency in the city; hence, Nottingham's urban changes are a combination of dynamic policy-driven strategies.[6,8] The process and management of urban change in Nottingham reflect on the city's economic and social demands. This process aims to develop new programmes in order to promote well-being, quality and sustainability within the city's major urban areas.[29] Moreover, despite an economic trend indicating a 20–25 per cent loss of industry in Nottingham since 1995,[30] the city's main industries have grown radically for the past two decades. As a distinct approach to regenerating the city, Nottingham has not considered a particular theme throughout its recent changes, but has enhanced its urban potential and has developed in partnership with private and public forces. As well as a major economic base in the UK, Nottingham is now transformed into a major creative centre. With such strong economic competitiveness (ie both nationally and within the European context), the city's growth has been developing towards maintaining social cohesion and social integration in the city centre and some of the vibrant inner cities.[21]

### Urban change and policy: Nottingham city centre

In recent years, the local government has specified three major regeneration zones: towards the south, the east and the waterside of Nottingham's city centre (see Figure 6). These deprived and

disconnected areas are within the poor fabric of Nottingham's city centre.[29] These districts are expected to be regenerated by private sector property development, which is expected to motivate economic benefits and mechanisms. In a similar context, Hambleton and Thomas[8] point out that 'government has emphasised private sector property development as an approach to urban regeneration believing that such a strategy would stimulate wider economic benefits'. Thus, one can argue that local government operates predominantly within the framework of zoning to consider responses to certain demands and detailed characteristics, as well as district planning around the city centre.[29] Mixed-use developments are widely encouraged to reduce the chance of deprived and vacant areas, which many cities have previously experienced after completion of their new developments.

Since 1997, the approach from Nottingham's local government has increasingly concerned urban renaissance and urban sustainability themes. The city's recent developments have precisely distributed urban qualities of the city (eg mainly social) within a suitable public–private partnership. Therefore, the local government considers mixed–use and complementary developments to secure the city's renaissance and sustainability:

> 'City Center sites are strategically important by virtue of their location and size, and their development will make a major contribution to the continuing renaissance of the City Centre. Development proposals should therefore, wherever possible, comprise a range of compatible uses.'[29]

Consequently, the author argues that community safety within the city centre of Nottingham has been achieved through the creation of vibrant and liveable urban environments. The local government allocates certain dedication to its recently grown industries and has also introduced
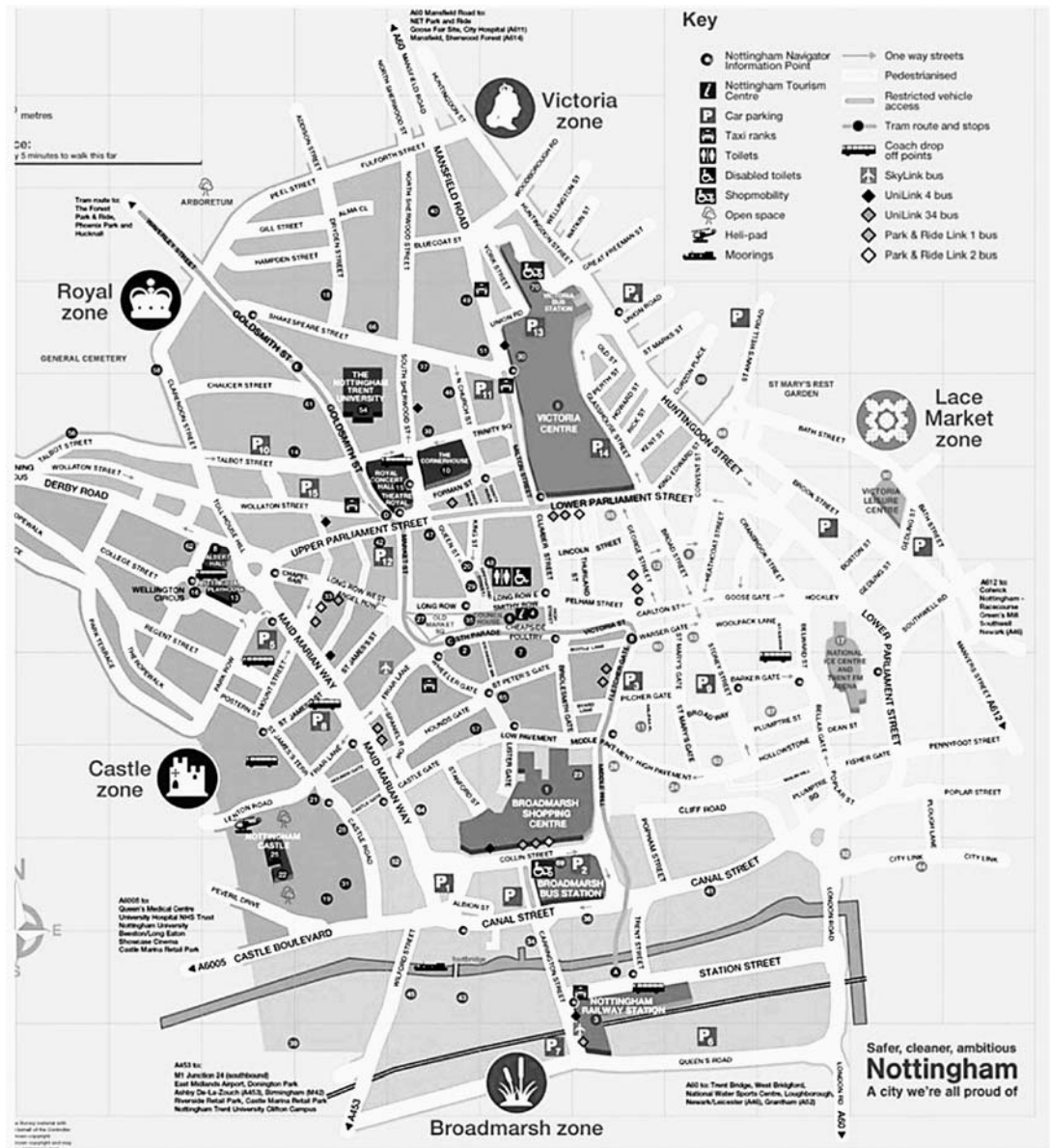
**Figure 6:** Nottingham city centre's zoning & districts
*Source:* Nottingham City Council map

city centre commercial–living districts to increase the city's vitality. Finally, the most noticeable achievement of Nottingham's city centre is an enduring sense of place in the face of many urban transformations over the past two decades.

## Comparison analysis of Derby and Nottingham

For Derby, the city's policy actions until a decade ago have always taken a line between social and economic approaches and, until the preceding Labour

Government's arrival (pre–2010), none of the policy inputs had yet attempted to establish a mixed approach to balance the social and economic aspects of Derby's changes. Nevertheless, the preceding Labour Government's policy inputs for Derby conceived more of the national policies and, therefore, concerned the economy (ie mainly retail as a shopping centre) as the primary strategy to enhance city life and urban qualities. For Blowers *et al.*,[13] indoor shopping centres are merely chains of individual and detached stores under a single roof, unless they can contribute to the hierarchy of other shopping centres in the city and then increase the chance of reversing decline within the neighbouring areas. For the City of Derby, however, the pressures that occurred for many years as a result of the economic decline were not eliminated by the new economic restructuring, as there was no significant hierarchy for social and recreational consideration of the city.

In contrast, for the City of Nottingham, the primary urban changes were based on promotion of local economies into characterised and sociable environments. Retailing, as a progressing industry since the 1980s, not only regenerated the central core's real estate, but also revived the concealed character and the infrastructure of the communities.[2,31] The city's policy makers articulated major qualities of 'accessibility, legibility and variety'[32,33] to re-establish hierarchy and prosperity throughout the interlocked communities of the city. For the local government, each urban environment is recognised as having its own individual demand and capacity. As a result, for some regions, recreational provisions have become a boosting industry and for some, local economies remain the key assets. In contrast to the City of Derby, Nottingham's local government has always protected or developed industries towards a purposeful

hierarchy to attract investment and competitiveness. Although the selection of initiatives and local enterprises in Nottingham has become a long-term approach, its boundaries are apparent, it is effectively developing, and it responds to different communities in a more considerate approach. This allows for urban change as a mechanism for growth and, as Cochrane[5] acknowledges, 'seeks to identify outcome goals rather than output measures'. Policy-driven socio–economic approaches in Nottingham have not merely stabilised the city's changes, but have responded to certain communities and economic competitiveness in a broader context. Such an approach has supported the city to achieve social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

Unlike Nottingham (see Figure 7), the lack of connectivity in Derby's city centre remains the key problem for the intensifying urban decay (ie particularly for the cultural quarter of the city centre). The city's poor transport management is insufficient to make up for the lost values. The transport system in Derby does not contribute to the city's constant changes, whereas the two well–located transport hubs in the city centre of Nottingham have enhanced social cohesion in the face of the rapid urban changes.[29] It is certain that the failure of the public services to supply adequate connectivity and legibility in Derby's city centre is due to unplanned transport policy inputs. The lack of pedestrian flow in parts of Derby's city centre (ie the Cultural Quarter) conflicts with socio–economic values of the city and forms a polarisation impact on the city centre's new structure. The transport proposals for the eastern part of the central core have been concerned with the creation of major hubs, while the volumetric dimension of Derby's city centre does not seem to have such development capacity.[25] Therefore, the
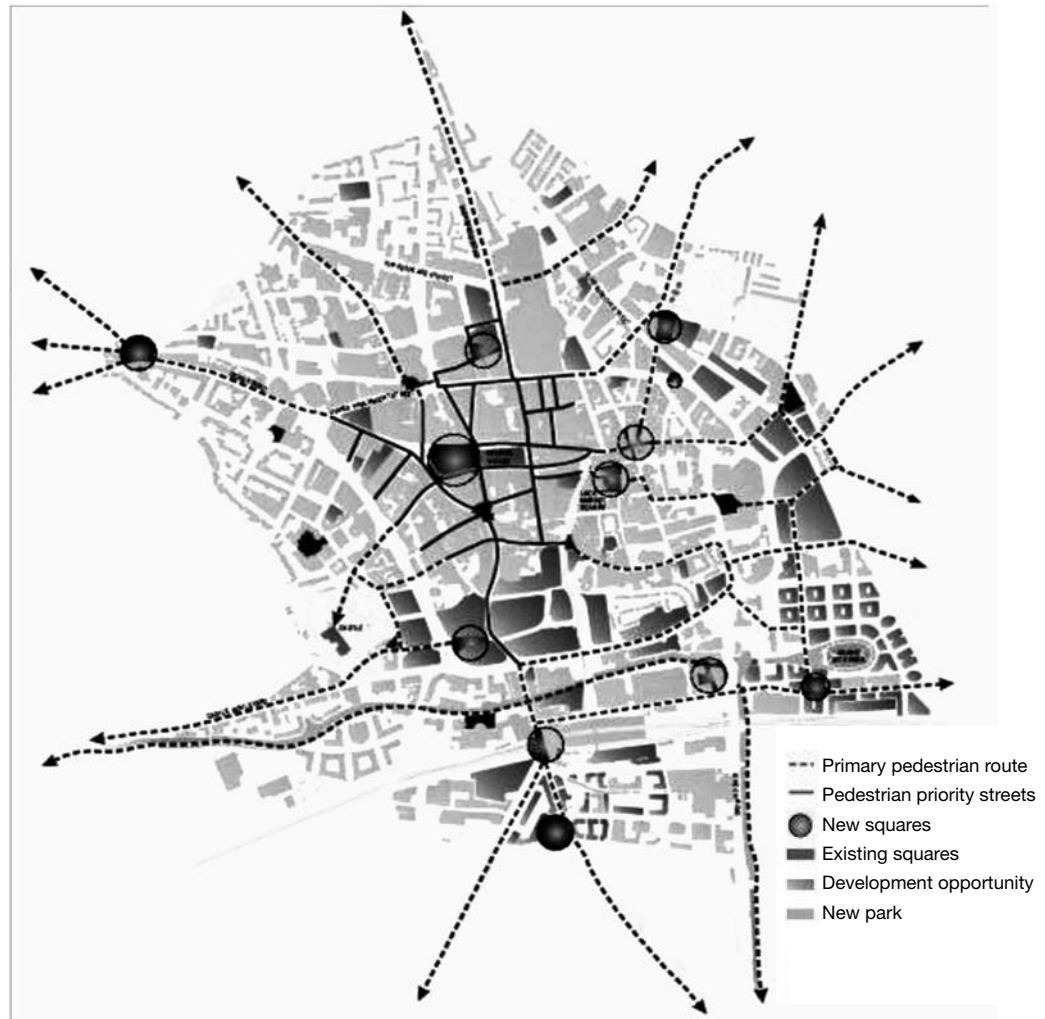
**Figure 7:** 'Safe and attractive streets, squares and parks that are filled with people make successful cities. Nottingham has created one of the most extensive networks of pedestrian streets in Europe, and has given pedestrians priority over traffic throughout the core of the city. Where walking routes once crossed busy roads through threatening subways, there are now direct crossings on the shared surfaces. In the next five to ten years, 12 new squares are planned for the city.'

*Source:* City Centre Masterplan for 2005–2015

unequal and imbalanced distribution of inputs retains inconsistent socio-economic exclusion in the city centre of Derby. For Nottingham, in contrast, all quarters within the city centre are linked by the public transport system. Thus, population density is maintained in respect to the hierarchy of the circulation. This transport management, lacking in Derby's centre, preserves social control, which is essential for issues of urban safety, liveability and economic vitality.

## STRATEGIC URBAN CHANGES: REGENERATING THE CITY

Ward[10] argues that, since regeneration, some central land-use deprivation has been reduced. The forces from policy tools, as Ward[10] describes, were initially aimed to protect the city's functional values and enrich urban growth with an approach towards urban fabric innovation. For the case of Derby's city centre development, the clash of functional and physical demands turned into dominance

**Figure 8:** 'Nottingham is unique among the core cities in retaining its medieval character. Limits on the city's expansion up until the mid-19th century mean that buildings from all periods of the city's growth sit cheek by jowl in the dense core of the city. This eclectic mix of styles is the essence of 'Nottinghamness' … The historic character of Nottingham was at its peak in the 1930s; since then it has been undermined to an extent by unsympathetic development, highway engineering and the decline of the areas adjoining the city centre … Nottingham has experienced considerable growth in recent years and the council has produced the Nottingham City Centre Masterplan to shape and guide this growth.'

*Source:* Nottingham Urban Design Guide and City Centre Masterplan, 2005–2015

of a shopping mall (Intu Derby Shopping Centre), while other quarters of the city centre were forced into deprivation. Nevertheless, one can argue that functionality is an essential element of urban change, but this should not occur merely through the creation of unbalanced urban enclaves such as the shopping malls:

> 'A city needs an Oxford Street the same way that the body needs an oesophagus or a lower intestine: It's not exactly pretty, but it does a job. Shopping malls, by contrast, are about the removal of sensory choice from the physical environment. They create a uniform orderliness the better to concentrate consumers' minds on the merchandise. They offer choice in abundance, but only on things you have to pay.'[21]

For Nottingham, however, both its shopping malls have been successfully integrated with the surrounding environment, and the city centre's capacity allows for such possibilities (see Figure 8). The sizes of the shopping facilities in Nottingham are in balance with the city's

overall fabric, while, in Derby, its new shopping centre has seized a big portion of the central core. The abrupt urban renewal scheme in Derby's city centre into a single retailing plan has shifted the whole city's structure into a visible — but not a lively — urban composition. In Derby's recent urban changes, existing social, economic and physical characters have not been considered thoroughly as part of the enabling mechanisms of the city's regeneration schemes. In comparison with Derby, Nottingham's regeneration schemes have enhanced the available mechanisms far more. These have helped remarkably to reverse inequalities and revitalise the central urban quarters of the city.

It may appear to be a long time since Atkinson[34] discussed the issues of 'partnership and empowerment in contemporary British urban regeneration', yet the significance of social discourses and relations that he argued for then remain valid today. For Atkinson,[34] the process of urban regeneration is the main element in societal empowerment and enhancement. The process of urban
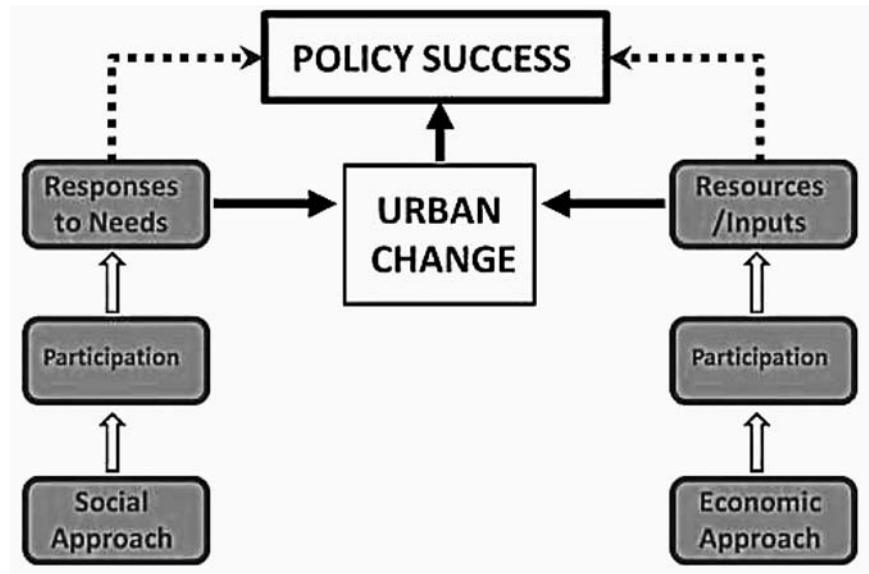
**Figure 9:** Key issues on policy success and the parallel strategy for social and economic approaches
*Source:* Author

regeneration, in the case of Derby, is driven by economics and towards achieving certain demands for urban growth and future perspective of development. Examining the case of Nottingham, one can see that both the physical regeneration undertaken by the local regeneration company and the social renewal developed by the Local Strategic Partnerships One Nottingham are considered as two mainstreams of urban regeneration for the city.[22] The city's regeneration, as such, is to encounter 'a range of socio–economic indicators'[22] to resolve the major pressures on the city, such as, employability, security and inequality. Also, study of both cases reveals the lack of policy response to inner cities where multicultural potential of the city exists. Finally, both cities' attempts to gain economic stability will remain a major challenge in the face of any future urban changes. The later parts of this research paper cross–reference the empirical values of the study and explore the relation between policy actions and policy implications of both urban regeneration case studies.

## FURTHER DISCUSSION: POLICY ACTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Policy actions are often applied within a political structure and are constantly influenced by the problems and possibilities of the city. Any advancement in policy tools is considered a response to certain partnerships and demands in the city, which may also be regarded as a response to particular urban challenges that could generate appropriate programmes and strategies for the city's growth and development. For Berg *et al.*,[9] the source of such strategies and challenges depends on national perspectives, within which certain priorities and patterns of spatial and economic development are formed or even re–formed. Berg *et al.*[9] refer to this emergence of issues and challenges from major national perspectives, such as 'social problem, balanced urban system, infrastructure and national housing, accessibility and the environment, sustainability and Cultural Heritage'. These are regarded as some of the main sources of regional and local policy systems.
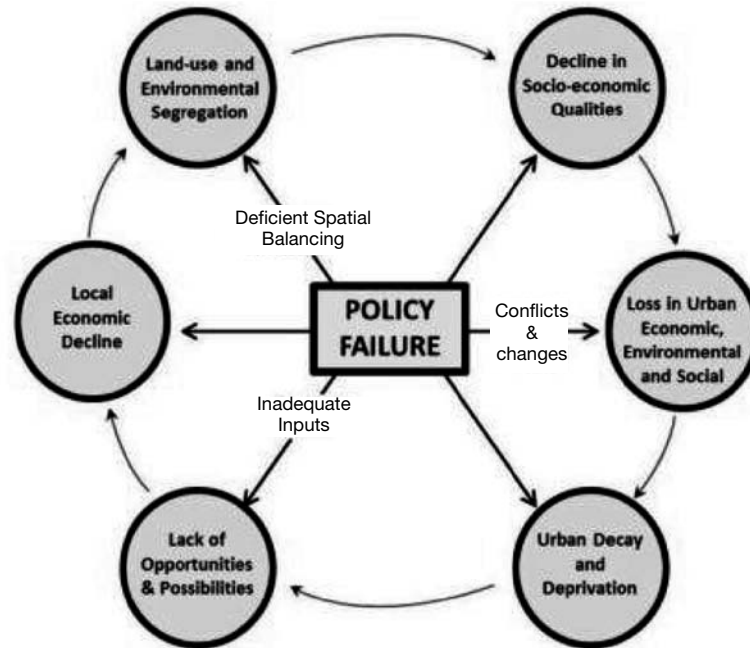
**Figure 10:** Key Issues on policy failure and the cycle of inequalities and losses in urban growth

*Source:* Author

The success of policy actions are mainly through parallel and mutual social and economic approaches towards urban change (see Figure 9). Therefore, socio–economic priorities are essential for urban change, and sufficient participation is required for urban growth and development. Oatley generalises the fundamental priorities for urban growth that potentially influence policy inputs and decisions:

> 'Key priorities [for growth] include strengthening local and regional economies, increasing economic opportunities for deprived areas, transforming urban environments into safer, greener, more healthy places to live and work, rebuilding neighbourhoods, enhancing the quality of life and ensuring that sustainable development takes place.'[2]

Therefore, it is this series of particular social and economic responses with which governments need to enhance urban growth. Hence, as Cochrane[5] asserts, social demands are as important as economic problems. He also argues that local governments need to exploit and distribute their strategies consistently to respond to the local needs more effectively. In contrast to policy success, issues of failure in policies can be expressed as a continuous cycle of problems and deficient responses that are often considered as conflicting with urban change. In general, it is the inadequate inputs of certain policy actions and their constant conflicts and changes that preserve enduring urban decline and deprivation. Consequently, Berg *et al.*[9] argue that the foundation of urban failures has remained unchanged for the past two decades. Such urban pressures are undoubtedly influential elements in shaping unmanageable urban decline, in which 'a powerful centre and weak periphery, lack of metropolitan government, limited regional organisations, and increasingly complex urban governance' are apparent.[9]

Moreover, many authors[2,9,35] argue that. since the 1970s economic downturn, urban policies, in general, have failed to regenerate many UK city centres and metropolitan districts (see Figure 10). For inner cities and the edges of city centres, in particular, urban policies have not yet reversed decline, nor have they decreased the crime rate, poverty, unemployment and homelessness.[35] More than a decade on from this statement, most of the inner cities in the UK's major cities are still facing deprivation and are even more insecure than they were in the 1970s and the 1980s. It is debatable that policy makers have perhaps been overly concerned with policy strength, but achieved too little in shaping manageable urban growth.

## TOWARDS REVIVING THE CITY AND SUSTAINING URBAN GROWTH

'If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, the poor men's cottages princes' palaces.' (*Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 2: cited in Ref. 36)

From combined economic, social and political perspectives, cities are the most fundamental assets of growth. It is therefore a major requirement of cities that strategies and programmes impose a constant cycle of change. As a result, policies are now aimed at harmonising urban environments to stabilise socio-economic growth. Almost all UK local governments have either focused on growth by strengthening urban policies and programmes or have considered approaches to reversing their effects.[13] In general, policies are identified by local, regional and national governments as the most effective tools for urban change. As argued earlier, many themes and programmes have been developing since the rise of Keynesian policies. Both urban

sustainability and urban renaissance are substantial programmes for stabilising the economic and social strength of urban regions. These two major thematic programmes emphasise mainly regional and local growth and enhance the socio-economic provisions of the city.[5] Although it is not expected for urban problems to vanish suddenly, it is anticipated that future urban policies will shift towards the development of socio-economic urban values and quality of life in many small and medium-sized UK cities. It is also important to note that policy actions should not necessarily be considered as a fixed approach towards strategy making for urban changes, but should become articulated in a cycle of development to address the issues of decline and deprivation in the city. This study therefore argues that strategies such as urban renewal do not allow flexibility in improvement and achieving a cycle of development for identifying and undertaking the urban pressures that often occur over a period of time. It is also argued that promotion of any city comes with quality in productivity; therefore, cities seek to promote their images and identities, while 'image promotion and marketing seem to be becoming ever important'.[11] Furthermore, the author argues that, for many UK cities, what is emerging is the unforeseen economic, health and social problems that are either effects of failed urban transformations or are themselves creators of false urban changes. What is required urgently is to invest broadly and encourage capable and existing industries in order to reverse market failures and halt or reverse urban decline. In addition, policy actions need to face sudden changes and extirpate the source of enduring problems:

'What is crucial [for urban policies] is to identify the forces which have created the problems and to establish means of

stemming or redirecting them … Though the current rhetoric of urban policy is about partnership and strategy, the reality is an agglomeration of initiatives and agencies which even the professional is hard passed to comprehend.'[12]

Similarly, throughout this empirical study one can witness the ever developing dynamics of urban change. This emergence in medium-scale cities, in particular, indicates the great potential to achieve sustainable design and planning approaches to tackle and reduce urban pressures.

Furthermore, it is evident that many national forces for regeneration and development (such as, English Partnerships, Urban Task Force and DETR) have introduced approaches towards liveability, sustainability, social cohesion and economic attractiveness. Although these have offered comprehensive propositions for regeneration at a national level, none has yet expressed a national approach towards reversing urban deprivation and economic decline. This is almost impossible, as such a proposal would require identification of the local and regional problems rather than national problems. Even though these policy actions are delivered, despite the lack of response to urban decline, it appears unlikely that 'future attempts at remarking, revitalising, and otherwise rebuilding British cities will turn away from value of tracing out these [interlinked policy agenda from regeneration, policing and disorder] connections'.[21] It is also arguable that future policies and urban changes would focus on symbolising certain inner cities as well as reviving the characteristics of cities through contextualised regeneration schemes.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined two urban regeneration case studies: one with an approach to structural and physical regeneration for the purpose of economic (re)development; and another with an approach to socio–economic improvement through consideration of the existing values and mechanisms. As one of the successful outcomes of policy actions in urban regeneration, the integration of local economies and potential industries is recognised as a way to maximise the socio-economic benefits of a city that may have an impact on the reduction of urban decline and deprivation. Considering both the tangible and intangible existing values of the city (eg local economies and industries) as measures and potential mechanisms for successful urban regeneration is certainly the key to revising policy responses and policy actions that may occur in the cycle of urban change. Through the evaluation of policies and urban regeneration programmes, this study has analysed how policy-driven strategies have affected the success or failure of urban changes. Urban regeneration, as a multidimensional programme, requires a holistic overview of how cities may develop, grow and be sustained for years to come.

The cases of both Derby and Nottingham represent the current condition of many small and medium-sized cities in the UK. The physical regeneration of Derby's city centre may seem less feasible in the current phase of economic austerity, but the current situation may attract the private sector to undertake massive redevelopment plans (similar to the case of Derby's new shopping centre). If not driven by policy action, this may neglect the values of urban regeneration policies, and therefore can potentially develop urban pressures that, in the long term, weaken a city's characteristics and ultimately have a negative impact on the quality of life and socio-economic growth of a city. The case of Nottingham seems to be more feasible, as it promotes

socio-economic improvement over a longer period. But this approach would require a long-term regeneration plan with effective financial support, which is probably less likely with the recent withdrawal of funding. The current pro-growth localism approach will potentially have a faster impact on major cities than on medium cities such as Nottingham. In the longer term, strong local support will become more essential to make any substantial progress on core regeneration plans.

Furthermore, it is evident that, under the Coalition Government, major economic incentives have so far aimed to strengthen 'private sector and enterprise-based recovery'.[37] This will have impact on the role of the public sector and may also have a negative impact on British urban regeneration policies that are currently without effective funding and support. Long-term plans and, specifically, regeneration plans are once again undermined by a lack of long-term vision. The current situation may have provided a better opportunity for major cities (mainly London) in the UK, but will reduce the success in small and medium-sized cities that require effective support from policy actions for strategic urban changes. To conclude, the continuing uncertainty of central government's urban regeneration policies and the absence (in some measure) of a national programme for regeneration (since 2010) will increase issues of regional disparity and will develop new challenges to rebalancing the national economy. Also, with the closure of many of the New Labour's innovations across the UK, matters such as urban regeneration are expected to be increasingly approached with bottom-up development and strategies.

Finally, the author acknowledges that any policy statement on alternative urban changes always sounds like a carefully crafted political product, but urban policies (and particularly policy actions) in the coming years will become more aware of the impact from integrated methods and will seek to embrace more public influence in their responses to regenerating the city.

## Acknowledgments

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