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Ouseburn Forum –July 2009 What Could / Should YOUR "Urban Village" be (like) ?

The regeneration of the Ouseburn that has happened since 2003 has been based on a vision of the valley as an Urban Village - but what exactly does that mean, and has the vision changed since the first strategy was written? As we head towards a revised document setting out the next few years of activities and targets, do we need to re-think what the Urban Village concept could or should mean for us now? This presentation from **Richard Kotter (Geography), Applied Sciences) of Northumbria University** will provoke debate and discussion, and will be a way for you the community to participate in writing the future of the Ouseburn.

The origins of the concept

- Origins may be:
- **normative**
- **empirical**

Tonnies (1887, *Community and Society*): urbanisation undermines a traditional rural life of family, kinship and community (*Gemeinschaft* = **social community**) that is replaced by an impersonal, contractual , self-centred lifestyle (*Gesellschaft* = **society/ economy**)

Chicago school or urban ecology – 'human ecology' such as Lewis Wirth (*The Ghetto*, 1928); G. Theodorson , ed., 1961, *Studies in Human Ecology*.; and R Park, E. Burgess and R. McKenzie (1925, *The City*)

Jane Jacobs (1971, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*) envisaged the **city as an inherently human place where sociability and friendliness are a natural consequence of social organisation at neighbourhood level**

supported by a **range of studies on working-class communities in cities** on both sides of the Atlantic (H. Gans, 1961, *The Urban Villagers*; M. Young & P. Willmott, 1957, *Family and Kinship in East London*; T. Jablonsky, 1993, *Pride in the Jungle*; M. O'Brien & D. Jones (1996) in T. Butler & M. Rustin, eds, *Rising in East London*

Urban Village as a term

- Taylor (1973): "The Village in the City" probably coined the term
- Urban Villages Trust (UVF) incepted in the UK during 1992, championed by HRH The Prince of Wales – their report critical
- Their 1995 report (Aldous) suggests six key characteristics of urban villages
- They should be -
- **Small; neighbourhood size, combine residential with work, retail and leisure units; aim to be self-sufficient; mix different social and economic groups; have efficient transport and be well designed; and be well managed**
- A sharp rise in the number of mixed-use developments characterised by the term "urban village" since
- Popular umbrella – culturally popular with policy makers and politicians

Modern urban villages in the UK

- Concept has been promoted since the late 1980s by developers, architects and planners brought together by the Prince of Wales' Urban Villages Group

- Concept embraces a fairly flexibly defined assemblage of characteristics that include the desire to produce distinctive, mixed-use neighbourhood units that are well-designed and sustainable and to generate community commitment, involvement and as sense of place

- Area based policies, embedded in wider regeneration initiatives and agendas

- E.g. Liverpool's Rope Walks (music), Urban Village North Liverpool http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Business/Economic_development/Area_or_site_specific_regeneration/North_Liverpool/villagenorth/index.asp; Nottingham's Lace Market (cultural consumption), Clerkenwell London (local creative industries), St. Georges Urban Village (Birmingham) http://stgeorgesbirmingham.com/; The Jewellery Quarter (Birmingham), Bilston Urban Village (Wolverhampton), Holbeck Urban Village (Leeds) http://www.holbeckurbanvillage.co.uk/

Critical questions of the concept

- Scale
- Community: Hillery (1955) finds 94 definitions, but agreeing on three points: a) Community involves groups of people who reside in a geographically distinct area; b) community refers to the quality of the relationships within the group, with members bound together by common characteristics such as culture, values and attitudes; c) community refers to a group of people engaged in social interaction, such as neighbouring
- cultural context in terms of countries, production and consumption
- class cohesion ? – quarter gentrification
- Social cohesion – c.f. neo-bohemian, social enterprise etc.
- Role of urban ethnography / anthropology / sociology
- (collective) sense of place notion – formed and negotiated rather than given / assumed ?
- Plannable ? / Managable ?/ Mediation of conflicts
- Role of physical planning and architecture – architectural design
- Role of social planning and enabling – both industry and housing
- Nostalgia in historical referencing and regeneration of features – heritage and tourism

Community cohesion studies

- R. Smith (1975): employed a multivariate index based on four dimensions:
- the use of local facilities
  - personal identification with the neighbourhood
- social interaction among neighbourhood residents
- Residents' consensus on certain values and forms of behaviour

- Pacione (1984): set of six measures employed to construct composite index of neighbourhood community cohesion in Glasgow:
- Personal attachment to the neighbourhood
- Neighbourhood-based friendships
- Participation in neighbourhood organisations
- Residential moves made within the neighbourhood
- Use of neighbourhood facilities
- Satisfaction with life in the neighbourhood

Methodologies of investigation

- Social areas analysis (Shevky & Bell, 1955): Societal trends / attributes / indices / variables / constructs (dimensions constructed deductively on the theory)

- Factorial ecology: (since 1960s, see W. Davies, 1984): a means of constructing urban social areas based on a mathematically rigorous procedure (exploratory analysis of a data set) and using a larger set of diagnostic variables than the seven employed in social-area analysis

- Social area profiling for marketing / polling / electoral campaigning – ACORN etc

- Cognitive mapping (behavioural approach in human geography / environmental psychology) – can identify sub-areas in a city based on congruence of individual delimitations

- 'Mapping of meaning' (humanistic approach) – attempts to reveal how shared values and common experiences transform a segment of physical space into a particular place – collective 'sense of place'

- World of experience of the taken-for-granted world: sense of place that people have and employ without much conscious thought; researchers must explore the lived experiences of individuals, possibly using a phenomenological approach of action that entails asking the question 'What does this social world mean for the observed action within this world and did s/he mean by his/her action within it'

- Urban fieldwork on foot – walking, perceiving, routing, socialising (Lee & Ingold, 2006) – systematic capture of planning, experiences and responses to Ouseburn Heritage Walks ?

Some examples

Bournville Village Trust, Birmingham

- 2005
- Ground-breaking start at Lightmoor Village in Telford, Shropshire, where the first phase of the 800-home "second Bournville" village gets underway.

- 2001
- Joint Venture agreement signed by English Partnerships and BVT to work together to promote and develop an urban village in Telford's Lightmoor district

Policy / politics reflections on the urban village concept elsewhere

- **What is an Urban Village? – as asked by Wolverhampton City Council / Advantage West Midlands**
- **"Urban Village. Hmmmm. What a great idea. It's brilliant. We like it. We're all in favour. What is it? "**
- **The recent history of "urban villages" in the UK really began in 1992 with the publication by the Urban Villages Forum under the patronage of the Prince of Wales of a book called "Urban Villages – A concept for creating mixed-use urban developments on a sustainable scale".** The first chapter of the book discusses what it is that characterises these developments and what ideal qualities we should be looking for.
- In one sense it is **sometimes easier to imagine what the alternatives to an urban village style development might be**. We are all familiar with the **large housing estates** that continue to be built up and down the country. There are a number of reasons why we don't think this is an appropriate model for Bilston:
- It does not use land very efficiently

- It would tend to contribute little to the wider regeneration of Bilston and would act as a barrier to movement between Bilston Centre and the south.

- It would become a "monoculture" , that is it would all look and feel the same. This wouldn't be Bilston, it could be anywhere.

- http://www.bilstonurbanvillage.co.uk/

Holbeck, Leeds: promotion

- **The promotion**: A pioneer of urban regeneration, Holbeck Urban Village, will set new standards in sustainable development creating over 5,000 new jobs in the high value digital and creative media sector. Use this website to learn about the past, present and future of this unique area, which was the birthplace of the industrial revolution in Leeds, and to find out how you could re-live the revolution for yourself!

- http://www.holbeckurbanvillage.co.uk/index.htm

The definition there …

Why an urban village?

- An area of Holbeck just to the south of Leeds City Centre has been designated an urban village and is the **focus of a multi-million pound regeneration programme**. But what exactly is an urban village?

- **An urban village is essentially a sustainable development combining a mix of uses including residential, business, leisure and community uses. Amenities such as bars, cafes, and shops form the key focus for ground level development. Healthcare, primary and nursery schooling, together with recreational and cultural facilities are also provided within an urban village.**

- Holbeck Urban Village will be the first of its kind in the Leeds city region and aims to create a new business and residential community, focused on creative and digital media. The urban village in Holbeck will not exist in isolation. Where it joins neighbouring communities such as Holbeck and Beeston Hill, it will aim to complement the existing facilities and fill the gap where facilities are missing.

- **The urban village will provide a vital link to surrounding communities, connecting them to the city centre and providing employment opportunities.**

- Further information regarding urban villages can be found at www.princes-foundation.org

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- [Bilston Urban Village](#) is a 101 acre site south of Bilston town centre which will be one of the largest regeneration projects in the Black Country. The development will create over 1,000 new homes as well as retail and commercial premises and a significant amount of parkland and open space.

- Contractors have been busy clearing the site and preparing the ground for the construction of a state-of the art leisure centre. A planning application has been submitted for this impressive facility, which includes a 25m, eight-lane swimming pool, teaching pool, health and fitness suite, four squash courts, sports hall, wet and dry changing rooms and meeting rooms.

- Facilities will be designed to attract families and provide a significant boost for facilities in the area. The site will also house a health centre.

- The contractors have also done significant work preparing highways and drainage infrastructure, along with

a high quality pedestrian boulevard which links the

urban village to the town centre.

More in Woverhampton – St. John's

St. John's, Wolverhampton

St. John's UV, Wolverhampton

28-33 & 36 Snow Hill, St John's, Wolverhampton

Snow Hill is a terrace of late 18th century houses built for the middle-class owners of metalworking businesses in the old Georgian heart of Wolverhampton. In time, shop fronts were added and workshops built to the rear of the houses. Today, 28-37 are listed Grade II, and situated within St John's Square Conservation Area. This is the centrepiece of St. John's Urban Village, a public/private partnership which was set up to revitalise this 50-acre area in the centre of Wolverhampton.

By the mid-1990s the terrace and the area as a whole were in a very run-down condition. Few of the shops remained open, and the flats above had been vacant for over a decade. The council had been unable to persuade the properties' owners to undertake the necessary repairs.

The Buildings at Risk Trust is a country-wide building preservation trust with a reputation for taking on large or difficult projects. It acquired the properties and found a workable solution for this part of the terrace with the assistance of the council.

Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter

- Jane S. Pollard (2004): repacking of the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham (moulded by the city's broader regeneration strategies) that gives greater emphasis to the aestheticisation of the Quarter may ultimately undermine its economic (and social) basis of the Quarters' jewellery manufacturing networks

- An urban industrial district only a mile north-west of the city centre - is at a crux of shifting from low-value to design and knowledge-intensive higher value production to survive; manufacturing jewellers and designer-makers (small batch) typically operating as sole traders

- Regeneration of production facilities, jewellery retailers moving in in late 1970s and 1980s, Conservation Area status based on unique industrial character and build environment

- BCC's 'new economy' is being constructed in the physical and symbolic space of its former manufacturing heart; plus plans to increase city-centre living (City Living Initiative)

- Jewellery Quarter Urban Village prospectus (1998) by BCC, EP, AWM, Urban Village Forum (now part of Prince's; Foundation) and BW

- Concerned with mixed use, including jewellery industry, residential housing, social and leisure facilities and not specifically concerned with the development of the Jewellery industry (a major European and UK cluster)

- controversial and competing agendas, insularity of trade ? Decline of collegiality ? Role of security. Quality of produce at retailers. Noise and pollution in production interfering with residential use and tranquility. Land and property prices. No control possible by Urban Village Board. Income and wealth disparities. CACMP (2002) with supplementary planning guidelines. Jewellery Quartyer Urban Village Trust became a Regeneration Partnership, with a stronger role for jewellery industry, and clear link in to BCC's economic development department

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- Result is physical improvement of parts of the area
- Inability to address pressures faced by locally resident industry, and increasing them (workshop rents, land value versus business value)
- Influx of more wealthy residents from elsewhere
- Disrupted local fragile web of industrial connections
- Mode of regeneration fails to reflect realities of production (and relies increasingly on imports for retailing)
- But belatedly has give jewellery industry some recognition in Birmingham's economic strategy
- Belated planning regulations may help in its survival short-to-medium term

Conclusions

- Make it YOUR definition
- Democratically
- Work from the bottom up – and work out what your community is / should be
- Should be more that a tool of regeneration / place / city marketing
- But: some economic realities cannot be avoided – hence: assets building by community

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