

Community Safety: A Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract

This article outlines a new approach for analysing and understanding problems of disadvantage and community safety in the United Kingdom. It uses the conceptual frameworks of Entitlements, Livelihood Analysis and Lifescapes commonly used to understand Third World development issues, including humanitarian responses to famines. The paper also uses the concept of social capital, which has been used and developed in developed countries (and is now widely used as a policy approach by the current UK Government) but has also been used in developing countries, most commonly associated with ideas of civil society. We use a case study of a housing estate in the North East of England which has experienced problems of anti-social behaviour, poor service delivery, environmental disrepair and community fragmentation to illustrate issues of social capital, loss of entitlements and livelihoods within a broader lifescape. The response to these problems by the local community, service delivery agencies and the local authority are also examined. We conclude by arguing that Entitlement Theory, Livelihood Analysis and Lifescapes can all be used to understand problems of disadvantage and community safety in the UK, as well as in a Third World context.

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Introduction

The transfer of poverty alleviation methodologies from a Third World to a First World context has a relatively short history. Participatory methodologies originated from work in the Third World, particularly Africa, from the late 1980s to the late 1990s. They were both a reaction and a response to centralised, top down planning processes which catered little for the needs of local people. These methodologies were essentially political in nature, as they changed the power relationships between those considered to be the powerful, e.g. government ministers, and the powerless, e.g. farmers or urban poor. Many of the methods were developed in the Third World and not by Western academic or governmental institutions, for example, in Kenya, through the work of the Kenya Woodfuel Development Programme and their 'mirror technique' (see Bradley, 1991) and in Burkina Faso with the NAAM movement (see Harrison, 1987) and Projet Agroforestier (see Critchley, 1991). In particular, they were politicised in Burkina Faso through the Gestion de Terroirs system of governance in the short term of Thomas Sankara (see Howorth, 1996, Toulmin, 1994,). These approaches were popularised by the work of Chambers (Chambers, 1995, 1996, 1997) and Scoones (Scoones, 1994, Scoones et al, 1995) in the mid-1990s and brought to a wider audience.

Accordingly, since the mid-1990s there has been increasing use of participatory methodologies in a UK context. Whilst certainly not free from criticism – for example, Pain & Francis (2003) argue that participation remains a buzzword that is rarely fully employed – participatory approaches have offered a new approach to community development, and local authorities and voluntary sector organisations now commonly use techniques such as Planning for Real (a.k.a. participatory map making), H-Forms (participatory planning), participatory appraisal and participatory evaluation. As Pain & Francis (2003) indicate, participation methodologies strongly encourages the inclusion and engagement of local people in decision making about their communities. Put simply, the application of such methods attempts to improve communication between the traditionally voiceless sectors of society and the policy makers. In this paper it is argued that other, more fundamental, analytical concepts and frameworks, which have long been applied in developing countries, have direct application to work with disadvantaged

communities in the UK. In the following section these concepts and frameworks are introduced and explained.

Loss of Entitlements, Livelihoods, Social Capital and Lifescapes

A series of theoretical frameworks and conceptual approaches are briefly presented here (their presentations are necessarily brief and each contains references for further reading). Each of the frameworks and concepts link or relate to each other and they are intended to be ways to understand a totality; that is, the reason why people suffer disadvantage and experience crime and disorder¹.

The first to be presented is Amartya Sen's Entitlement Theory (Sen, 1981), which is the dominant theoretical framework for understanding poverty and famines. Sen proposed that the reason why poverty and famines occur, was that people lost their entitlements to live a productive life, through losing their entitlements which enabled them to produce food, to purchase food, exchange goods for food, to inherit or be given food or goods and to have access to land. This last entitlement is key to our analysis as it represents entitlements to access as a critical element to people's survival. In Sen's analysis it was land, but in a non-agrarian economy we are concerned with access to key services which allow social reproduction, e.g. employment, healthcare and education. When people's entitlements change, poverty and disadvantage can occur. The loss of entitlements has been used to explain the reasons behind the Irish Potato Famine of 1846 and the Ukrainian Famine of 1930; two cases where there was ample food in existence but where people starved. People had no access to food as they had lost their entitlements.

Sen proposed that people possessed two types of entitlements: those owned by them ('endowment' entitlements); and those that could be exchanged by them ('exchange' entitlements). Blaikie *et al* (1994), in further work on vulnerability and disaster, proposed that these entitlements were conceived of as socially-derived resources which

¹ Although it is not specifically examined in this paper, the concept of social reproduction is an on-running theme. Social reproduction is taken to mean the ability of a family or a community to survive, prosper and create new generations by using the resources available. It is essentially a term for the successful survival and replication of a social group and has generally positive connotations, i.e. that proceeding generations will strive for a better life.

can be called upon by individuals according to the current allocative rules of society. When entitlements change or are removed people can suffer a fall in endowments (such as owned material resources) or a fall in exchange entitlements (such as demand for their own labour (unemployment) or a decline in wages) or a combination of these (Blaikie *et al.*, 1994).

Sen's Entitlement Theory can be applied to issues of community safety and disadvantage in a First World context, albeit in a different format because of the difference in subject matter. Although we are not dealing with famine, we are still dealing with a vulnerable (see later) population who suffer disadvantage and as a result experience crime and disorder. People's entitlements in a UK context concern the entitlement to:

- The democratic process;
- The planning process;
- Community resources;
- Employment;
- Education;
- Health care; and
- A community safety response.

It is through the loss of entitlements to formal services that makes people seek entitlements through other means, e.g. access to money through criminality such as drug dealing or theft because they lack the formal means of access, such as through employment or access to credit.

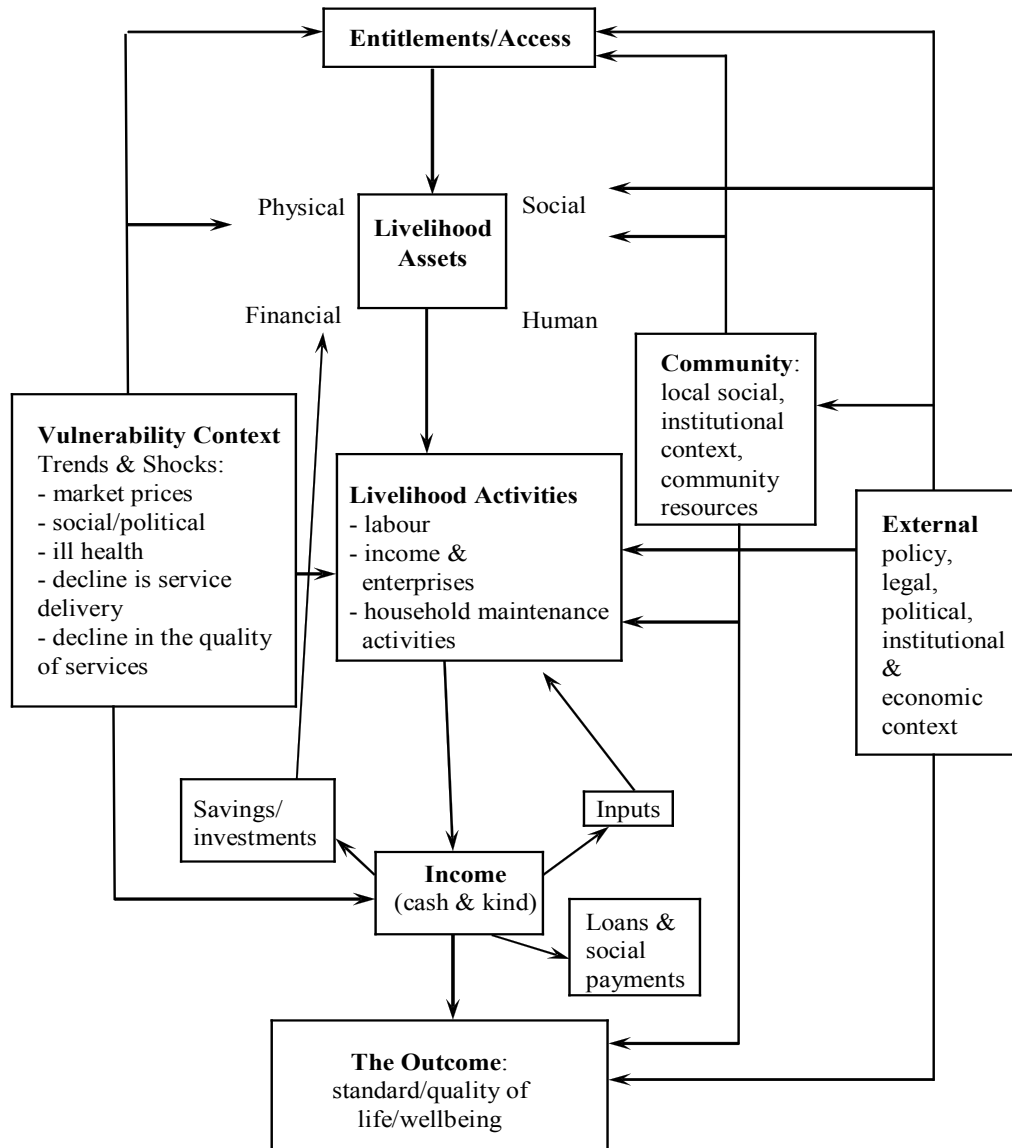
The second theory is a conceptual approach that has been used to understand the social reproduction of communities in the Third World. Livelihood Analysis (or simply livelihoods) is used to explain how local communities live, adapt and suffer disadvantage. There are many different definitions of livelihoods, but Carney (1998) presents one based on the work of Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway that is better than most:

“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future”
(Carney 1998:4).

The concept of livelihoods is gaining increasing acceptance as the basis of approaches to understanding the factors that influence the lives and well-being of people, and especially the poor, of the developing world (Carney 1998, Davies 1996) but so far it has not been applied in a UK context.

The whole concept of livelihoods is focussed on the family unit and based around the dynamics of the means through which people secure a living; that is the goods and services that allow them to survive and prosper (or not as the case may be). Also, key to the concept is the recognition that livelihoods are influenced by a wide range of external forces, both within and outside of the locality where people live, which can be beyond the control of the family unit (or perceived to be) (Howorth *et al*, 1999). This includes social, economic, political, legal, institutional and environmental dynamics of their local area (*ibid*, 1999). These external forces are not static and change over time, indeed, there can also be ‘shocks’, e.g. riot, political upheaval, intense media coverage. Figure 1 presents a model of livelihoods, including issues of entitlements and access, where the central spine of the diagram represents the livelihood dynamics of the household (Howorth *et al*, 1999).

Figure 1: A Model of Livelihood Processes and Influences



Source: Adapted from Howorth *et al*, 1999.

Vulnerability is a complementary concept to Livelihood Analysis and relates to the capacity of the family (or community or household) to withstand changes in internal or

external forces. In general, the poorer a household is, the more vulnerable it is to disruption in its livelihoods patterns. Indeed, in a livelihoods context this is almost tautologous: vulnerability is both a condition of and a determinant of poverty (Howorth *et al*, 1999). Specifically relating to disaster analysis (but also generally applicable) Blaikie *et al* (1994) observe from empirical evidence:

“Those with better access to information, cash, rights to the means of production, tools, equipment, and the social networks to mobilise resources from outside the household, are less vulnerable to hazards, and may be in a position to avoid disaster”. (Blaikie *et al*, 1994:47)

The concept of access to resources and vulnerability is also strongly interlinked (see chapter Access to Resources and Coping in Diversity in Blaikie *et al*, 1994:46), however, in this paper, we are using Entitlement Theory as a replacement for the concept of access to resources, as a key aspect of the former is access and entitlements to access (resources, services and processes).

The third theoretical approach, social capital, is one that is not confined to work in developing countries but one that is now used extensively in a Western context, including work in the UK. Social Capital is defined by the World Bank:

“Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions...Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together” (World Bank, 2007)

Robert Putman (1995, 2000) has most recently popularised social capital and it now has a relatively well established relationship with the outcomes policy makers in the UK are concerned with, namely: economic growth, social inclusion, improved health and more effective government (Harper, 2001). Putnam has defined it as:

“Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called “civic virtue”. The difference is that “social capital” calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations”. (Putnam, 2000:19)

The key indicators of social capital include social relations, formal and informal social networks, group membership, trust, reciprocity and civic engagement (Harper, 2001). Strong social capital has been identified as having quantifiable effects including lower crime rates (Halpern 1999, Putnam 2000), better health (Wilkinson, 1996), improved longevity (Putnam, 2000) better educational achievement (Coleman, 1988), greater levels of income equality (Wilkinson 1996, Kawachi *et al.* 1997), improved child welfare and lower rates of child abuse (Cote and Healy, 2001), less corrupt and more effective government (Putnam, 1995) and enhanced economic achievement through increased trust and lower transaction costs (Fukuyama, 1995). The cumulative effect of this research indicates that the well connected are more likely to be "housed, healthy, hired and happy" (Woolcock, 2001:12)². Social capital has been used recently by one of the authors (Burton *et al.*, 2005) as a framework for investigating hill farming in Cumbria, and identified that the mechanisms for generating social capital through co-operative actions are diminishing, with consequences for community sustainability and environmental management of upland areas.

The final concept of Lifescapes again originated from work in developing countries and emerged from the disciplines of anthropology and geography to explain how families used the resources available to them in their locality to secure a living (Howorth, 1999). The concept of Lifescapes was introduced by Nazarea, an anthropologist working in the Philippines, and later developed by Somé *et al* (1996) as a way of framing the social, cultural and economic interactions that occur for people across the landscape. Subsequent

² Taken from Harper, 2001.

work by Howorth (1999); Howorth & O'Keefe (1999) & Convery (2003) has highlighted the dynamic nature of Lifescapes in creating places that offer livelihoods for the community

Since then it has been used as a method to explain the damage caused to local communities by the 2001 foot and mouth epidemic in Cumbria (Convery *et al*, 2005). Similar to the other concepts and frameworks introduced in this paper, it can be applied to many situations to explain how local communities live, adapt, continue to grow or suffer shocks which either improve or damage communities, either socially or economically. Similar to social capital, but more broader and encompassing, Lifescapes as a concept looks at how families and communities survive and prosper (or not) in a given locality and how they interact with social, economic, political and environmental factors to attempt to ensure social reproduction.

The Application of Theories

What is being proposed here is that a collection of theories based around a common theme, most which have only been used in a Third World context, can be used to understand how communities survive and why they suffer disadvantage, with particular reference to community safety in a UK locality. The next stage in this paper is to apply these theories to a real world scenario. The case study that is used is based on research in the North of England. However, in order to protect the residents, the locality has been given a pseudonym and all names have been changed.

Case Study: John Carrick's Estate

John Carrick's Estate is a residential estate of approximately 200 properties, housing a similar number of families. It has been identified as being in the 10% most deprived wards (i.e. poorest) in England and Wales. The majority of the housing stock is council housing (administered by an Arms Length Management Organisation – ALMO), with a small number (seven) being owner-occupiers. It was an estate where there had been little investment and almost no service delivery. Although the initial problem was reported as

anti-social behaviour (ASB) (see later), the estate was experiencing social exclusion, environmental disrepair and under investment.

John Carrick's Estate was a community that had experienced a series of negative events and situations that had undermined feelings of community and its cohesiveness. These events and situations included:

- The estate is located in between administrative boundaries and fell out of the catchment areas of regeneration funding. The estate was also in between Police foot beats and as a consequence was infrequently and sporadically patrolled. As a result, there was limited service delivery in the estate and the community felt they had been abandoned by mainstream services.
- There had been a bad experience of running a community house, which operated in the estate for several years up to 2003. It was previously a residential house owned by the council which was rented to the community for a peppercorn rent. It was run by a few families and provided some trips and events and a breakfast club. The house created tensions within the community as services were only provided to certain people and 'cliques' developed. The house closed and became derelict. The closure of the community house and its decrepit appearance in a prominent position on the estate was particularly symbolic of the community's status; after closure in 2003 it did not immediately return to residential status but was left empty and became vandalised and used by young people as a 'den'.
- There had been the arrival of several 'problem' families into the estate who were moved into the area by the ALMO. Members of these families were involved in anti-social behaviour.
- The estate had a run-down physical appearance, there were overgrown areas, broken fences and dumped refuse. This was amplified by much of the housing estates in the surrounding area being demolished.

The Community Beat Managers (the local Police Officers) for the area containing John Carrick's Estate started to be aware of problems in the locality whilst on patrol in

September 2004 (a new CBM had started working in the area and was familiarising himself with the territory). These problems included criminal damage, youth disorder and anti-social behaviour. These problems were not reported directly to the Police due to the lack of confidence and trust felt by residents in the Police and a corresponding reluctance to report incidents. Residents also felt that they would be further targeted by perpetrators if they were seen to be reporting incidents of crime and disorder. One CBM stated that the estate was in serious disrepair, it looked abandoned and people had “*learned to put up with it*”.

Problem Identification and Service Response

The problems were identified and reported by the local Community Beat Manager to the Ward Coordinator (a council employee who provides the link between the local community, council employees and elected local councillors) in early 2005. These problems specifically related to anti-social behaviour caused by a small group of young people from five families. The Ward Coordinator reported these problems to the Ward Councillor and the response initiated a series of actions.

The first action was an estate ‘walkabout’ in March 2005 with the Ward Coordinator, the Ward Councillor, the Neighbourhood Response Manager (a council employee responsible for managing the local environment) and the Community Beat Manager (CBM). Here the immediate visible problems of an unkempt and untidy estate, graffiti and damage were noted.

The second action in April 2005 was a call by the Ward Councillor for multi-agency officer meetings. The multi-agency meetings included representatives from the council’s housing provider (the ALMO), the Police, and the council’s Neighbourhood and Environmental Services, Community Development Services, Play and Youth Services and the Ward Coordinator. Here the problems were discussed and actioned and a process of continued multi-agency meetings was started.

The third action also in April was a door-to-door survey carried out by a Community Development Officer that asked residents their views about the estate and if they would be willing to attend the multi-agency meetings (the response to which was positive). This action initiated a six weekly officer and resident meeting process which continues to date.

The fourth action in May 2005 was a public consultation event that took place at a local community centre. People from the community attended in this workshop-style event and focused on a series of issues including ASB, housing, children and young people and environmental issues and they provided structured feedback and comments.

The issues which were raised during the May meeting were followed up by the multi-agency meetings which were led by the Ward Coordinator. These responses included:

- Environmental improvements including cutting back overgrown trees and shrubs, tidying up overgrown areas and replacing broken fencing;
- Visible policing by the Community Beat Managers, i.e. additional patrols and building relationships with community members;
- Provision of youth diversionary activities including sport provision through a local sports centre and detached outreach on four nights a week;
- A series of actions aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour from an enforcement perspective including: installation of a CCTV camera and an additional CCTV stack allowing it to be moved if necessary; 10 signed Acceptable Behaviour Orders; 39 returned letters from residents detailing incidents of anti-social behaviour; two Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) on conviction served and one stand alone currently being prepared and five notices of eviction served and two being pursued.
- The construction of an all weather sports facility for the young people in the estate. The installation and location of the facility was the subject of much consultation, both door-to-door and at the local school where the local young people had the opportunity to vote on where they would like the area. After much negotiation and discussion between the residents, the facility will be located in the central green space in the

middle of the estate; a visible area close to the houses where the young people can be seen, as opposed to away from the estate; an area more hidden.

- The provision of activities for young mothers and those in pregnancy at the local primary school. A local children services provider was asked to become involved with work at the estate as there was a high proportion of young mothers and no facilities for mothers, babies or toddlers. The workers consulted young mothers on the estate about starting a local group that was subsequently started.

During and after these responses, there were trimestrial public meetings which were opportunities for residents to feed into the planning process and provided an opportunity for scrutiny, evaluation and feedback. These were in addition to the multi-agency and community meetings.

The residents that were interviewed for this research felt that there had been significant improvements on the estate over the course of the last year. They spoke very highly of the environmental improvements and the much improved physical appearance of the estate. There was also evidence of a very responsive service from Neighbourhood Services when residents asked for particular improvements around individual tenancies. They stated that the environmental improvements had “*opened things up*” and they can see a lot more than they could previously. The example was made of the park at the bottom of the estate where gangs of youths used to congregate. One residents said “*kids have started to go down the bottom now to play ‘cos it’s been opened up ... we don’t see the gangs passing down there no more*”. Residents also stated that anti-social behaviour had much reduced on the estate. It was felt that the ASBOs and the eviction orders had worked by “*acting as a warning to people about behaving themselves*”. There was also a recognition by local people that the diversionary activities for the young people had done much to reduce ASB on the estate.

Over the course of the year, there had been a considerable amount of community activity, including participation in public meetings, community meetings with professionals and the consideration of other residents in planning, e.g. in the negotiation about the siting of

the all weather sports facility for the young people. As a consequence, residents feel that community spirit is improving “*people are getting on more now ... better than before, much better*”.

Young people who were interviewed about the service provision were also highly appreciative of the agencies that had to come to work in the estate and were looking forward to the installation of the sports facility.

The CBMs noted that in the summer of 2005, youth disorder dropped dramatically due to the range of interventions that had been initiated, in particular the youth diversion. The Police also reported that the anti-social behaviour on the estate also dropped dramatically in the spring and summer of 2006.

Conclusions

John Carrick’s Estate held a community that had suffered from a progressive erosion of entitlements for many years. The lifescape of the community was one where there was community fragmentation, environmental disrepair, no service provision, crime and disorder and fear of crime. It was a bleak place to live, although, as the CBM had said, “*people had learnt to live with it*”, i.e. they had accepted that as their lifescape.

However, through intervention and community mobilisation, the lifescape began to change and improve: the landscape improved; households began to interact; crime and disorder was addressed; community confidence improved; and residents began to feel better about living there.

Entitlements also began to increase: for young mothers, access to childcare and resources for children; for those experiencing crime and disorder, access to a criminal justice response; for those who wanted to be involved in the planning and democratic process, the chance to be on decision making bodies and regular dialogue with councillors; and for young people, access to a range of interesting and worthwhile activities.

Because entitlements have increased, the institutional and policy framework has been strengthened and community resources have increased, it has all had a positive impact on livelihoods. However, livelihoods have a more complex dynamic and include the household economy, health and education and thus are affected by numerous other elements. This is where future development work should focus upon, i.e. strengthening livelihoods.

The methodologies introduced in this paper all attempt to understand the dynamics of communities, either from the perspective of the family unit (through livelihood analysis) or from the level of the community (social capital and lifescapes). Entitlement theory encompasses both these units of measurement and can be used both on an individual and a community level.

The case study of John Carrick's Estate shows that it is possible to increase entitlements, support livelihoods, improve social capital and develop lifescapes with effective interventions. Without looking at these three of four key concepts, it is difficult to put in place sustainable development or effective crime reduction initiatives. If policy makers and practitioners pay proper attention to them, then it is possible to start real development work (using Third World terminology) or real regeneration work (using First World terminology).

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