

4. Some Assessments as a Conclusion

The characteristics of the Slovenian practise in preparing and carrying out urban design workshops, their general purpose, organisation, course and results, in comparison to their preparation and realisation abroad may be summed up in the following assessments:

- a) both here and abroad urban design workshops are organised for different purposes, mostly for gaining strategies of long-term development and possible urban design solutions for settlements,
- b) by analysing the organisation of the mentioned workshops we find that their deficiency is primarily inadequate participation of the economic sphere and still a low level of interdisciplinary character of participants. The applications do prove that these participants are mentioned in programmes of urban design workshops, however they do not get involved, or do so at a low level in the further phases of the workshops. This fact could be a result of non-existent and subsequently undeveloped communications. It should be mentioned that international participation was achieved in five out of the nine mentioned workshops.
- c) there are clear differences between workshops here and abroad as regards the characteristics of the course of workshops. Abroad it is as a rule a several-day intensive event occurring at the location itself and corresponds to the before mentioned dictionary definition. Even areas where workshops are taking place are in the most busy centres, thus being visually and functionally accessible to the broader public. We find that in Slovenia in most cases the workshop was carried out as a
- d) the analyses of the final product showed that the results of this year's urban design workshops are stimulating. Most of the results can be applied as a professional foundation for the preparation of physical plans. In some cases, (revision of plan documents), the results of the workshops contributed to a significant improvement of previous physical planning solutions.

We may conclude that the project of the URSPP on co-financing municipalities for the realisation of urban design workshops and competition in 1996 was successful. There are two questions that still remain open:

- will this year's project on co-financing the realisation of urban design workshops necessarily be continued, and in what form;
- are municipal town planning offices prepared to include urban design workshops as an indispensable tool of an everyday planning practise.

Footnotes

1 Workshop

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 1995, page 1377: a period of discussion and practical work on a particular subject, in which a group of people share their knowledge and experience. Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 1989, page 1645: a seminar, discussion group, or the like, which emphasises exchange of ideas and the demonstration and application of techniques, skills, etc., a theatre workshop (work+shop).

- 2 The presentation was made on the basis of received applications for funding.
- 3 The urban design workshop in Izola was conducted under the auspices of the Planning, Urbanism, Housing and Building Authority of the municipality of Izola and the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Ljubljana. The topic and the organisation of the urban design workshop was prepared and lead by architects Jana Gojanović Purger and Lučka Ažman Momirski.

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The Regeneration of a Multi-Ethnic Mixed-Use Area: The Case of Robin Hood Chase

The St. Ann's area of Nottingham, in the British East Midlands was originally developed with dense terraced housing during the last half of the nineteenth century. The streets were arranged in a highly-connected grid, with homes in continuous terraces fronting onto the streets, with minimal private outdoor spaces at the back. Commercial facilities to serve the area were situated along St. Ann's Well Road: as one resident now remembers it, St. Ann's Well Road "was completely lined with shops all the way up on one side and all the way down on the other".

By the mid twentieth century much of the building stock was in poor repair, and the area underwent extensive redevelopment during the 1960's and 1970's. In the manner of that period, the original grid of streets developed with perimeter blocks was replaced with a layout based on courts and culs-de-sac, with little clear definition of "front" and "back"; and the commercial facilities were relocated at right angles to St. Ann's Well Road, in a new pedestrian precinct along Robin Hood Chase. Since St. Ann's Well Road remained the major link between the area and the rest of the city, this meant that the commercial facilities in the Robin Hood Chase precinct had a far less prominent location than had originally enjoyed; a factor made worse by their tenuous spatial integration into the nearby housing in St. Ann's itself. Not surprisingly, the shops have never done as well as had been hoped, and this relative decline has been worsened by Britain's recent and continuing economic recession.

The shift of the original perimeter block layout to the new cul-de-sac arrangement also had marked implications for the perceived vitality of the area. The new public spaces have far less surveillance from the housing, and the level of human contact in the new culs-de-sac is far less than that in the old streets, because of the markedly reduced spatial integration of the system as a whole. These reductions in surveillance and in the chances for informal human contact contribute to a widely-remarked sense of insecurity in the public spaces of the area as a whole, and in the Chase in particular.

By the 1980s, it was clear that improvements were needed in terms of economic regeneration, community safety and general environmental improvements. Proposals for the refurbishment of Robin Hood Chase formed part of a programme called Nottingham City Challenge, since the initiation of the UK Central Government's Challenge programme in mid 1991. Over a period of nearly two years up to 1993 there was a lot of behind the scenes talk, which led to a high degree of local concern as to what, if anything, would really happen on the Chase. In particular, there was widespread concern that proposals for redevelopment were being made and progressed without any real knowledge of local people's concerns and priorities, because there had been very little in the way of consultation with the local community. Whilst this might have been partly due to City Challenge's and the City Council's concern not to raise people's expectations, it had by 1993 resulted in a situation where local people had been left to respond to other people's ideas and priorities, rather than setting out their own priorities for redevelopment to inform and guide subsequent proposals.

Matters came to a head when the City Challenge organisation unveiled its own proposals for the Chase at a public meeting set up by a local organisation called Sector Forum. These proposals were very badly received, and Sector Forum asked for independent advisers to be commissioned to carry out a consultation process on behalf of the local community. Following a competitive tendering process, Oxford Brookes University Urban Regeneration Consultancy (URC) were commissioned to carry out the work – which forms the subject of this paper.

The overall aim of the community consultation process was to help the local St. Ann's community to articulate their views about the future of the Chase, and to ensure that these were presented in a form which could have the maximum practical impact. The achievement of this overall aim was felt to depend on meeting three crucial objectives:

- to make effective contact with St. Ann's community itself;
- to help the community to articulate its particular goals and priorities in terms which can be assimilated into the regeneration process;
- to convey these goals and priorities to City and to other potential funding and planning agencies, in such a way as to maximise their impact on the final outcome for the Chase.

Taken together, these objectives implied a particular methodology for the consultation process.

Given the time and budget constraints, it was clear from the outset that a lengthy process of community development was out of the questions, though it was important to do as much consciousness-raising as possible through the local media. It was therefore agreed that URC should tap into *existing* local groups and individuals of key social importance, in their preliminary work to establish common goals and priorities. URC did not have time to develop complex networks themselves, and there fore drew heavily on the existing contacts of a number of established local community-oriented organisations:

- Technical Aid for Nottingham Communities (TANC)
- The Chase Action Group
- Sector Forum
- St. Ann's Resource and Advice Centre

Since the intention of the consultation process was to explore ideas from the widest possible cross-section of the St. Ann's Community, it was decided that URC should begin by holding separate discussions with a broad range of local groups to

generate a wide variety of possibly conflicting views about what should be done at the Chase. Ideas from these meetings would then be synthesised into a number of markedly different options for the future of the Chase. Available resources limited URC to the production of three alternatives, which would then be submitted to public debate. Feedback from this debate would identify majority views about the respective strengths and weaknesses of each option, and this information would be used to generate two second-stage alternatives which as far as possible would build on the strengths and eliminate the weakness which had been identified. These two options would then be submitted to further debate, whose feedback would then be used to generate a final proposal. In a last stage of public consultation, the attitudes to this proposal would be checked; and this information would be used to make detailed adjustments to the final scheme.

In discussion with TANC and the Chase Action Group, it was decided that URC should contact the widest possible range of the Chase's users. This was made possible through the willingness of TANC and St. Ann's Advice Centre workers, and other members of the St. Ann's community, to take an active role in helping to manage the consultation process, leaving URC free to develop consultation aids and facilitate discussions about the alternative design concepts.

To ensure a large and varied participation in all the public discussions, TANC and St. Ann's Advice Centre workers carried out an intensive programme of publicity:

- making direct contact with all relevant groups on the Sector Forum's data base
- leafleting 1800 local households
- placing announcements in the local press on the local radio

The desire for the widest possible participation also had implications for the venue and timing of the events.

The venue for the events had to fulfill the following requirements:

- be on the Chase itself, to be as accessible as possible to the places' everyday users
- be capable of accommodating 60-100 people

No existing space could satisfy this specification, so a marquee was hired, to stand in the market square. This had two further advantages in terms of our objectives:

- it would stand out from the surroundings, with a festive atmosphere, to dramatise the fact that the event is taking place
- not belonging to any existing organisation, a marquee would demonstrate the event's independence from (for example) the council, emphasising its character as part of a community-led process.

To attract as many participants as possible, it was decided to time the events for market day, when the Chase was at its most intensively used. Events were run twice: once from 11am to 1pm, to pick up shoppers, and once from 7pm to 9pm, to attract those who worked during the day.

Much of the previous discussions about the Chase had focused on its *problems* and its *negative* aspects. To engender a fruitful series of discussions at these events, it was vital to promote a more positive frame of mind. For this reason, it was decided to start these events with a party atmosphere, focused around a large cake made in the form of the Chase itself, balloons and so forth: what was needed was a lively, positive, fun

atmosphere, where people felt able to be positively creative, rather than being heavily "problem-solving" in tone.

In URC's previous experience, we found that discussion about physical works best around large-scale models, with elements which can physically be moved as participants want to explore new ways of doing things. Since we were expecting large numbers of participants, the models had to be large enough for a maximum discussion group of nine people (in our experience, larger groups tend to break down into several sub-groups, and the discussion becomes hard to monitor). We therefore made the models at 1:250 scale, and large enough to include the immediate context as well as the Chase itself, to help participants orientate themselves. For the same reason, we decided that the models should be laid out in the correct geographical orientation, so that we could point out of the marquee to relevant real features on the ground.

Discussion about broader topics, in our experience, is best organised around display panels which incorporate a range of relevant images drawn from different sources. The use of range of different sources is important because it helps participants to see beyond particular instances to the broader topic, rather than potentially being side-tracked by their reactions to some other aspects of one particular image.

Feedback from the discussions about the models and the broader topics would best be recorded in different ways. In the case of the models, the discussions were focused in nature, and lent themselves to recording in a questionnaire format. The more open-ended topic discussions, in our experience, were most helpfully recorded by the discussion animator writing up a continuous list of key-words as they were raised in the discussion itself, and then asking participants to prioritise the importance of these at the end of each session.

Having established the rationale for the particular methods and techniques to be used in the consultation process, let us now review the progress of the project in practice.

First, the initial discussion with community groups managed to include twelve groups over the two-day period which was all we could afford. The specific discussion groups, and the order in which they took place were as follows:

- TANC Management Committee
- St. Ann's Resource and Advice Centre Staff
- METRA Youth and Development Workers
- Staff of Homeless Peoples Hostel
- The Chase Action Group
- Members of Robin Hood Chase Tenants' and Residents' Group
- Sector Forum/Neighbourhood Centre Group
- The Reverend Ron Collett (Baptist Church and City Challenge Board)
- Local Shopkeepers
- City Challenge Project Officer
- City Council and City Challenge Officers
- Ward County Councillor

The discussions were initially organised on a completely open-ended basis, so that the participants could address the issues which they thought important, rather than covering an agenda imported from outside. As similarities and differences of view gradually became apparent, however, these were consciously introduced as talking-points into the later meetings in the series, to test whether they formed a systematic pattern which

could be used as the basis for generating different options for the future of the Chase. In addition, URC had a checklist of topics, based on their previous experience, which they introduced into the discussion if they did not arise spontaneously. This list of topics was as follows:

- *Opportunities*
 - employment creation in all-phases of the project
 - training of un/semi-skilled and unemployed people from different local groups
 - setting the stage for *active* use of the Chase, throughout the day and evenings, and during school holidays
 - economic spin off for local business
- *Threats*
 - raising expectations but not delivering the goals
 - dirt, noise and disturbance during the construction process
 - danger to children and passers by
 - traffic generated by the new development
 - ugliness/unfriendliness/inappropriate image

Detailed notes of each discussion were made, and key points from these were later brought together and synthesised with the results of TANC's earlier consultation exercise, to form an analysis both of the common ground and of the disagreements within the St. Ann's community about how the Chase should be refurbished.

Overall, this process worked well, in that no glaring omissions for the list of discussion topics was discovered later in the process. On the other hand some groups with particular problems, such as community care psychiatric patients, were left out of the initial discussions. Work with more "official" bodies such as the local authority social services department, the police and the probation service would have helped here. However, such contacts would also have marked us out as "establishment" in some local eyes. There is a balance to be drawn here, between a loss of community trust on the one hand, and being seen as a treat by the official bodies on the other. We now think that we were in practice slightly too "anti-official"; and that this caused a lack of commitment by the "official" controllers of resources in the implementation stages of the project.

The initial discussion groups were highly successful, however, in terms of generating three alternative strategic options for the Chase's future. These were broadly as follows:

The "Chase is ours" concept

From this viewpoint, the problems of the Chase were seen primarily as social ones. The solutions, therefore, must also be seen primarily in social terms; for example through maintaining and strengthening all the existing social facilities, and the existing social networks between these.

Overall, the thrust here was towards a sense of the community "owing" the Chase.

The "Consolidation" Concept

Here the problems of the Chase were seen as economic as well as social in nature. People felt that it was necessary to bring trade in from outside the immediate St. Ann's area, so they welcomed new facilities such as a supermarket, but they did not want its location to destroy existing social facilities, nor to threaten existing local businesses, which might therefore need some form of extra support.

The "Commercial Anchor" Concept

From this view, which was primarily taken by City Challenge rather than by local people, the Chase's problems were seen primarily as economic ones. To make the existing precinct work properly in commercial terms, to offer a thriving facility to local people, an "anchor" supermarket was needed; and this must be located on purely commercial principles. If existing social facilities were thereby destroyed, this was regrettable but necessary. They would have to be relocated, and where conflict arose the social convenience of their location must take second place to the need for the precinct's commercial viability.

These three options formed a framework for workshop discussions at the first set of public meetings. These were highly successful in getting a large number of people involved. The open-ended layout of the marquee, with people passing through all the time, made it difficult to make an accurate count of the numbers who took part, but we estimate that about 300 people showed enough interest to come in and see what was happening. Of these, 123 people were sufficiently interested to fill in questionnaires (sometimes related to several of the options, sometimes only for their own preferred scheme) or topic discussion sheets. In all, 83 people filled in questionnaires about "The Chase is Ours", 81 responded to "Consolidation" and 72 to the "Commercial Anchor" scheme.

Overall, then, formal feedback was received from 123 individuals, which represents a response rate of representatives from 8.2 % of the households leafleted in advance.

As the first round of public debate was held during the term-time of local schools, however, the Chase Action Group felt that it was necessary to consult specifically with the local young people about what they wanted to see happen in the redevelopment of The Chase. An ideal opportunity for such consultation was presented by an event called "St. Ann's Street Play", organised by a local play worker. The event was ideally situated to attract local children, since it was located on open space directly adjacent to The Chase itself.

Members of the Action Group attended the event, and placed the three consultation models in a strategic position next to the "bouncy castle" play equipment. Using the models, the Action Group members explained what had happened so far in connection with the redevelopment of The Chase, and the young people present were asked specific questions about how the open space was used, how they would react to new buildings on parts of the open space, and about their ideas on how the open space and playground could be improved. The format of the event also made it easy for Action Group members to mingle informally with the young people, to get further feedback on these topics.

The findings of this session were invaluable in helping the consultation team to understand how the area's public spaces were used by children at present, and what facilities were particularly desired by younger people. It would probably have been equally useful to have contacted other limited-mobility groups such as disabled people's clubs and so forth: in future work, this was to form a larger part of our agenda.

Feedback from these first meetings revealed a complex situation. The "commercial anchor" scheme was widely disliked, which was no surprise in the light of our initial discussions. There was, however, no clear preference for either of the other

two proposals; and a number of completely new ideas were contributed by local people. The feedback helped us to see which features of each scheme were liked and disliked, but it was still not possible to generate a single proposal for the Chase's future, because (as usual!) preferences were sometimes mutually exclusive. For this reason, we narrowed down to two "composite" schemes for this second set of public discussions, to explore different ways of combining the best-liked ideas.

The level of community participation in the second public meeting was even better than in the first, probably because word had got around of the success of the first stage, and also because this level of interest had been picked up by local radio and TV, who broadcast information about the second meeting both the day before, and during the day itself. This high level of public interest resulted in 265 formal questionnaire appraisals of one scheme or the other. Altogether, 160 people gave formal feedback. This represents 10.7 % of the number of households leafleted beforehand, and is a 30 % increase over the number of people responding in the first public meetings.

Overall, the feedback from these meetings showed that both schemes were well-liked, but it was possible to see patterns of preferences for different aspects of each which could, potentially, be combined within a final scheme. This was again developed in the form of a large model, with a very clear rationale explaining three factors for each element of the scheme:

- why it had its particular location
- the percentage of people who had earlier responded favourably to the facility itself
- the percentage who had responded favourably to the proposed location

For example:

- **Police Station**
Has to be on St. Ann's Well Road for good accessibility to the whole area. 96 % of people want it. 87 % of people like the location we've proposed.
- **Surgery**
This is needed because a number of doctors in the health centre want to set up a new practice. 76 % of people think it is a good idea to have a new surgery. Many people would like it to be nearer to the bus stop, health centre and chemist's, but the location we've proposed is the nearest we can find.

Perhaps because of the widespread feeling amongst the community that the previous two sets of public meetings had been interesting and successful, and because of continuing media interest, even more people turned up for this final session, which was held in the open, in the market square, outside the St. Ann's Resource and Advice Centre. 254 people filled in the final questionnaire and this represented an increase of 59 % over the response rate for the second public meeting.

Of the 254 respondents, 91 % said they were satisfied with the scheme, though 11 % of these had suggestions for further improvements. Only 9 % said they were not satisfied, and even here 35 % of these were dissatisfied only about characteristics of the scheme which could easily be put right.

Because of the high level of satisfaction expressed with the proposal exhibited at the final public meeting, we concluded that this was the scheme which should be developed, with minor modifications and additions to take account of the final

feedback. URC's work concluded with the development of a community master plan incorporating these amendments, and linked to a Community Implementation Strategy which had been worked up with the Chase Action Group.

Finally, what were the successes and failures of the consultation process overall? Discussions with community workers and with TANC officers now involved in its implementation have revealed both good and bad points.

The good news centres around the fact that the process did generate a scheme which achieved a high level of satisfaction across a wide community spectrum, is proving a catalyst for a real process of change on the ground, and did this for a total expenditure of £5000. However, the implementation process is proving more difficult than it needed to be, mostly because there was relatively little dialogue with "official" stakeholders, who feel no real sense of "ownership" of the scheme. This lack of dialogue also contributed to being rather cavalier about a number of technical constraints on implementation which, though not impossible to overcome, should have been better integrated into the approach at an earlier stage.

Perhaps the most significant lesson to be drawn is that, in the UK at least, the mutual suspicion between official bodies and professional on the one hand, and community groups on the other, has still to be overcome at a level far deeper than more concerns about *techniques* for community involvement. The current situation is often, in our experience, that consultation work has to be partisan in favour of community groups, to get their effective commitment. This has to be brought out into the open at the start of any consultation process, and its implications discussed with all parties; so that the final course of action, if it alienates anyone, at least does not do this by accident.

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South Moravia-Lower Austria: A Regional Plan Going Beyond Frontiers

Introduction

We still think of Southern Moravia and Weinviertel, Northern Austria, as being a region of plenty. However in the past decades a lot of its wealth has been used up and only a little put back in. The region which used to be one of the richest in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as in the pre 2. world war Czechoslovak Republic, has become marginal. The Moravian border area near Austria is in a deplorable state. There is a shortage of safe drinking water, the air is considerably polluted in some places, small towns, historical sights and villages are dilapidated.

Owing to the iron curtain and communist regime, demographic degradation occurred on both sides of the border. Young and educated people were leaving this area where they could see no prospects. Yet it is a region where people of different nationalities were used to working together, a region with an interesting and fertile landscape and rich natural resources.

The fall of the iron curtain has opened a new chapter in European history. New economic, cultural and political opportunities and prospects have appeared especially in border regions. It is possible to take up again what was once historically held in common. New life has been brought to the recently dead strip of land between the Czech Republic and Austria and, thanks to the new political conditions, the region is once again located in the centre of Central Europe. However, many negative aspects which started in the past are continuing and, in some areas, have even become more significant. This is true for example of the environment and of the changes in the socio-demographic character of the population. Other negative aspects have appeared only recently and are becoming a danger – e.g. high unemployment. On the Austrian side of the border distrust of foreigners is growing amongst certain social groups mainly because of their concern about employment opportunities. Production is being transferred from there to locations with cheaper labour, that is to former socialist countries. The population of the area, as well as leaders in local and national government, are confronted with facts they have no experience of – new opportunities and new dangers are appearing.

This is why a regional plan going beyond national frontiers including both the Czech Republic and Austria has been worked out. It is expected to help deal with major problems concerning the region's development. Its objective is to support permanently sustainable development of the region and prevent uncontrollable growth which might bring more problems than benefits. As the project involves a border area in which different laws, decrees and procedures are applicable, great demands are made on co-ordination and cooperation.¹

2. Methodological approach applied to work on the regional plan

The benefits of this research task can be seen in the scientific, educational and political areas. Academically it means the development of new, up-to-date methods of spatial and regional planning and their unification with the methods used in Austria, Germany and the rest of Europe. Active participation by students in research and planning work on the project is an educational innovation. They deal with real tasks jointly with their foreign partners for the benefit of specific communities in the given area. The politically positive aspect is in dealing with problems in the border region common to both nations, the development of effective methods of joint work and a sense of understanding for the needs of the other side. The project is based on the new concept of borders, which is the essential basis for acceptance into the European Community. Additionally, a whole series of regional activities and projects have appeared such as the planning of national parks and nature reserves, regional water-management systems, the restructuring of agriculture, regional democratic problems, the improvement of the ecological situation, the development of infrastructure, the construction of new border crossing etc. These intentions require mutual agreement and co-ordination.