
The Problems of Poor Areas

The idea that society's ills are concentrated in certain areas and communities has a long history. It arises from notions of association and contamination, congregation, inheritance and environmental influence. Destitute, poor or criminal people are believed to seek refuge in certain areas because there is nowhere else for them to go. Those already living there are believed to be contaminated by the anti-social values and practices of those coming into their midst, just as disease spreads in crowded conditions. Children are believed to have no chance of escaping the limitations of the families, environment and culture into which they are born and live. For such reasons, poverty, criminality and disadvantage are believed to be heavily concentrated and deeply rooted in particular communities.¹

The idea is important historically and contemporaneously.² It affects government policies as much as explanations of poverty. Thus, the assumption in the United States that there were geographical 'pockets' of poverty in scattered areas in which there was both economic recession or depression and inadequate housing and welfare services led to the 'grey areas' programme of the Ford Foundation in the early 1960s and the community action programmes financed by the US government in its War on Poverty in the mid and late 1960s.³ In the United Kingdom, the same

¹ 'In these horrid dens the most abandoned characters of the city are collected and from them they nightly issue to pour upon the town every species of crime and abomination' - Laing, S., *National Distress: Its Causes and Remedies*, London, 1844, p. 11; quoted in Dennis, N., *People and Planning*, Faber & Faber, London, 1970, p. 334.

² In part, of course, the idea derives from the history of community studies. Throughout history, the expectation that geography or locality will determine the nature of social relations has been kept alive and nurtured. Communities are assumed to have more independence, and to have characteristics, sets of relations and behaviour far more idiosyncratic than they can be shown to have. In recent years there has been considerable criticism within sociology of the traditional treatment of community as a locale. See, for example, Pahl, R. E., 'The Rural Urban Continuum', *Readings in Urban Sociology*, Pergamon, Oxford, 1968; and Gans, H., *The Urban Villagers*, Free Press, New York, 1962.

³ For early accounts, see Marris, P., and Rein, M., *Dilemmas of Social Reform: Poverty and Community Action in the United States*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1967; Moynihan, D. P., *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty*, Arkville Press, New York, 1969.

idea has taken root in a cluster of policies developed in the late 1960s. First, following the publication of the Plowden Report in 1967,¹ Educational Priority Areas were designated as deserving additional resources. 'Positive discrimination' became a fashionable concept. Schools in designated areas were supposed to receive larger capital sums, equipment grants and teaching staffs, and higher salaries were to be paid. Yet no basis for the measurement of deprivation either in areas or schools was laid down as the first stage in discriminating who should be helped.

Next followed the Urban Programme. In 1968, the government announced action to help 'areas of severe social deprivation in a number of our cities and towns' to 'meet their social needs and to bring their physical services to an adequate level'.² Urban aid projects included nursery education, day nurseries and child care, community centres, family-planning and other advice centres, play schemes, care of the aged, various miscellaneous schemes for the homeless, the mentally handicapped and alcoholics, and help for voluntary organizations such as the Salvation Army and the Samaritans.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, local authorities with relatively large numbers of immigrants began to receive grant aid. Finally, the Community Development Project, first announced in July 1969, was 'a neighbourhood-based experiment aimed at finding new ways of meeting the needs of people living in areas of high social deprivation'. It was assumed that problems of urban deprivation had their origins in the characteristics of local populations - in individual pathologies - and that these could best be resolved by better coordination of the social services, and encouragement of citizen involvement and community self-help.³ Twelve local project teams were set up between January 1970 and October 1972 in Coventry, Liverpool, Southwark, Glyncoirwg (Glamorgan), Canning Town (Newham), Batley (in the West Riding), Paisley, Newcastle, Cleaton Moor (Cumberland), Birmingham, Tynemouth and Oldham to identify needs, promote coordination and foster community involvement.

These schemes were either allowed to run down or were succeeded by new schemes developed in the mid 1970s. For example, two new types of special area - 'Housing Action Areas' and 'Priority Neighbourhoods', in addition to 'General Improvement Areas' - were introduced under the Housing Act 1974.⁴ Housing 41

¹ Central Advisory Council for Education (England), *Children and Their Primary Schools*, HMSO, London, 1966.

² Mr James Callaghan, *Hansard*, 22 July 1968, col. 40.

³ *The National Community Development Project*, Inter-Project Report 1973, CDP Information and Intelligence Unit, February 1974.

⁴ See, for example, Department of the Environment, *Housing Act 1974: Renewal Strategies*, Circular 13/75, HMSO, London, 1975; *Housing Act 1974: Parts IV, V, VI, Housing Action Areas, Priority Neighbourhoods and General Improvement Areas*, Circular 14/75, HMSO, London, 1975.

Action Areas were intended to be areas of housing stress in which poor physical and social conditions interacted, and Priority Neighbourhoods adjacent areas where problems were likely to increase if no action were to be taken. Guidance was issued to local authorities showing what kind of indicators could be used to identify such areas.¹

All these programmes make assumptions, however vaguely, about the spatial and social distribution of deprivation. In the following pages, the variation in the extent of poverty and certain forms of deprivation will be examined among regions, urban and rural areas and four poor districts, with the intention of mapping the range of problems experienced, contributing to the task of explaining variation in poverty and offering provisional guidelines for policy.

The Incidence of Poverty

The survey establishes beyond reasonable doubt the wide dispersion of poverty. This can be seen by comparing the findings both for regions and for selected types of area (Table 15.1). If we add together both the numbers with incomes below the state's poverty standard and those with incomes just above that standard, Northern Ireland was found by a large margin to be the poorest region, followed by Scotland, the North-West, Wales and the South-East, and the Northern, Yorks and Humberside region. Greater London and the South-East contained the smallest proportions of poor. It should be remembered, however, that the differential would not be so sharp (though it would remain) if we were to adjust incomes for their purchasing value. The relativity between regions for the populations of all ages also holds for the different age groups. (See Table A.58, Appendix Eight, page 1037). Scotland had the highest proportion of persons with high incomes as well as the second highest proportion with low incomes. Anglia and the East Midlands comprised another region with substantial proportions of the population at the extremes of poverty and wealth. None the less, as Table 15.1 shows, substantial minorities living in poverty were to be found in all regions.

We next compared the proportions of poor and marginally poor in rural and urban areas and conurbations. It will be surprising to some that the population in poverty, or on its margins, was as high or nearly as high as in urban areas. (By the alternative deprivation standard, the result was the same: 24 per cent were assessed to be in poverty, compared with 26 per cent in conurbations and 27 per cent in other urban areas.) There were proportionately more rich people in rural areas than in other types of area, but rather fewer in the next rank of prosperity. Rather fewer children but more middle aged than elsewhere, and roughly the same numbers of young adults and elderly people, were poor or marginally poor (Table A.59, Appendix Eight, page 1037). The survey also allowed a check to be made on two criteria of area poverty:

¹ Department of the Environment, Area Improvement Note 10, *The Use of Indicators for Area Action, Housing Act, 1974*, HMSO, London, 1975.

the percentage of voters voting left (at the 1966 General Election),¹ and the percentage leaving school early. As the table shows, there was a correlation, but by no means a marked one. Even in the large number of constituencies with a relatively low left-voting percentage, there were 9 per cent of the population living below the state's poverty standard, and another 23 per cent on the margins. And even in those areas with the fewest people who had left school early (accounting for less than a quarter of the population), there were 9 per cent below and 19 per cent on the margins of the standard.

From the viewpoint of area deprivation policies, the data for areas smaller than constituencies are perhaps the most telling. We divided the wards and districts in the fifty-one constituencies which we had visited into four groups according to the

Table 15.1. *Variation in the incidence of poverty by region and area.*

<i>Type of region or area</i>	<i>Percentage of persons in income units with net disposable income last year, as % of state standard</i>					<i>Total</i>	<i>Number</i>
	<i>Under 100</i>	<i>100-39</i>	<i>140-99</i>	<i>200-99</i>	<i>300+</i>		
<i>Degree of urbanization</i>							
Rural	9	21	34	19	17	100	930
Urban	8	25	27	28	11	100	2,400
Conurban	10	22	28	28	12	100	1,992
<i>Region</i>							
Greater London	8	19	26	32	15	100	716
South-East	6	21	33	28	12	100	809
Anglia and East Midlands	11	18	32	25	14	100	526
South-West and Wales	8	26	32	21	13	100	555
West Midlands	8	22	28	29	13	100	704
North-West	9	27	27	28	10	100	621
Northern, Yorks and Humberside	10	23	32	24	12	100	586
Northern Ireland	18	31	18	28	4	100	244
Scotland	9	29	25	21	17	100	561
<i>Left-wing vote in constituency</i>							
80 % or more	8	28	29	26	9	100	1,353
Over 65 % but under 80 %	9	18	29	29	15	100	1,176
Under 65 %	9	23	28	26	14	100	2,793

¹ The reasons for adopting this criterion are discussed in Appendix One, page 931.

Table 15.1. - contd

<i>Type of region or area</i>	<i>Percentage of persons in income units with net disposable income last year, as % of state standard</i>					<i>Total</i>	<i>Number</i>
	<i>Under 100</i>	<i>100-39</i>	<i>140-99</i>	<i>200-99</i>	<i>300+</i>		
<i>Fraction of low incomes in area</i>							
Very high (half or more)	14	36	25	18	7	100	1,275
Rather high (two fifths or more)	12	20	31	25	12	100	849
Rather low (a fifth or more)	7	20	29	31	13	100	2,629
Very low (under a fifth)	3	11	32	28	26	100	569
<i>%leaving school early in area</i>							
High (60 % or more)	9	27	27	26	10	100	2,312
About average (50-59%)	8	22	30	26	14	100	1,804
Low (under 50 %)	9	19	29	28	15	100	1,206
<i>Selected poor areas^a</i>							
Belfast (2 wards)	14	36	36	14		100	750
Glasgow (polling districts in 3 wards)	13	35	36	15		100	907
Salford (4 wards)	13	25	36	26		100	905
Neath (1 urban ward and 1 rural district)	4	23	42	31		100	606

NOTE: ^aFor persons in household units.

fraction of households in the sample who were living below or just above the state's poverty standard (strictly, with net disposable incomes plus housing costs in the twelve months previous to interview of less than 150 per cent of the state's poverty standard). By definition, the correlation between the proportion of income units living below or close to the poverty standard and the 'poorest' areas was marked. But, even in the poorest group of areas, a quarter of the people interviewed were relatively prosperous, and in the richest group of areas 14 per cent had incomes around the poverty standard. Indeed, the reader will see from Table 15.1 that two groups of areas with 'rather low' or 'very low' fractions of low incomes accounted for 2,629 plus 569 persons respectively, making 3,198 persons altogether, or 60 per cent of the sample. None the less these areas accounted for 46 per cent, or nearly half of the poor and marginally poor in the national survey.

These data are so important for national understanding and action that they need to be presented in greater detail. In the survey, 28 per cent of the population in *households* (as distinct from *income units*) were living below or marginally above the state's standard of poverty. For the fifty-one constituencies in the entire sample, the range was (with one exception) between 12 per cent and 46 per cent, though sampling error is considerable. The ten constituencies with the largest proportions of poor accounted for 20 per cent of the population surveyed and 32 per cent of the poor. The ten constituencies with the smallest percentages of poor accounted for 19 per cent of the population surveyed and 10 per cent of the poor. For interest, the list is set out in Table A.60, Appendix Eight (page 1038). Despite the liability to extremely large sampling error, most of the constituencies which might be expected to have the largest percentages in poverty are to be found at the head of the list, and those with the smallest percentages at the foot of the list. Thus, constituencies with largest percentages of poor tended to be those with high percentages of manual workers (Table A.60, Appendix Eight, page 1038) or retirement pensioners or both. Conversely, the constituencies with the smallest percentages of poor tended to be those with more non-manual and non-elderly populations. The picture of wide dispersion of poverty, despite higher incidence in some constituencies, is not substantially altered when different criteria of deprivation are examined - such as housing facilities, number of consumer durables in the house and social customs and activities.

Four constituencies which, on different criteria, seemed at the first stage of the sampling to be the poorest among the fifty-one, had been chosen for further separate study. (For methodology, see Appendix One, pages 951-4, and Chapter 3.) These constituencies were Salford East, Belfast North, Neath and Glasgow Shettleston. The poorest districts within these constituencies (in the case of Belfast two alternative districts outside the constituency were chosen) were then selected according to the percentage of children in them receiving free school meals, and addresses sampled at random for visits and requests for interviews. For each of the four areas, data on income were successfully obtained for between 600 and 900 individuals. The percentage of poor and marginally poor was lowest in Neath, with 27 per cent, and highest in Belfast, with just under 50 per cent, the other two areas, Salford and Glasgow Shettleston, being intermediate, with 37 per cent and 48 per cent respectively. In these four poor areas (three of them highly deprived) the percentage of the population in households with incomes of more than twice the state's poverty standard varied from 16 to 31.

We can certainly conclude that there are areas with about twice as many poor and marginally poor as there are in the nation as a whole. These areas also have a disproportionately high prevalence of other types of deprivation. But there are two major reservations: (a) the majority of poor are not to be found in areas which even account for 20 per cent of the population; and (b) there are substantial minorities of relatively prosperous people even in the poorest districts of the country.

Rural and Urban Differences

The percentage of the population in rural areas who were poor or marginally poor was not markedly different from that in urban and conurban areas (Table 15.1). In other respects, there was less evidence of deprivation in rural Britain,

Table 15.2. *Percentages of people in different types of area with different characteristics.*

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Percentage of persons having characteristic</i>		
	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Conurban</i>
More than 10 years' education	29	25	24
Work indoors	56	71	76
Council tenants	21	33	32
Owner-occupiers	54	48	46
Poor household facilities	6	9	6
Socially deprived (scoring 6 or more)	15	17	16
Fewer than 6 of 10 selected consumer durables	15	24	20
Poor environmental conditions (3 or more on index)	1	9	17
Employed and self-employed with non-manual occupations	47	45	46
Persons aged 15-39 with disablement condition	5	8	6
Persons aged 40-59 with disablement condition	11	15	17
Persons aged 60 and over with disablement condition	29	33	35

taken as a whole, than in urban Britain. Thus, markedly fewer of the population lacked gardens, and almost none complained of air pollution. Slightly fewer lacked a reasonable number of consumer durables. Roughly the same proportion as in urban Britain were socially deprived and had poor housing facilities. Fewer of those who worked indoors had bad conditions of work, but more worked outdoors, and some of them had dangerous work or very poor conditions. More owned their homes and substantially fewer had council tenancies. Perhaps surprisingly, slightly more of the adults had had more than ten years' education, and about the same proportion had non-manual occupations (Table 15.2).

However, the picture derived from rural areas is by no means uniform. A larger proportion of the population than elsewhere were found to live in low-income areas, but a larger proportion also lived in high-income areas. This is because there are relatively prosperous farming areas, areas containing large numbers of upper non-manual commuters, and popular tourist holiday areas, as well as declining and poor rural areas. The relationship between different sectors of the economy and the extent

of poverty in rural areas remains to be elaborated.¹ Nearly a third of the rural population, compared with a quarter elsewhere, lived in areas where over 50 per cent of the population had low incomes; and yet nearly a fifth, compared with less than a tenth, lived in areas where fewer than 20 per cent of the population had low incomes.

This means that the areas cannot be treated as autonomous or self-sufficient in terms of either economy or culture. To a large extent, their functions, and therefore their prosperity, is decided externally. The pattern of inequality can be inferred to be set nationally, and area variations in the extent of poverty arise through variation in mix of industry and use and value of land, employment level, deviation of the wage structure of the local labour market from the national labour market, the distribution of type of housing tenure and types of house location, and the deviation of the local housing market from the national housing market. These factors tend to condition distortions or unrepresentativeness of local population and hence community structure. One example is rural depopulation, leaving relatively few young people in an area. Migration from the area is a function partly of tight farming control over housing, and upper non-manual control over land-use planning. Alternatively a large number of additional elderly people may be attracted into certain rural and seaside areas. This immigration is fostered negatively by the elderly being denied employment and other functional roles in their home areas, and positively by the combined efforts of local trading interests and property speculators in the areas of settlement. When those with the largest economic interests in an area decide to go elsewhere, to concentrate their interests or to exercise them irrespective of the social consequences, there tend to be large numbers of families and individuals who, because of ties to relatives or community or housing, or simply because of cost, cannot extricate themselves to leave for a more prosperous area. The general argument briefly outlined here, therefore, is that the observed variations in poverty in rural and urban areas must be explained in terms of access to economic resources.

Differences between Regions

This geographical pattern of economic subservience and superiority results in some marked regional disparities. The regions reproduce national customs, conventions, structures and therefore inequalities. But just as country areas can serve the interests of urban areas and vice versa, and then fall into place in a larger framework of inequality, so regions do the same. Although much less independent or autonomous than nation-states, regions tend to take embryonic form as backward and advanced sub-systems of society - in some respects like the developing and developed

¹ A study by Howard Newby of agricultural workers in East Anglia makes evident the dependence of one large group of workers. See Newby, H., *The Deferential Worker*, Allen Lane, London, 1977.

societies of the world - though they are rarely as unequal or as closely bound by economic, political and cultural ties. Few large countries lack regions which can be described as economically underdeveloped. Like many of the countries of the Third World, however, the relative poverty of these regions can fairly be said to be a function of the rich regions' prosperity.

In the United Kingdom, the population living in the South and South-East have distinct advantages over the population living in other regions. This is documented in various official and independent reports.¹ The poverty survey produced new types of data on deprivation. The ranking of the nine principal regions according to various criteria is summarized in Table 15.3. Three reservations must be entered.

Table 15.3. *Ranking of regions according to various criteria.*

<i>Criterion of ranking (% of population in each case)</i>	<i>North- ern Ireland</i>	<i>Scot- land</i>	<i>North- ern, Yorks and Hum- berside</i>	<i>South- West and Wales</i>	<i>North- East</i>	<i>West Mid- lands</i>	<i>Anglia and East Mid- lands</i>	<i>Greater Lon- don</i>	<i>South- East</i>
Income unit in poverty or marginal poverty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Socially deprived (scoring 6 or more on index)	1	2	5	4	3	7	6	8	9
Fewer than 6 of 10 selected consumer durables in home	1	2	5	4	3	7	6	8	9
Poor household facilities	1	6	7	5	2	8	3	4	9
Overcrowded (according to bedroom standard)	1	2	7	8	5	4	6	3	9
Poor environmental conditions	3	9	2	8	1	6	7	5	4
Home not owner-occupied	2	1	7	5	6	4	8	3	9
Adults fewer than 11 years' education	1	2	4	7	3	5	6	8	9

¹ See the annual *Regional Statistics*, produced by the Central Statistical Office, and the reports of the Family Expenditure Survey and the General Household Survey. In 1974 and 1975, average weekly household income was highest in Greater London and the South-East - the former being 35 per cent and the latter 42 per cent larger than that in Northern Ireland. See *Social Trends*, No. 7, 1976, HMSO, London, 1977, p. 128.

The number and boundaries of regions have been changed in official conventions in recent years, and some of the regions as defined in this study cover rather extensive geographical areas. Again, ranking depends in some instances on the precise cut-off point of deprivation which has been chosen for purposes of comparison. And ranking sometimes conceals extremely small differences between regions. Thus a difference of three percentage points sometimes covered three or even four regions. None the less, on different criteria of deprivation, the advantage of the South and South-East, and the disadvantage of Northern Ireland, and to a lesser extent of Scotland and the North, is unmistakable. Perhaps 'environmental conditions' is the least reliable indicator since interviews were clustered in constituencies, some of which were widely subject to air pollution.

Table 15.4. *Percentages of people in different regions with different characteristics.*

<i>Individual characteristics</i>	<i>Greater London</i>	<i>South-East</i>	<i>Anglia and East Midlands</i>	<i>South-West and Wales</i>	<i>West Midlands</i>	<i>North-ern, Yorks and Hum-berside</i>	<i>North-East</i>	<i>North-ern Ireland</i>	<i>Scot-land</i>
Persons aged 15-39 with more than 10 years' education	47	47	36	40	34	32	28	30	23
Persons aged 40-59 with more than 10 years' education	30	27	24	22	18	16	17	13	17
Persons aged 60+ with more than 10 years' education	15	18	20	15	9	12	6	6	11
Employed and self-employed with non-manual occupations	57	51	38	48	40	42	44	43	46
Council tenants	25	25	28	25	42	29	25	22	50
Owner-occupiers	42	60	56	48	45	52	49	35	23
Socially deprived (scoring 6 or more)	10	9	13	18	11	15	23	40	25
Fewer than 6 of 10 selected consumer durables	15	8	22	24	21	22	26	50	26
Poor environmental conditions (3 or more on index)	18	20	15	9	16	28	53	26	7
With disablement condition	11	11	8	16	13	12	11	15	14

The rankings help to sum up the regional structure of inequality, but are not very informative. Some of the most informative indicators are brought together in Table 15.4. A high proportion of the employed population in the South, South-East and Greater London were in non-manual occupations. Many women were included, the great majority of whom were in non-manual occupations. If we consider occupational status of the head of household, the high ranking of the South and South-East remains pronounced. Regional inequality is therefore closely associated with the unequal class structure. With the reservation that the findings may have been affected by migration, the inequalities in educational experience seem to have persisted for three generations. Certainly more of the elderly in the South than the North had had more than ten years' education, and though more younger people in all regions had had an education of this length, the difference between regions remains very large. There also tended to be more disablement in the North than in the South, which was not explained by differences in age structure.

Areas of High Deprivation

The themes developed above for rural and urban Britain and for the major regions can also be developed for quite small areas. The separate surveys in four areas covered groups of only from 5,000 to 8,000 households. Four wards were selected in Salford East, certain polling districts in the three wards of Glasgow Shettleston, two wards (one mainly Roman Catholic and the other mainly Protestant) in Belfast, and one urban ward and one rural district in the constituency of Neath.¹

With the exception of Neath, the percentage found to be in poverty or on the margins of poverty by the state's standard was high, being 38 for selected areas of Salford, 48 for Glasgow Shettleston and 50 for Belfast. The figure for the United Kingdom as a whole was 28. Table A.61 in Appendix Eight (page 1039) shows that these higher percentages applied to each age group and nearly every type of household. Families with children were disproportionately at risk. Over half the children in these areas were living in or near poverty. I will review some of the factors which contribute to the excess in these poor districts and also discuss some of the correlates of that high incidence of poverty. Table 15.5 first of all shows the age distribution and household composition of the samples in each of the areas compared with the United Kingdom. The percentage of children was relatively larger, and of adults aged 25-64 relatively smaller in the three city areas. The number of elderly averaged about the same as in the United Kingdom, but was relatively larger in Belfast and Glasgow and relatively smaller in Salford. In looking at the lower half of the table, it is evident that the additional children in poverty are only in small part to be traced to there being more couples with four or more children. The relatively exceptional category is the miscellaneous group of

¹ The criteria of selection are discussed in Appendix One, pages 951-4.

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households with children. These were mainly one-parent families and couples with a widowed parent and children - anyone 15 or over counting as an adult. In the four areas, we found that 13 per cent of families with children were one-parent families,

Table 15.5. Percentages of population of four areas and of the United Kingdom by age and household type.

Age	Neath	Salford	Belfast	Glasgow Shettles- ton	All 4 areas	United Kingdom
0-14	25	31	29	31	30	25
15-24	16	15	15	14	15	14
25-54	22	23	18	24	22	25
45-64	26	22	24	18	22	23
65+	11	9	13	13	11	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number	709	1,028	782	1,040	3,559	6,045
<i>Household type</i>						
Single person under 60	1	2	4	3	2	2
Single person 60 or over 3	4	5	7	5	4	
Man and woman	15	15	13	17	15	18
Man, woman and 1 child	8	10	4	8	8	, 7
Man, woman and 2 children	12	15	6	10	11	13
Man, woman and 3 children	4	5	6	10	7	7
Man, woman and 4+ children	5	9	8	10	9	6
3 adults	14	8	8	7	9	11
3 adults and children	11	9	17	9	11	12
4 adults	5	5	7	4	5	6
Others without children	4	4	6	3	4	4
Others with children	19	15	15	13	15	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number	671	937	736	953	3,297	6,077

NOTE: In this and other tables giving results for the four areas, adjustments have been made to allow for losses at the second stage of interviewing. This has rarely involved a change of more than one to any particular percentage figure, and only in a minority of instances even a change of one.

compared with 7 per cent in the United Kingdom, and 10 per cent of children, compared with 7 per cent, were in such families (see page 760).

The level of economic activity in these areas was lower. For example, as many as 19 per cent of males aged 50-64 had not worked in the previous year. Levels of unemployment and incapacity were disproportionately high for both sexes. More men and women of working age were registered unemployed, and as many as 10 per cent of households were found to include an adult who had been unemployed for eight weeks or more in the previous year, compared with 4 per cent for the United Kingdom as a whole. There were also more households with an adult under 65 who had been sick or injured for eight weeks or more in the previous year - 18 per cent, compared with 9 per cent. These are, of course, both important factors in increasing the prevalence of poverty (given the low level of alternative income support for people not in employment).

But, in addition to the high proportion of people sick or injured from work and the high proportion of people who were unemployed, both the distorted occupational structure of the population living in these districts and the high proportion of people of manual class who were low paid contributed further to the excess of poverty. Table 15.6 shows the paucity of people of non-manual occupational class living in the special areas. Only 14 per cent of their populations could be classified as non-manual, and most of these were in the routine non-manual occupations with lowest pay and status. By contrast, 86 per cent were of manual class, 24 per cent being of unskilled manual class, compared with 10 per cent who were in this class in the population of the United Kingdom as a whole.

Did the difference in distribution by occupational class in fact account for the

Table 15.6. *Percentages of population of four areas and of the United Kingdom, by occupational class.*

<i>Occupational class</i>	<i>Neath</i>	<i>Salford</i>	<i>Belfast</i>	<i>Glasgow Shettle- ston</i>	<i>All four areas</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>
Professional	1	0	0	0	0	6
Managerial	1	0	0	0	0	5
Higher supervisory	6	2	2	1	2	10
Lower supervisory	4	4	2	2	3	14
Routine non-manual	7	7	11	9	8	8
Skilled manual	41	41	37	43	41	31
Partly skilled manual	24	24	17	20	21	16
Unskilled manual	16	23	32	24	24	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number	695	1,016	764	1,018	3,495	5,925

excess of poverty? We estimated that if the UK population were of similar occupational structure to the populations of the four areas, the percentage in or on the margins of poverty by the state's definition would have been increased from 28 to 35 (compared with 42 per cent in the four areas). It may therefore be concluded that the difference in class structure contributed substantially - about a half - to the additional poverty experienced in the four areas.

Even allowing for the much larger proportion of the population of manual workers and their families - and especially unskilled and partly skilled manual workers - the risk of poverty was greater in the special areas. Earnings tended to be lower: for example, 8 per cent of households included men earning under £14 per week, compared with 4 per cent nationally. There were fewer, and smaller, supplementary sources of income, and fewer working-class people had assets worth £200 or more. Fewer, too, were owner-occupiers (just over a fifth, compared with two fifths who were council tenants and two fifths who were tenants of privately rented properties, nearly all unfurnished). These factors stem essentially from the form of the economy and of the housing market taken in the local area - both as it had been in the past and as it was now.

Two factors contributing to excess poverty are only indirectly related to the economy. They are the level of dependency and the low incomes of the nonworking population. The *slightly* larger number of families with four or more children, and the markedly larger number of one-parent families than in the United Kingdom as a whole, were mentioned above. They suggest there was a larger problem of dependency in these areas than elsewhere. However, a comprehensive conception of dependency would need to refer, on the one hand, to the greater likelihood of loss or interruption of family support, and on the other to the greater likelihood of major dependency through illness, injury or disability. Dependent groups in the population often acquire, or are given, sets of characteristics, and are treated as social minorities. The significance of this concept to social structure and the explanation of poverty is developed in Chapter 16.

Areas such as the four selected are among the sources of migrant, especially unskilled, labour. They are declining areas industrially, and young adults tend to migrate, especially if they are earning better than average and looking for good housing. At the same time, those losing their homes in other areas because of rent arrears and loss of earnings due to illness, disability or unemployment, and wives who are separated from their husbands and have little money, are driven to look for cheap housing - which can be found there. And because the areas tend to provide for a disproportionate number of manual jobs which are heavy, dangerous or generally have poor amenities, and also have bad housing and poor environmental amenities, the incidence of illness and disability is high and the dependency ratio tends to be larger. Fewer people, with disproportionately low incomes, come to be maintaining more than their fair share of dependent people. We obtained the results in Table 15.7 from the different surveys. These data are not surprising in relation to mortality data

Table 15.7. Percentages of households in four areas and the United Kingdom with disabled people.

Type of dependant in household		% of all households	
		4 areas	United Kingdom
Disabled child		2.6	1.3
Disabled adult under 65		14.5	9.7
Person sick or injured for more than 8 weeks in past 52 (under 65)		18.1	8.7
		% of population	
Severely disabled	30-49	5.0	1.5
	50-64	13.7	8.9
	65+	30.1	28.7

from the selected areas. Compare, for example, mortality rates for Salford for 1959-63 with those for other towns.¹

We also found that the incomes of the non-working population were lower in the four areas than elsewhere. Initially this seemed puzzling, because most of them were receiving social security benefits at national rates. The explanation was to be found, first, in the fact that fewer of the non-working population had sources of income supplementary to social security - occupational pensions in the case of retired people, pay during sickness, interest from savings and other unearned income, maintenance allowances from husbands, and tax rebates. Secondly, although dependent on state benefits, more were receiving relatively small amounts. Because more lacked other sources of income, more were dependent on supplementary benefit and fewer had earnings-related sickness and unemployment benefit. Some were receiving reduced rates of national insurance benefit because their contribution records had been incomplete. There were fewer retirement and widow pensioners who were entitled to supplementary benefit but not drawing it than in the United

Table 15.8. Selected death rates in four towns.

	Death rate per 1,000 population ^a			
	Salford	Oxford	Ipswich	Croydon
Infants under 1 year	28	17	18	18
Men aged 45-64	20	12	11	13
Women aged 45-64	10	6	7	6

NOTE: ^aPer 1,000 live births for infants under 1 year.

¹ The Registrar General's Decennial Supplement, England and Wales, 1961, *Area Mortality Tables*, HMSO, London, 1967, Tables 1 and 2.

Kingdom as a whole. None the less, about a quarter of retirement pensioners who were eligible for such benefit, and about a sixth of widow pensioners, were not receiving it. The pattern for sickness and unemployment beneficiaries was less favourable. Larger proportions of both groups of beneficiaries than in the United Kingdom were entitled to supplementary benefit. Despite the fact that many received this benefit, large percentages did not, as the figures in Table 15.9 show.

Table 15.9. *Percentages of certain groups in four areas and the United Kingdom who were eligible for supplementary benefit.*

<i>National insurance category</i>	<i>Percentage eligible to receive supplementary benefit</i>		<i>Percentage of those eligible who are receiving it</i>	
	<i>4 areas</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>4 areas</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>
Retirement pensioners	57	46	77	57
Widow pensioners	40	43	85	65
Sickness benefit recipients	55	27	69	52
Unemployment benefit recipients	69	50	45	48

Further evidence on social-security benefits is discussed in Chapter 24. Our information on the incomes of those receiving supplementary benefits suggested that fewer than in the nation as a whole were receiving exceptional circumstances additions' and more of the unemployed and sick were wage-stopped. For these various reasons, more state beneficiaries' and their dependants than in the United Kingdom as a whole had incomes below the state's poverty standard, or very little more than that standard.

The Persistence of Deprivation

This summary of comparative statistics cannot convey the impact upon any observer of the poverty to be found in these areas. In my first visit to Belfast in 1968 (incidentally, just before the disorder and bloodshed that has persisted right through the 1970s), I was struck not only by the evident poverty in Catholic and Protestant areas alike, but by scenes which seemed to belong more to the 1930s - of red-haired boys using scales on a cart drawn by an emaciated pony to sell coal by the pound, teenage girls in a second-hand clothing shop buying underslips and skirts, and some of the smallest 'joints' of meat in butchers' windows that I had ever seen. Here, as in the other areas, working conditions, housing and the immediate environment of the home were often raw and harsh. This is not to say, of course, that there were not also some superbly laid-out and kept homes, shops and workshops. But, by various of our measures, the deprivation in these areas was undeniable. Over two thirds of

families with children in the four areas had insufficient bedroom space, and over two thirds declared that there was no safe place for their young children to play in near the home. Nearly two thirds of all homes were said to suffer from structural defects, and as many as 86 per cent of the working men interviewed in the second stage of our surveys were found (on the basis of the ten criteria discussed in Chapter 12, page 438) to have poor or bad working conditions (compared with 21 per cent in the United Kingdom as a whole).

These conditions were not temporary. Others, like Robert Roberts in his compact and masterly *The Classic Slum*,¹ have traced their origins. The high incidence of poverty is not something recent, or, as the analysis earlier in this chapter makes clear, so easily explained as to be quickly remediable. Moreover, there is illustrative evidence that such conditions persisted for some years following the survey. In 1972, Marie Brown, the fieldwork supervisor for the poverty survey, decided to base a short dissertation on repeat interviews with a cross-section of twenty families originally interviewed in Salford in 1968. In the earlier year, eight of the twenty households were in poverty and nine on the margins. In the later year, the numbers were six and nine respectively. More families than at the earlier date were scored on some indicators of deprivation, and more described themselves as poor. The study was limited in size and scope, but illustrates well the effects of long periods spent at or around the poverty line. One man described such a situation as, 'It's not living. It's not even existing. It's just shuffling along somehow, from day to day.'²

Towards a Theory of Area Poverty

Our consideration of poverty and deprivation in rural and urban parts of the country, regions and selected small areas has shown the wide dispersion of deprivation, and yet, at the same time, both the relatively greater concentration of deprivation in certain, especially city, areas and the wide degree of inequality within any single area, however small. Other studies can be cited in support of these findings. For example, the Inner London Education Authority identified one sixth of its schools as being schools with special difficulties or educational priority schools. Twenty-five per cent of the pupils, or more than double the average, were defined to be poor readers. However, 'While the incidence of poor readers was higher than expected, three quarters of the pupils were not poor readers. In fact 5 per cent were identified as good readers.'³ Similar points could be made about the distribution of free school

¹ Roberts, R., *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century*, University of Manchester Press, 1971; reprinted by Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1973.

² Brown, M., *An Intertemporal Comparison of Some Low Income Households*, Department of Social Administration, London School of Economics (unpublished thesis), p. 27.

³ Little, A., 'Schools: Targets and Methods', in Glennerster, H., and Hatch, S. (eds.), *Positive Discrimination and Inequality*, Fabian Society, London, March 1974, pp. 14-15.

meals and of academic performance at 11. 'Altogether, for every two disadvantaged children who are in EPA schools five are outside them. And in the EPA schools themselves, disadvantaged children are outnumbered by children who are not disadvantaged.'¹

Another example is a study of information derived from the census about the extent and location of areas of urban deprivation in Britain. In 1971, there were 120,000 enumeration districts in Britain. In one study, eighteen indicators of housing facilities, overcrowding, employment and car-ownership were selected from census data for 88,000 of these enumeration districts, each averaging 163 households or 470 persons, though there could be as few as fifty persons. The data were weighted with respect to housing and material possessions, and for that reason might be expected to produce a high degree of concentration or overlap. Thus 1 per cent of districts had male unemployment rates of 24 per cent. On the other hand, 5 per cent of the districts (or over 4,000) accounted for only 16 per cent of the total unemployed, and 15 per cent of districts for only 36 per cent. As Sally Holtermann concludes, 'the degree of spatial concentration of individual aspects of deprivation is really quite low'.² She went on to ask to what extent districts with a high rate of deprivation on one indicator had a high rate on another indicator. Although there were many areas with high levels of two or three kinds of deprivation, the spatial coincidence was far from complete'.

Such findings confirm that an area strategy cannot be the cardinal means of dealing with poverty or 'under-privilege'. However we care to define economically or socially deprived areas, unless we include nearly half the areas in the country, there will be more poor persons or poor children living outside them than in them. There is a second conclusion. Within all or nearly all defined priority areas, there will be more persons who are not deprived than there are deprived. Therefore discrimination based on ecology will miss out more of the poor or deprived than it will include. It will also devote resources within the areas predominantly to people (or children) who are not poor or deprived. This applies even if enough areas are designated (which they have not been by existing programmes) and even if the right areas are designated (which they have not been).

An institutional theory of poverty is therefore required, drawing on labour market theory, industrial location and land-use theory, and housing market theory, as they relate to both the national and local occupational class structure, and social security theory as that relates to minority status but also class position. The theory would be expressed in terms of the process, on the one hand, whereby resources are unequally allocated or withheld; and on the other, whereby styles of living are generated,

¹ Barnes, J. H., and Lucas, H., 'Positive Discrimination in Education: Individuals, Groups and Institutions', ILEA, London, 1973, p. 37.

² Holtermann, S., 'Areas of Urban Deprivation in Great Britain: An Analysis of 1971 Census Data', *Social Trends*, No. 6, HMSO, London, 1975, p. 39.

emulated and institutionalized. This process is essentially a *national* process. To look only at minute enumeration districts is to evade the interconnections between the relatively (and not uniformly) rich in the suburbs and the relatively (and not uniformly) poor in the city areas. And whether we look at the low paid, retirement pensioners, sick and disabled persons, one-parent families and even the unemployed, they are not only dispersed geographically, but their resources, *and* their customs and style of consumption and activity, are determined in the main by *national* institutions, organizations and policies. This implies remedial action through a complex policy of structural change rather than area supplementation.

In putting such a view forward, the possibility that relatively deprived areas are functional to the operation of a market economy, and the protection of business interests, even declining business interests, must not be neglected. The area deprivation policies of recent years relate, in some respects, to policies of longer standing which, while having declared aims of *restoring* spatial equity, and perhaps in part actually *servicing* such aims, in major part actually reinforce inequality and dependence. This can arise by the labelling of areas, and, through their loss of status, scare off potential development. It is a risk which we must endeavour to trace and document, knowing all the difficulties.

We can understand this by examining, for instance, central grants to local authorities. For the financial year 1976-7, the government's rate support grant to the local authorities has been estimated at about £6,000 million. More than three fifths of this sum is represented by the 'needs' element of the grant, but it would be wrong to suppose that resources are allocated substantially in accordance with any reasonable definition of needs. In practice, many of the indicators of need are very crudely defined, and they are weighted by a piece of technical wizardry which obscures the bureaucratic conservatism of the exercise.¹ Past expenditure is not only treated as an indicator of need but is the most powerful indicator in the formula. Here, then, is an example of a major instrument of social policy failing to become an instrument of radical change. The landed and market interests which have shaped and which, by their control over the rating system and the local distribution of public resources, seek to perpetuate and even accentuate inequalities between communities, are not seriously threatened.

We can also understand better the ineffectiveness of area deprivation policies by examining regional development and industrial location policies.² By 1970, the

¹ There are thirty variables used in a multiple regression calculation of 'needs', and these are set out in three pages of definitions in the *Rate Support Grant Order, 1975*, House of Commons Paper 31. The method has been criticized by Davies, B., 'Territorial Injustice', *New Society*, 13 May 1976.

² For accounts of the development of regional policies, see McCrone, G., *Regional Policy in Britain*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1969; Richard, H. W., *Elements of Regional Economics*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1969; Fisk, T., and Jones, K., *Regional Development*, Fabian Society, London, 1972.

government was spending £314 million a year on preferential aid to industry in the Special Development, Development and Intermediate areas. A committee under Sir Joseph Hunt on the 'intermediate areas' identified a more comprehensive Set of criteria for assessing an area's needs for assistance. They included above-average rates of premature retirement, a slow growth of personal incomes, a low or declining proportion of women at work as well as a high rate of unemployment and low earnings. But the diversification of criteria leads to the dispersion instead of the concentration of resources, because a much larger number of areas become eligible for aid. Resources are spread thinly, and may make comparatively little difference to the prosperity of individual areas. Forty-four per cent of the national workforce live in the assisted areas. Some commentators have argued that policies have had a negative rather than a small positive effect because they have helped to accelerate the decline of the inner city.¹

Declining industries become low-paying industries, and, unless new industries take their place, workers who become redundant stay unemployed or migrate, leaving disproportionate numbers of the elderly, the middle aged and the poor behind. The outflow can sometimes even lead to labour shortages - at least for the low paid. The value of houses falls, properties are not kept in repair and some houses as well as factories become derelict. A combination of low-paid work and the availability of some types of housing allows immigrant communities - including those from Eire as well as the black Commonwealth - to become established in certain areas. The depressed standard of old council estates and of so-called 'short-life' housing give further examples of local populations being stratified sharply according to status, income and amenities. The decline of an area in relation to others within a region will tend to produce some extreme effects - of overcrowding, streets taken over by squatters or sheer, unrelieved squalor - which lowers the reputation to outsiders of the area as a whole. Lacking a sufficient basis for raising rates to meet the greater needs of such communities for services and cash benefits, local authorities cannot develop policies to direct resources to the poor. Nor have sufficient powers been taken centrally to ameliorate or limit the downward spiral of poverty into which some communities are drawn.

Just as some areas are declining, others are experiencing a boom. The decline or the deprivation of some areas is not explicable except in relation to the advance or the affluence of others - whether regionally or nationally. The conditions within each type of area have to be related to some standard, or, alternatively, to other parts of the economy or the social structure as distributed spatially. Advancing prosperity is converted into new and more generous forms of consumption and display. The activities and possessions of a select few become, in time, the expected rights of the bulk of society. The attainable life-style of the majority is continually changing, and

¹ Falk, N., and Martinos, H., *Inner City*, Fabian Society, London, May 1975, pp. 12-13.

hence new obligations are imposed upon the poor and new needs are generated and acknowledged. Action to control and disperse the growing wealth of areas already wealthy is, therefore, a necessary part of a strategy to reduce poverty, and even more necessary than action to augment the low resources of the poor. Policies have to be devised which simultaneously check the aggrandisement of the rich areas and the impoverishment of the poor areas. These are primarily industrial, employment, housing and land policies.

Summary and Conclusion

The dispersion of poverty is wide. Although the survey showed there are higher proportions of the population in poverty in some areas than in others, there are relatively prosperous people in even the poorest areas, and substantial numbers of poor people in the richest areas. The areas considered were regions, rural and urban areas, constituencies grouped according to various criteria, and four specially chosen small areas, three of them in the poorest quarters of the poorest cities in the United Kingdom.

Northern Ireland was found by a large margin to be the poorest region, followed by Scotland, the North-West, Wales and the South-West, and the Northern, Yorks and Humberside region. Greater London and the South-East contained the smallest proportions of poor. Scotland had the highest proportion of persons with high incomes as well as the second highest proportion with low incomes. Anglia and the East Midlands comprised another region with substantial proportions of the population at the extremes of poverty and wealth.

The proportion in poverty or on its margins was as high or nearly as high in rural as in different groups of urban areas, despite the higher proportion of the rich in such areas.

When constituencies were ranked according to the percentage of the adult population leaving school early, and the percentage voting left at the previous General Election, there was a correlation of the expected kind with poverty, but it was by no means marked. When we grouped the 126 wards and districts of the constituencies visited into four ranks according to the proportion of units interviewed with low incomes, the highest rank had relatively three times as many poor or marginally poor people as the lowest. But the two lowest ranks, with 60 per cent of the sample, included 46 per cent of the poor in the survey.

Four small areas were selected for separate follow-up surveys. Three were the poorest districts of three of the poorest cities of the United Kingdom. In these three, the percentage of poor and marginally poor varied from 38 to nearly 50, compared with 28 for the population in household units in the United Kingdom as a whole. On the other hand, the percentage of relatively prosperous people varied from 14 to 26, compared with 39. In studying the results of the four area surveys, we suggested that the excess proportion in poverty and on the margins of poverty was substantially the

consequence of the relationship of the populations to the economy and the housing market. Substantially more were of manual than of non-manual occupational class, were unemployed, had low earnings and poor working conditions and, living in poor housing in often crowded conditions, had poor health. To this set of factors should be added high dependency ratios (loss or lack of family wage-earners and disproportionately large numbers of sick and disabled people and one-parent families) and the relatively low incomes of many in the non-working population (some of the components here being shortcomings of social security schemes). The analysis calls attention to national control of the rules of access to resources.

Areas or communities cannot be treated as autonomous or self-sufficient in terms either of economy or culture. Their functions and distribution of prosperity are in the main decided externally. The pattern of inequality within them is set nationally, and area variations in the extent of poverty arise through variation in the mix of industry and use and value of land; employment level; deviation of the wage structure of the local labour market from the national labour market; the distribution of type of housing tenure and types of house location; and the deviation of the local housing market from the national housing market. It is the national structure of unequal resource allocation, especially in its outcomes for classes and social minorities on the one hand and the sponsorship of styles of living and modes of consumption by powerful market and state institutions on the other, which primarily explains area deprivation. National action to remedy poverty - through incomes policy, full employment, less specialization of work roles, higher social security benefits, new forms of allowances and rate support grants and a more redistributive tax structure - is implied.