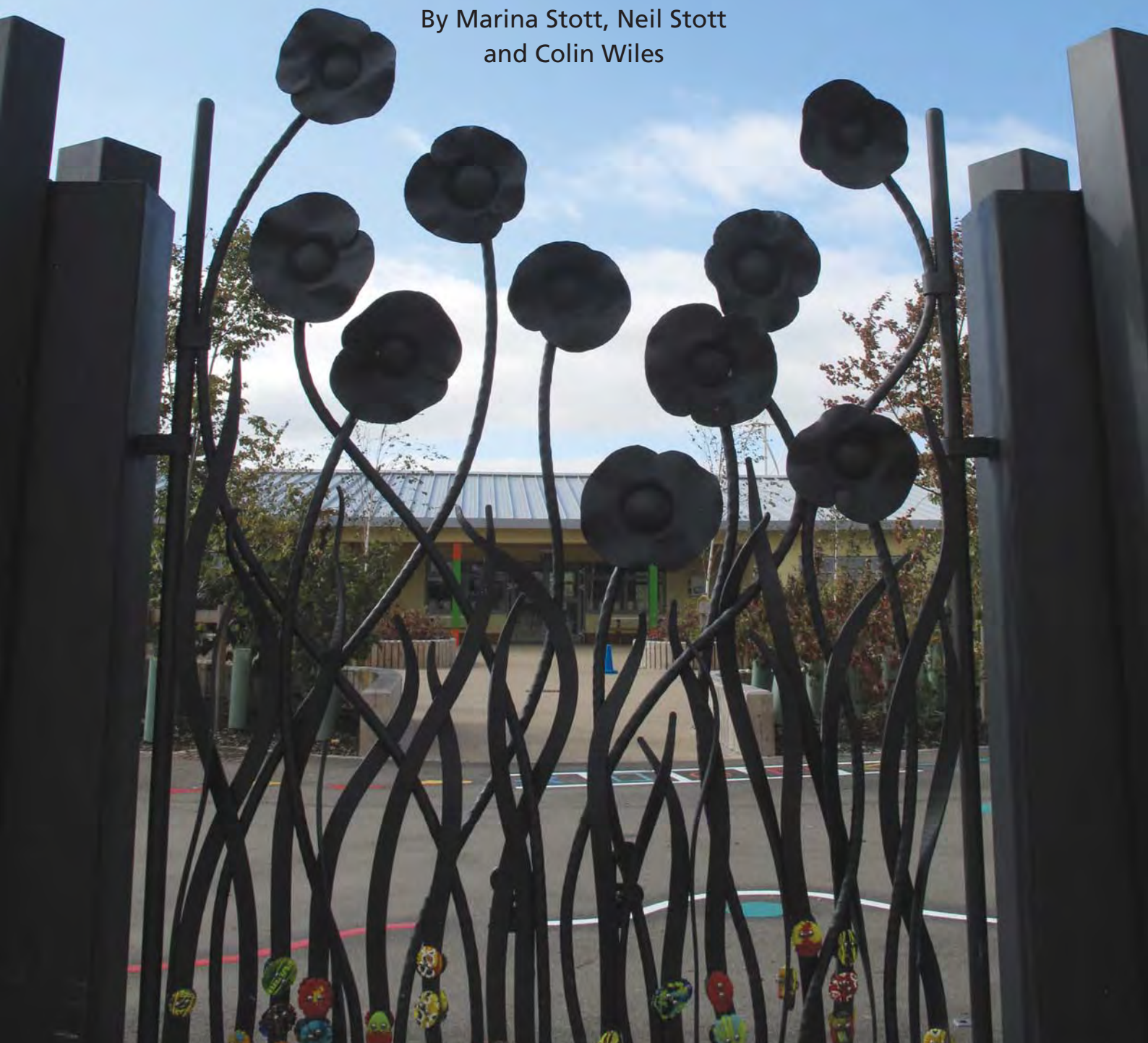


LEARNING FROM THE PAST?

Building community in new towns,
growth areas and new communities

By Marina Stott, Neil Stott
and Colin Wiles



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bpha specialises in working with partner organisations to build sustainable communities in new settlements and major urban extensions. We have worked on some of this publication's case study developments, and are pleased to be a co-sponsor. Whilst not entirely concurring with all the views expressed, the conclusions on the central importance of good design, community participation, timely provision of key facilities and infrastructure, strong public/private/voluntary sector partnerships, and tenure blindness are very well made.

This challenging document should cause organisations from all sectors to review their contributions to the creation of new communities to ensure that we create even better places for people to live in the future.

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ISBN 978-0-9564398-0-2



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Published by

Keystone Development Trust
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www.keystonetrust.org.uk

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Printed by Renaissance Creative, Office 1 Heath Business Park, Coalpit Lane, Wolston CV8 3GB. Tel: 024 7654 5666

FOREWORD

Do we learn from the past or make the same mistakes and continually re-learn lessons that were evident to our regeneration forebears? Do we ‘talk the community talk’ prior to new regeneration schemes only to see our aspirations unravel as schemes progress?

This report reviews the history of community building in New Towns and recent policy development around a new generation of new towns, growth areas and eco-towns. It outlines a pattern of policy makers and developers (public and private) emphasis on the importance of community yet frequent chronic underinvestment in community development and infrastructure in schemes. The results are often long and frustrating community campaigns to secure resources or remedial investment when communities unravel.

Learning from the Past provides the reader with a critique of the New Town experience of building community and recent developments. It draws attention to the hard learnt lessons that can make a difference in creating new places that support vibrant communities.

This report was developed with the Development Trust Association’s support as the issues discussed are increasingly pertinent to the communities in which Trusts operate.

I am indebted to the team who made the report possible.

Neil Stott

Chief Executive



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The concept of community is a slippery term and one that may be interpreted in a myriad of ways. Individuals may belong to any number of 'communities' simultaneously based on notions of place, identity and/or interest. Policy-makers, planners, developers must appreciate the variety of ways in which different communities operate and ensure that one type is not privileged over another.
- Neighbourhood design and layout can facilitate community cohesion, interaction and integration but it does not determine it. Neighbourhood layout intended to encourage social interaction and belonging through innovative designs have since become a haven for anti-social behaviour and generated insecurity among residents. Careful consideration is needed to ensure that fleeting 'fashionable' trends are not equated with 'innovation' which takes precedence over practical liveability issues.
- Housing type and tenure are likely to play an important role in creating cohesive and sustainable communities. Although there is a general consensus that tenure should be 'blind' and 'pepper-potted'; it is also suggested that considerations of housing should go beyond this. The 'right mix' should include considerations of income, ages, ethnicity and household types to ensure a range of households with different social characteristics.
- Neighbourhood identity and reputation are established early on in a development and are resilient to change. This is influenced by factors such as unmatched/coordinated development with population growth, a lack of community facilities and unfulfilled s106 agreements. This can impact on attracting investment and new residents. Timely and coordinated delivery of developments along with enforcement of s106 agreements is needed to ensure new communities do not 'fail' before they begin and become communities of 'no choice'.
- Involvement, not mere consultation, of existing (nearby) and prospective communities is recommended to engender a sense of belonging and attachment and minimise potential tensions. Listening to and acting upon the views of communities can aid cohesion and integration. A model of success is recommended for developments to follow which included community planning weekends, themed interest groups and a series of public events to facilitate continued community involvement in the planning process.
- Community development workers play a critical role in developing new communities. Although this has long been recognised, resources remain sporadic, uneven and are often the first to go in expenditure cuts. If the goal of sustainable and cohesive communities is to be achieved, community development must have a strategic and secure position in any new developments.
- Community buildings provide space and opportunity. Usually they are designed to maximise community use and not financial sustainability. While achieving both in a particular building is not impossible with public grant/ revenue support, it is usually challenging without public income. This is particularly pertinent in areas/neighbourhoods where residents have little disposable income. The alternative to public revenue subsidy is building-in trading opportunities (not just marginal activity such as community cafes or room hire) such as rental space and/or 'counterweight' building or activity that can generate considerable income.
- Community building designs need to balance perceived community needs, financial and environmental sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

The New Towns programme is often referred to as one of the most ambitious urban planning exercises of the twentieth century. Influenced by Ebenezer Howard's concept of the garden city, the new towns sought to address housing shortages, stimulate economic growth and create 'balanced communities' through mixed tenure housing and mixed industry. On the whole the New Towns programme was viewed largely as a successful endeavour. To date, the new towns have accommodated over two million people and provided over one million jobs.

However, the New Towns programme has never been comprehensively evaluated. The degree to which they are 'successful' is currently the subject of debate in the context of the government's Sustainable Communities Plan to provide three million new homes by 2020 through Growth Areas, New Growth Points and Eco-Towns. Lessons are being sought from the New Towns programme and reassessed to help deliver these new developments. Areas in which the new towns were initially seen as successful, are now being questioned as many experience deprivation, high levels of unemployment and housing need. These and other issues were highlighted by the Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee who called for urgent evaluation which "identified good practice and mistakes before any major new settlements are considered" (2002:para. 39, 40).

In 2002 Members of Parliament warned that the new towns were in danger of falling into a "spiral of decline". The Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee said many of the communities built as a model of 20th century living now suffer from collapsing house prices and high crime rates. The 22 new towns had been overlooked in successive government programmes to regenerate urban areas and were in danger of becoming expensive liabilities. Telford in Shropshire, for example, suffers from a collapsing housing market, high crime levels and pockets of severe deprivation. A comprehensive investment programme is needed to prevent a spiral of decline. Another problem highlighted by the report is that many of the new towns were designed around the car and their central areas

need to be completely rebuilt to reflect this. Committee chairman Andrew Bennett MP told the BBC: "The government needs to recognise that the new towns are up to 50 years old, and large amounts of the housing and infrastructure are desperately in need of a thorough overhaul. They also have major social and economic problems." The report adds that, "This failure of public policy to adapt to change may well create a text book example of how not to manage public assets." (TLGR 2002).

Don Burrows, of the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation - a Telford-based charity that aims to help improve local communities said the original design of some estates had led to many of the problems. "High density large estates with poor amenities, mainly designed for the car not the pedestrian are turning into breeding grounds for petty crime and drug abuse" he said in a BBC report (BBC News 2002).

The MPs suggest regional development agencies should take control of strategic sites and a New Towns Reinvestment Fund could allocate profits from the sale of these according to need.

The cause of many of these issues is attributed to layout, construction and designs that were seen as innovative at the time of the new towns building. Non-standard building materials have reached the end of their lives, spaces that were intended to facilitate social interaction and a sense of community resulted in a lack of privacy and increased fear of crime. Although each of the new towns have fared slightly differently, these are problems common to many of them. Key information on new towns in the East of England are presented in the table below.

Focus on the East - New towns

	Date of designation	Population	Key issues and facts
Letchworth	1903	35,000	Established stable community. Is home to one of the only colonies of black squirrels in the country
Welwyn Garden City	1920/1948	55,000	Established stable community. English Partnerships is drawing up plans to regenerate Hatfield town Centre. Until a mistake in 2005 there were no street names with the word "street" in the town.
Harlow	1947	80,000	Town centre to be regenerated. Harlow Gateway project will build 450 new homes on 11 hectares. Proposals to extensively extend the town to the north.
Basildon	1949	102,000	Now in need of regeneration. Basildon is a key hub for the Thames Gateway redevelopment. Much of it is built on an old plot lands area.
Stevenage	1946	80,000	Town centre being redeveloped. English Partnerships owns a 28 hectare former waste disposal site adjacent to the A1 that could be developed along with adjoining land holdings to relieve housing pressure in the area.
Hemel Hempstead	1947	83,000	Famous for its magic roundabout where traffic apparently flows the wrong way. English Partnerships is working with Stanhope Plc to bring forward employment opportunities for Breakspear and an adjoining site, in the east of Hemel Hempstead.
Peterborough	1967	160,000	City centre undergoing regeneration to exploit distinctive features such as its river frontage and the potential for a substantial increase in shopping, leisure and urban employment. Housing stock now transferred to Cross Keys Homes.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the New Towns programme to identify transferable lessons in delivering the Sustainable Communities Plan and creating new communities. Chapter two discusses notions of ‘community’, a concept which has proliferated policy developments in recent years and become a catch-all term. According to Raymond Williams it is a unique term in never being used unfavourably (in Day 2006:14). The implications of this are discussed in light of the myriad of ways in which community is defined and the increasing expectations of communities to deliver government outcomes. An overview of historical and contemporary debates around community is offered along with the role of community workers in addressing the needs of diverse and complex communities.



Chapter three charts the successes and failures of the New Towns programme as they were viewed at or near the time of their completion. Although they were seen as successful, some cracks were beginning to appear even in the early stages. Despite calls for lessons to be learned, particularly with regard to the development of community facilities, the programme continued relatively unchanged. Chapter four looks at more recent literature on the new towns to see if these lessons have changed since the earlier publications. Chapter five looks at a selection of case studies of new developments in and around Cambridgeshire which illustrate the extent to which lessons have been applied. It also draws attention to the development of Eco-towns and raises questions around the notion of sustainability. There is concern that some of the new settlements that are proposed, such as Northstowe near Cambridge, are not large enough and are too close to existing towns and cities to be self-sustaining. The fear is that they will merely add to traffic congestion because residents will look elsewhere for work and leisure opportunities.

The final chapter summarises the issues raised and the implications of these for the development of new communities.

2. WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

2.1 Introduction

Attention to notions of community has waxed and waned amongst academics and policy-makers for decades. Debates have tended to concentrate on attempts to define what community is, whether it does and should exist and how to maintain and utilise its perceived benefits. In recent years community has again taken centre stage in policy circles, promoted as a panacea for a raft of social ills ranging from crime to ill-health, poverty to disharmony and exclusion. Restoring and strengthening community has become a political imperative for New Labour with few policies neglecting the topic (Blair 2002).

Despite this intensification, notions of community, what is sought from it and what it can achieve remain ill-defined and ambiguous. Such uncertainty has not halted the government's aims of creating new communities in the context of the Sustainable Communities Plan (2003). Some fear that this lack of clarity will result in repeating past mistakes and perpetuate existing problems (Bennett 2006). This chapter will provide an outline of historical and contemporary debates around community.



2.2 The Policy Context

The *Sustainable Communities Plan* (2003) sets out the current framework for creating new communities in designated growth areas. The Sustainable Communities Plan aims to address current low demand and housing supply issues as part of a wider remit to improve the quality of life through a joined-up approach to economic, social and environment development, creating places where people want to live and work (pg.5). The subsequent *Egan Review of Skills* (2004) set out the vision for sustainable communities;

'Sustainable communities meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, their children and other users, contribute to a high quality of life and provide opportunity and choice. They achieve this in ways that make effective use of natural resources, enhance the environment, promote social cohesion and inclusion and strengthen economic prosperity' (pg.18).

Egan identified the essential components of sustainable communities as:

- **Governance** – effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
- **Transport and connectivity** – good transport services and communications linking people to jobs, health and other services
- **Services** – public, private, community and voluntary services that are accessible to all
- **Environmental** – providing places for people to live in an environmentally friendly way
- **Economy** – a thriving and vibrant local economy
- **Housing and built environment** – high quality buildings
- **Social and culture** – active, inclusive and safe with a strong local culture and other shared community activities (pg.19-21)

Egan urged for this to become a common language for everyone involved in delivering sustainable communities and provided a list of 50 indicators by which progress could be measured (pg.22, Annex B). These include indicators to measure a sense of place and belonging, cohesion and influence. In addition to the built environment specialists, *community workers* comprise one of the core occupations and skills sets involved in creating sustainable communities (pg.53). Since and prior to this, there have been a range of policies aimed at increasing community involvement in decision making and engendering a sense of belonging as routes to improving services and addressing disadvantage.

The *Modernising Government White Paper* (1999) made a commitment to listen to local people and involve communities in decision making (para. 3.6, 3.7). Giving local communities more influence in decision making was identified by the Social Exclusion Unit in the *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (2001) as part of the solution to entrenched poverty and area deprivation (pg.43-53). A range of funding streams were established to help 'empower' communities and facilitate their involvement in Neighbourhood Management Schemes and Local Strategic Partnerships. The emphasis on community involvement and empowerment continued in the 2005 progress report *Making It Happen in Neighbourhoods* along with calls for it to continue in the creation of sustainable communities (2005:60-62).



The *Together We Can* (2005) strategy for civil renewal aimed to empower communities to work with public bodies to shape the policies and services that affect them. This, it argues, will engender a sense of ownership and belonging, reduce social tensions, crime and fear of crime and improve health and educational attainment (pg.4). Building on this and *Citizen Engagement and Public Services* (2005), David Miliband called for a 'double-devolution' of power from Whitehall to town hall to local communities and citizens to strengthen communities and promote equality (2006:8). The *Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper* (2006) maintains the theme of empowering communities, pledging support for communities to have greater involvement in owning and managing community assets and more control over their lives (pg.32). This is done primarily through strengthening the role of local authorities and local councillors as representative bodies of the community (pg.32-36).

The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 provides a channel for people, through their local authority, to ask central government to take action to promote sustainable communities. It starts with the premise that local people know best how to improve their area (LGA online).

The most recent policy push to devolve power to communities is outlined in the Community Empowerment White Paper, *Communities in Control* 2008. This aims to pass power into the hands of local communities and give real control to a wider pool of active citizens (pg.12). Local councils have a strengthened 'duty to involve' local communities and promote democracy while communities are encouraged to become more active through volunteering, serving on committees, standing for election or running and managing local services and assets (pg.8-10). Community development workers are identified as playing a vital role in achieving this with increased support pledged from the government (pg.40-42).

Alongside these developments, there has been increasing attention paid to the notion of *community cohesion*. Cohesion was thrust into the policy limelight after the 2001 disturbances in Oldham and Burnley, culminating in the Cattle Report which drew attention to the 'parallel lives' led by many communities. This was, in part, due to a lack of coherence around notions of citizenship, a lack of cross-cultural contact between different communities and a lack of participation in decision making across all communities (pg.10-11). The latter was promoted as vital to achieving community cohesion with current methods of doing so inadequate (pg.58). Since this time, community cohesion has been mainstreamed with a plethora of guidance on how to achieve it, progress reports, a 'duty to promote' in schools (outlined in *Strong and Prosperous Communities* 2006), its relation to the sustainable communities agenda and a dedicated body to oversee it (The Institute of Community Cohesion).

This is not an exhaustive list of recent community focused policy. Rather it is intended to offer an overview of the development of this focus and the increased importance placed upon communities to deliver. Underpinning these policies is an assumption that a sense of community, cohesion and belonging either already exists or can be created without problems. This has important implications for creating communities in the Growth Areas and the role they are expected to play.



2.3 Defining Community: key debates

2.3.1 Definitions

There has been an increased emphasis on the notion of 'community' in UK social policy, as the preceding section illustrates. The US, Canadian and Australian governments have also joined the quest for restoring and strengthening 'community' (Freemau, 2005). Such global popularity points to a growing confidence in the ability of local communities to deliver solutions to a range of social issues – crime and fear of crime, social unrest, ill-health, among others – and instil a sense of security and belonging. The emphasis is such that any anti-poverty strategy or development project is doomed to failure *without* the central involvement of communities. However, there is startling *uncertainty* amongst policy-makers and academics about what the term 'community' actually means.

Definitional difficulties have plagued the concept of community for decades, not least because those who promote its recovery refuse to acknowledge any negative effects; not unlike the concept of social capital, also seen in recent decades as a cure-all for society's ills. The concept of community is a loose and all embracing term, used to denote membership along the lines of interest and identity, as well as physical boundaries (for instance, the Gay community, Faith communities or the business community). Although Brent (2004) argues that 'dictionary style definitions do not untangle the complexity of community in practice' (pg.214), they serve as a useful indication of both the variation and similarity. A selection of definitions are listed opposite:

- A territorial group of people with a common mode of living striving for common objectives (Durant, 1959)
- A specific population living within a specific geographical area with shared institutions and values and significant social interaction (Warren 1963). Both in Graham Day (2006) *Community and Everyday Life*
- A collection of people in a geographical area; Collections of people with a particular social structure; there can be collections which are not communities; A sense of belonging or community spirit; All the daily activities of a community, work and non-work, take place within the geographical area; self-contained. Nicholas Ambercrombie et al (1994) *Dictionary of Sociology* Penguin
- ...some combination of small-scale, relative boundedness, strong affective ties, traditionalism, and face-to-face contact. Craig Calhoun (ed) (2002) *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* Oxford University Press
- Community is not a place, but it is a place-orientated process. It is not the sum of social relationships in a population but it contributes to the wholeness of local social life. A community is a process of interrelated actions through which residents express their shared interest in the local society" Wilkenson, 1989, p. 339 Richard Meegan and Alison Mitchell 2001 'It's not Community Round Here, It's Neighbourhood' in *Urban Studies* Vol 38 No. 12
- As a *social or political principle* - a social group that possess a strong collective identity based on the bonds of comradeship, loyalty and duty. Andrew Heywood (1997) *Politics* Macmillan

- “Communities are social webs of people who know one another as persons and have a moral voice. Communities draw on interpersonal bonds to encourage members to abide by shared values...communities gently chastise those who violate shared moral norms and express approbation for those who abide by them. They turn to the state (courts, police) only when all else fails. Hence the more viable communities are, the less need for policing. Amitai Etzioni (1994) *The Spirit of Community*
- The web of personal relationships, group networks, traditions and patterns of behaviour that develops among those who either share the same physical neighbourhood and its socio-economic situation or common understandings and goals around a shared interest.. Val Harris (ed) (2001) *Community Work Skills Manual* Association of Community Workers; Community Work Training Co., National Lottery Charities Board

Bell and Newby note that Hillery (1969 in Bell and Newby 1974:3) identified *ninety four definitions* of the term community, the only commonality among them being that they all dealt with people and interactions. Beyond this, there was no agreement. What is certain is that ‘community’ is something that has been ‘lost’ and needs to be recovered.

Community discourse is characterised by themes of loss and recovery. Bauman (2001) describes community as a warm and cosy place; another name for paradise lost; a world that is not available to us but one that we hope to return to (pg.1-3). Delanty (2003) also notes the enduring nostalgia for the idea of community, seen as the source of security and belonging in an increasingly individualised and globalised world. Community is generally seen as something essentially good and its decline something about which to be concerned. The decline of community is perpetuated as both cause and effect of, for example;

- The decline of the traditional family
- The breakdown of respect for others
- The rise in crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour
- A lack of shared values, norms and morality
- Increase in ill-health
- Increased social exclusion and isolation

The community whose return is sought today is based on romanticised notions of what is imagined to have existed in the past. In the community of the past, neighbours knew and looked out for one another, child care was a collective responsibility and everyone generally got along. It is argued that these characteristics no longer exist. They have been lost in the pursuit of individual success and the exercise of rights, brought about by increasing industrialisation and the growth of capitalism.



2.3.2 Historical context

Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

Contemporary debates on community can be traced to the publication of *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* (Community and Society, 1887) by German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, the founding father of community theory (in Bell and Newby 1971). In it he contrasts the social relations characteristic of each in the context of increasing industrialisation, urbanisation and migration.

In community (*Gemeinschaft*) relationships are based on blood, kinship ties and friendship. They are intimate and enduring. Roles are specific, status is ascriptive and culture is relatively homogenous. There is a strong moral code, conflict is rare and members are loyal to each other and have a strong attachment to place. All interactions are based upon members' consensus and adherence to the moral code and take place within the locality. Such a structure necessitates cooperation and solidarity.

In society or *gesellschaft*, relationships are cold, impersonal and fragmented. They are independent of one another, devoid of mutuality, familiarity and are artificial. Interactions are contractual and take place only in so far as they can further the interests of the individual, if necessary at the expense of another. *Gesellschaft* represents interaction and existence on a large scale and is everything that *gemeinschaft* is not (Bell and Newby 1971, 1974). The passing of community is to be feared and regretted.

Community studies

The ideas of Tönnies heavily influenced the community studies which took place throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century in the US and the UK (see for example Bell and Newby 1971, 1974). Social surveyors and statisticians sought to understand variations between local populations. Social anthropologists focused on understanding the distinctive ways of life of small social collectivities to show how sometimes bizarre patterns of behaviour made sense once they were set in context. Social geographers drew contrasts between rural and urban communities seeing how they developed over time whilst political scientists were concerned with small town democracy and community activism.

The community studies were holistic in their approach, in that they sought to provide a complete picture of a community's nature and tended to focus on three particular types of locale – the rural or village, small towns and working class communities (Day 2006:26-27; Delanty 2003). These generated a perception of community as a particular kind of social structure or environment, with very specific characteristics, within which certain typical patterns of action and belief were likely to appear. Community studies tended to define community as 'a locality with settled denizens, a stable social structure consisting of dense networks of multiplex relations and a relatively high boundary to the outside (Day 2006:47). The maintenance of these networks rested primarily with women (see for example Young and Wilmott, 1957). These were seen as essential requirements for the well being and functioning of communities, the absence of any one of which signalled the breakdown of community and the emergence of the problem community (Taylor 2003).

Such problem communities were the subject of the Community Development Projects (CDPs) in the 1960s. An ambitious and contentious government programme, the CDPs were five year “neighbourhood based experiments aimed at finding new ways of meeting the needs of people living in areas of high social deprivation” (CDP 1977:4). It was assumed that it was the communities themselves who were to blame for their deprivation, the solution to which was for community workers to promote self-help and overcome communities’ apathy. However, findings from the CDP research pointed to structural causes and “forces outside [working class communities] control” of deprivation. Subsequently, the CDP workers found themselves between a rock and hard place; working on behalf of the state to quell growing social disquiet and advocating on behalf of working class communities in revealing the causes of community breakdown. The CDPs simply echoed earlier assertions that community breakdown was the result of policy not the people.



The community studies emerged at a time when such communities were seen to be in sharp decline with the advent of slum clearance and developing ‘homes fit for heroes’ to address poor quality housing, overcrowding and economic growth. City planners and policy makers came under heavy criticism for destroying social networks and building housing estates and new towns that were ‘soulless’ and lacking in community spirit (Jacobs [1961] 1993, Taylor 2003, Fremeaux 2005). It was the task of community development workers to rebuild these severed social networks, re-instil a sense of community and remedy the problems.

Community studies have been roundly criticised for presenting communities as cohesive, harmonious and stable places when they were full of conflict, division and fluidity. They also neglected issues of power both internal and external to the communities and failed to connect them with the wider society to which they belonged (Day 2006; Fremeaux 2005). Community studies fell out of favour shortly after the publication of Bell and Newby’s *Community Studies*. Although the CDPs pointed to structural causes in the decline of communities, the state response was to prescribe community self help and organising, a theme that continues to inform current policy. Similarly, despite their criticisms, the community studies are still influential in providing a benchmark of desirable social relations and the ‘good life’ for contemporary expectations (Day 2006).

2.3.3 Contemporary Debates

The community studies in the previous section saw communities as the basis for providing stability, cohesion and a sense of belonging and identity within a relatively bounded physical space. Many of these assumptions are questioned in contemporary debates on community, not least whether the communities of the past ever really existed. Consensus and agreement on what community is, what it does and what it can achieve still elude commentators.

Place

For some, notions of place are still a key component of community, providing a physical location and focus for human interaction, the undermining of which has had devastating effects (Freie 1998 in Brent 2004). The concern with the local grows out of wider concerns about the forces of globalisation. Many see the increasing global interconnectedness and mobility of goods, people, services, capital, as rendering the local as irrelevant. For many, the local or physical space is no longer considered important for social interactions, collective organising or as a basis for identity. Cohen (1985) and Anderson (1983) talk of *symbolic* and *imagined* communities. For Cohen, the “symbolic nature of the opposition means that people can ‘think themselves into difference’ whether or not that ‘difference’ is visible. This is done in subtle ways by using a framework of symbols, such as religion, ethnicity, certain traits or values, the actual content of which may vary and be invisible to those who are not part of the community (1985:117). For Anderson, the community exists in the minds of individuals “because members will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (1983:5-7). Individuals can be members of ethnic, religious or class based communities, which entail a sense of belonging without face-to-face contact. This can also be seen in the rise of virtual online communities, for example on social networking

sites such as MySpace, Facebook and Bebo. Perks argues that these virtual communities can repair broken social bonds and provide new arenas for public and civic engagement (in Clements et al 2008:104-114).

Fremeaux notes that most territories are arbitrary (e.g. administrative districts, local housing development) and do not necessarily represent the cognitive maps that inhabitants have of their locality. Furthermore, these cognitive maps are not automatically shared by the inhabitants who might have differential vision of what constitutes ‘their’ locality (2005: 271).

Nash (2003) argues that although place-based notions of community may seem outdated or nostalgic in the current climate of mobile, electronic and individualistic lifestyles, it is still of key importance, a “vivid reality” for many “whose family or friends live nearby, whilst for others who are tied to a locality in virtue of parenting responsibilities, lack of income or age, there is little choice to be had in where or with whom they socialise” (Nash with Christie 2003, p. i). Indeed, Forrest notes that “its degree of importance depends on who you are and where you are” (in Kearns and Parkinson, 2001: 2103). Considerations of how much time is spent there may also be important in determining the significance of place. Robertson et al (2008) note the continued significance of place in determining a sense of belonging and community (pg.62). Geographical location and clearly demarcated areas were important factors in developing an association with a place and identifying with it (ibid).

Family and friendship networks

Robertson et al (2008) further noted the significance of the immediate and extended family and friendship networks in fostering a sense of community, particularly in the absence of wider social welfare infrastructure (pg.47). The sense of community was maintained through these networks and the “mundane and routine interactions that take place at the local shops, hairdressers or post office” (pg.53). The loss of such places was seen as having quite devastating effects on the sense of community as opportunities for social interaction and engagement were reduced. Ironically, the authors of this study note that the most aspirational neighbourhood looked at, had no obvious community (ix). Their social networks extended beyond the local to a much wider social world. This has important implications for the focus on developing social networks that are less close-knit and dense to those that are weak but wide ranging and diverse (pg.100). The sum of these different types of social networks is commonly referred to as ‘social capital’ (Putnam, 1995, 2001).

Social capital

Social capital, although variable and contested in its definition, generally refers to the ways in which our lives are made more productive by social ties and networks (Putnam:2001:19). It is generally accepted that different types of social networks bring different rewards. Networks which are close-knit, referred to as bonding social capital, are good for providing social and psychological support and usually found among family members, close friends and members of ethnic groups (Putnam, 2001:22). Bonding social capital acts as a social glue and is good for mobilising solidarity and ‘getting by’ (ibid). Bridging social capital represents social networks that are weak but connect people who move in different circles, facilitating diversity in groups. This type of social capital is good for ‘getting ahead’ (Putnam 2001:23).

It is asserted by social capital commentators (for instance Putnam 1995, 2001; Aldridge et al 2001; Halpern, 2004) that the social ties of excluded and disadvantaged communities were close-knit, dense and inward looking. These dense ties prevented such communities from accessing employment and opportunities which would improve their situation. The lack of diversity of these ties was also seen as preventing cohesion across different ethnic groups. The proposed solution then was the development of bridging social capital and later linking social capital which connects communities to those with resources and power (Aldridge et al 2001; Woolcock 2001; Halpern 2004). The point that was missed was that these dense social ties often developed in response to social exclusion, rather than a pre-cursor to it and so act as survival social capital (Creek, 2003). Putnam believed that there was a decline in social capital, indicated by a lack of participation in civil society institutions and that this was cause for concern.

For Putnam and many others social capital is seen as a resource of empowerment; a facilitator in the attainment of collective goals, the creation of which is contingent on shared values, norms, effective sanctions and trust. The decline in social capital is important to the debates on community because it marks a decline in collective activity and in participation. What the debates on community and social capital miss is that both can be an oppressive force which can result in further exclusion of groups already excluded and make it difficult for new members to become a part.



Multiple communities

Community is not only descriptive, it is also normative, entailing expectations about standards of behaviour, values and loyalty. For those unwilling or unable to adhere to such norms, community becomes oppressive and members may find themselves excluded, for example because of religious affiliation, ethnicity or sexuality. It is likely that people will belong to many communities, along the lines of identity and interest in addition to those based on place. Allegiances to these communities may come into play at different times and may pull in different directions. Taylor notes that there is a misconception for policy makers wishing to engage communities that shared identity, location or interests will necessarily translate into cohesion, security and action (2003:37-38). She calls for more understanding of how these dimensions of community overlap and interact and about what choices people have in making connections between them (pg.227). Clements et al (2008) call for a radical rethink in the current 'participatory paradigm' which dominates community debates (pg.13-16). They assert that far too much government intervention in trying to create communities has undermined them. What is needed instead for the 'community creators industry', is a focus on delivery of services rather than the social engineering of the shape of communities (ibid:184). Such an approach however may be seen as complete abandonment by the state and wider society of those communities in most need, and least able to address these needs. Furthermore, it was just such an approach that some claim has led to the current predicament of disadvantaged communities (Skocpol 1996; Wilson 1996).

2.4 Community infrastructure

Developing appropriate community infrastructure is perceived as an essential ingredient in achieving vibrant, cohesive and sustainable communities. Community infrastructure combines *people, places and property*. Place and property provide the physical opportunities/limitations to community activity, people (community champions, activists, dedicated staff) provide the initiative, leadership and expertise;

- Place has an important impact on community infrastructure as it physically provides/ constrains community activity through available space to develop community building etc. The socio-economics of place also influences the availability of time and resources, emergence of community champions and the levels of inter community cooperation or conflict.
- Although community activity can exist without community 'property', there is a symbiotic relationship between the amount of dedicated community space and the ability of communities to develop and deliver appropriate services.
- The motivation and empowerment of local people to engage and develop community infrastructure is integral to any successful place. This can be enhanced/ constrained by the above and the actions of public, private and third sector organisations. Supportive frameworks include access to expertise such as community development staff, access to resources for example in kind or grant and a participatory approach to civic governance.

Community capital

Community capital is a term which combines Putman's notion of social capital with human, physical and financial capital to give a holistic development construct applicable to place communities (KDT 2004). The community capital concept fuses community development and community economic development theory and practice.

Community capital is the collective skills, knowledge and experience, facilities and organisations which ensure greater returns in the quality of life for all. To achieve community sustainability it is essential to *anchor* community capital locally to ensure sustainable returns.

Building community capital focuses on 'empowering' individuals, groups and communities to tackle their own needs and issues; creating their own solutions, organisations or enterprises. *Anchoring* community capital is about creating sustainable opportunities such as training, jobs, or community spaces in social/public (or commonly owned and managed) assets or enterprises. Community capital is integral to achieving resilience in communities, especially those experiencing rapid change. Community infrastructure is a key ingredient in building community capital.



Existing places

Most existing places in the UK have well developed community infrastructure which is continually changing to meet new demands and circumstances and combines to varying degrees the following elements;

- Community buildings; buildings which were purposefully developed to meet community, cultural or sporting needs or 'retrofitted'/ converted for these purposes; many in public/social ownership and publicly subsidised.
- Myriad local/grassroots groups often utilising the above to meet perceived needs.
- 'Formal' local, regional and national voluntary/charity/Third Sector organisations delivering services to meet local needs and aspirations and often coordination or joint work.
- Community strategies developed and delivered by local public agencies (usually coordinated through Local Strategic Partnerships) as well as;
 - direct service delivery
 - support to local community buildings/groups through for example grant, rate relief, in kind (officer) support
 - Partnership/delivery fora frequently involving the Third Sector
- Community strategies, partnership work and financial support through regional or national government or their 'agents', such as the Big Lottery.
- Private sector delivery through contracts, such as leisure.

New places

New towns and communities are created within existing public and Third Sector frameworks. Development is framed through a combination of national, regional and local policy as well as developer aspirations. Therefore there is usually an overarching framework of policy and 'formal' Third Sector organisations and umbrella groups. New towns and communities usually require additional community infrastructure capacity in particular;

- The buildings purposefully designed to provide space for community activity, including cultural and sporting opportunities.
- Land set aside for future development of community buildings.
- Dedicated staff and resources to promote and develop community activity.
- Support to the 'formal' Third Sector to extend services into new areas.
- Support to local people to develop community activity/groups.



2.5 Summary and Conclusions

There remains startling uncertainty and disagreement about the nature of the concept of community. It is a concept which means different things for different people at different times, the allegiances to which may pull in opposite directions simultaneously. The lack of definition can result in the concept of community being manipulated to the ends of differing and competing interests. Resolving these and disentangling the complexities has often been the task of community development workers who find themselves balancing the needs of diverse communities with policy requirements. Community is necessarily a relational concept; defining who is 'in' a community must entail some designation of who is 'out'. This is a key area of tension in creating new communities and a degree of conflict is inevitable according to some. The remedy is to ensure that there are enough communities, all with equal status, equality of opportunity and access to resources and power, for all to belong to; communities of 'choice' rather than 'no choice'. Ensuring this and managing conflict will be a task for community development workers, especially for communities who have experienced exclusion and disadvantage.

It is essential that space and opportunity for social interaction are available to allow communities to develop on their own terms and at their own pace. The current policy context suggests this is increasingly an area for which communities themselves should be responsible. This could be seen by some as a state abandonment of its citizens. It is those communities who are most often required to participate that are least able to do so. However, this could be a welcome and long awaited move in allowing communities to finally exercise some control over their own destinies. If communities are to be empowered, expected to run and manage community assets and organise themselves for action, they must be given the power and resources to do so, not just the burden of responsibility. If this is the case, many more resources will be needed to enable

them to do so, for this is not a quick fix. Building community capacity to realise the goal of community empowerment is a long term commitment. Above all else, this should be a choice for communities rather than a *duty*.

Key Lessons

- Recognition that people will belong to many different communities which may be based on identity, interest and place, each of which may accrue different and unequal benefits.
- Some will be able to exercise more choice in relation to the communities to which they belong and the duration of that membership.
- Community development workers should ensure that new communities are sufficiently close knit to afford support to their members but also sufficiently loose to avoid oppression and exclusion.
- There must be sufficient space and opportunities for interaction to enable communities to develop.
- Creating communities that are empowered requires long term commitment and resources.



3. THE NEW TOWN EXPERIENCE

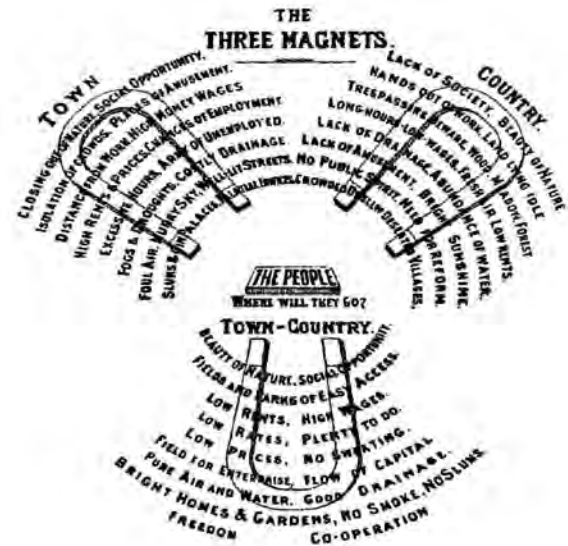
3.1 Introduction

The New Towns programme is often referred to as one of the most ambitious urban planning exercises of the twentieth century. Influenced by Ebenezer Howard's concept of the garden city, the new towns have accommodated over two million people and provided over one million jobs (English Partnerships, online). The literature that emerged around the time of completion of the new towns hailed them largely as a success. However, the literature was sparse and much of it either uncritical of the New Towns programme or lacking a comprehensive evaluative approach. The following chapter discusses some of the findings of the key texts written at that time, concluding with a summary of the key lessons for creating new communities.

3.2 Howard's Vision

Ebenezer Howard (1850 – 1928) was the father of the new town movement. His book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1902) led directly to the construction of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City. Howard was a social visionary rather than a planner, who envisaged garden cities of around 1,000 acres joined together in a vast conurbation of perhaps millions of people, all connected by rapid transport systems. Moreover, these communities would be self-governing with the land owned by the community and where the growing value of land would create a local welfare state without the need for state support. As with so many visionaries Howard's revolutionary ideas were corrupted and only certain elements were taken forward.

Howard sought to 'marry' the virtues of town and country without the vices of either to create "third alternative" (Howard [1898] 1989:8). He conceived this alternative in his now famous three magnets diagram:

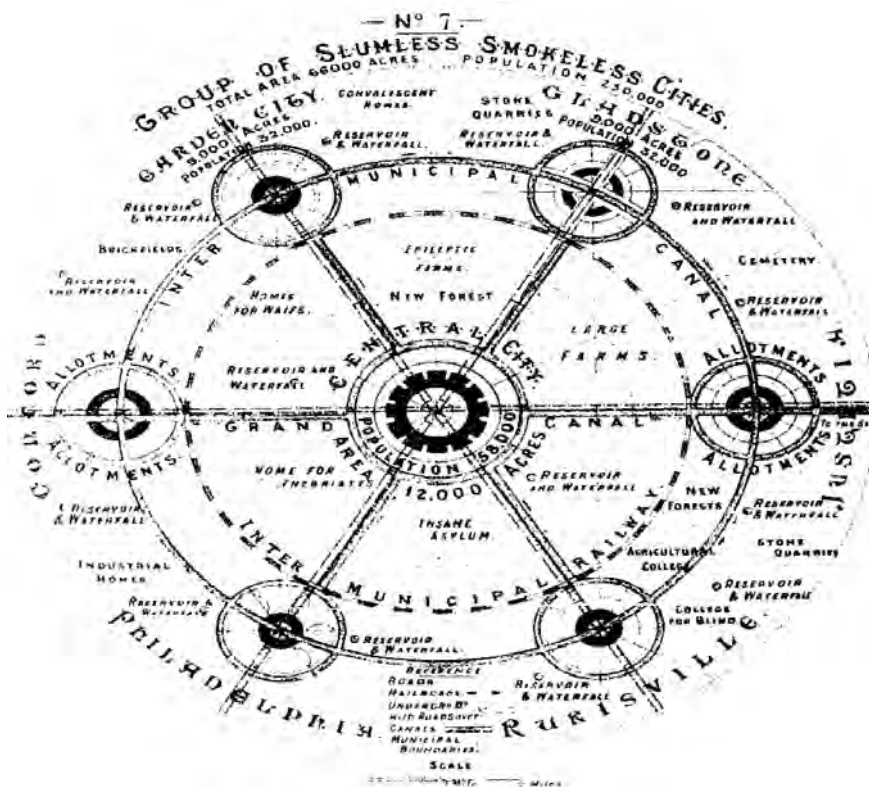


Howard's Three Magnets Diagram No. 1, pg.9

The virtues of the 'town' magnet were opportunities for employment, high wages and social opportunities. However these were offset by the vices of the city -high rents, lack of sunlight and fresh air and the "isolation of crowds" (ibid:10). While the country magnet "declares herself to be the source of all beauty and wealth, she is very dull for lack of society and sparing of her gifts" (ibid). Howard believed it was possible to create such a place where the best of both worlds could be found. He envisioned an area of about 6000 acres at the centre of which and covering 1000 acres, would be the garden city (pg.14). The centre would comprise a large public garden surrounded by public buildings, which were in turn encircled by a larger park of about 145 acres and the Crystal Palace – a glass arcade of shopping and gardens. The city is arranged in circular form with a three-quarter of a mile radius decreasing in density from the centre to the outskirts with an upper population limit of 32,000. The furthest removed inhabitant would be only 600 yards from the central park (pg.15-17).

Howard also intended for the inhabitants of the new city to be in close proximity to their employment, which was located in an industrial belt on the outer ring of the town connected by a main line railway (pg.18). The most outer ring of the town comprised allotments, farms, fields and small holdings to produce goods for the inhabitants and “whosoever they please” (pg.19). When the city had reached its upper population limit, another town offering the same benefits and opportunities, would be built a short distance away, connected by a rapid transport system to eventually form a cluster of cities. This is encompassed in Howard’s Social Cities diagram:

Howard's vision of cities in which work, home and the goods needed for day-to-day living were all contained within walking distance, connected to other centres in relative close proximity to accommodate growth, is commensurate with contemporary notions of sustainability. It was these principles of self-containment which most influenced the development of the New Towns programme, although the degree to which they adhered to them varied.



Howard's Social Cities Diagram No 7 in Hall and Ward 1993:23

3.3 The New Towns Act

In October 1945 the Labour government appointed Lord Reith as chairman of a New Towns Committee which concluded that new towns should be created by government-sponsored corporations financed by the taxpayer. This top-down planning was in direct contradiction to Howard's bottom-up approach. The New Towns Act 1946 designated Stevenage as the first new town. The key principles of the Act were:

- new towns should be located sufficiently far from their mother city at least 40 km from London and 20km from other metropolises;
- they should target a population of 20,000 to 60,000 inhabitants;
- they should feature predominately single-family housing, albeit with much lower density rates;
- they should be built, as far as possible, on greenfield sites;
- a green belt should be created around the new towns;
- quality sites should be chosen, but outside areas of exceptional natural beauty, which had to be preserved;
- housing had to be organised in neighbourhood units around a primary and nursery school, a pub and shops selling staple goods, with in every case a meeting-room for clubs and voluntary groups to meet;
- a balance had to be struck between housing and jobs, by making it obligatory for the development corporation to offer every business moving into the new town one housing unit for each job created.

The Act recommended the establishment of development corporations, responsible for the development and layout of each new town. The development corporations were given special and wide ranging powers with which to do this and were answerable directly to the government (section 2). Funding of the new towns would come in the form of loans from the Treasury, paid back over 60 years at the current rate of interest (section 12). The development corporations would be wound up once they had fulfilled their remit and assets and liabilities transferred to the local authorities (sections 14, 15). Any surplus after the winding up of the development corporations would be payable to the Treasury (section 15). However, there were some amendments made to the original act. Rather than transfer assets to the local authorities, the government created the Commission for the New Towns (CNT), which from 1961 was responsible for managing and disposing of the land and property assets of the development corporations. The CNT later merged with English Partnerships and now owns about 5,700 hectares of land valued in excess of £1bn. By 2009 English Partnerships had merged with part of the Housing Corporation to form the new Homes and Communities Agency.



The Act enabled the development of 32 new towns in three phases across the UK between 1947 and 1970. The first generation of new towns concentrated on easing congestion and housing shortage in major cities, especially London. Eight of the first 11 new towns were located in relative close proximity to London (Basildon, Bracknell, Crawley, Harlow, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City). The other first generation new towns were Corby, Cwmbran, Newton Aycliffe, and Peterlee. The second generation new towns were Redditch, Runcorn, Skelmersdale and Washington. The third generation new towns were Central Lancashire, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Peterborough, Telford and Warrington. The remit of some of these new towns was to attract new industry in regions of economic decline and address forecasted population growth and housing demand. At the time of their near completion, the new towns were viewed largely as a successful endeavour of a social experiment in urban planning. The enthusiasm with which they were celebrated is epitomised in the following quote:

'We claim full success for the first stages of the experiment in creating British new towns...They provide good homes in healthy, pleasant and well planted surroundings, never far from the country and in most cases near places of work. They are centres of efficient and advancing industry and commerce; equipped with modern urban services, schools, shops, churches and public buildings. They are financially sound, not only more economical to construct and maintain than any alternative type of development, but positively remunerative as capital investments' (Osborn and Whitick 1963:133).

The above quote however is qualified with the acknowledgement that the new towns do not "meet every possible requirement of every kind of human being, every personal or associated activity in urban civilisation. No town old or new is perfect in this sense" (1977:90). It is in this spirit that the new towns are judged successful; many have experienced some difficulties, but no more and no different than in wider society (Pitt 1972:140). The notion of 'success' must also be qualified. Aldridge argues that the New Town Policy was far too vague in what it was supposed to achieve and how, which greatly inhibits attempts to evaluate their success or otherwise (1979:162). Aldridge refers to a consultation document produced by the Department of the Environment in 1974 on the new towns in England and Wales. The document was published as a "comprehensive review of the new towns policy" but there were few recommendations, it avoided prickly subjects and simply endorsed the status quo (ibid:157). According to Aldridge the document was "bland, imprecise, a little self justifying and propagandist – even patronising" (ibid:159).

The literature on new towns during this time was diverse and fragmented, much of it in the form of annual reports of the New Town Development Corporations which "whistle a happy tune" and the locating of which was like "panning for gold" (ibid:ix, 54). The development of each new town will not be discussed in detail, but will be referred to where they are attributed special mention in the literature for their success or failure in relation to aspects of the developments.



3.4 The Masterplan principles

Although considered *on the whole* relatively successful, all of the new towns experienced some difficulties. The enthusiasm with which they were approached began to wane as some of the development corporations themselves realised they had not achieved all they intended;

'On the one hand there is a sense of achievement that so much has been accomplished; on the other there is an appreciation that not all the high hopes held in 1947 have been fulfilled.' (Hemel Hempstead DC, 1957 in Aldridge 1979:41).

In the literature, discussion of the extent of success is structured around the guiding principles of new towns which were that they should be "self contained and balanced communities for work and living" (Reith Committee, 1945). These principles were integrated into the masterplans to form a broad pattern of development whilst allowing for a degree of variation for each new town:

- segregation of home and work
- opportunity to enjoy open air exercise and nature
- privacy for the individual family
- some measure of community life
- 2 storey houses with private gardens
- Largely dependent on motor transport, ideally the private car

The masterplan was based on ideas about the ways of urban life (Gibberd 1972:90). Most early schemes consisted of two storey houses, mainly terraced with rear gardens, arranged around the roads to forms closes, squares and other patterns consistent with the garden city design. It became apparent that repeating this design over large areas resulted in a monotonous feel. The designs evolved to include three story and patio houses, combinations of houses and flats and tall flat blocks which were less tied to road layout. There was also a change in the materials used, under government directive, to supplement traditional brick and timber with 'non-standard' materials. Gibberd believed that Harlow represented an example of "design coming to terms with industrialised building" (ibid:98-99).

Balanced communities?

There was a desire for a 'balanced community' although the precise meaning of this was ambiguous. In relation to class, it was assumed that this would be achieved by attracting a varied range of employment and industry and providing different types of housing (Cresswell and Thomas 1972:73; Pitt 1972:138). While none of the new towns can be said to have a serious imbalance, they have tended to have a higher proportion of skilled manual workers than the rest of the country as a whole (ibid). Housing layout favoured separate clusters of rented and freehold housing rather than being mixed in the same streets. However this did not lead to a class polarisation in the new towns (Brook-Taylor 1972:133).

A popular design layout for housing used in many of the new towns was based on the Radburn layout to achieve the segregation of pedestrians and traffic. This provides pedestrian access at the front of the houses, which are situated along a green facing each other, with vehicular access via the back. It was believed that such a layout was conducive to privacy and safety whilst being "aesthetically pleasant" and "a pity where it [did] not feature" (Osborn and Whittick 1963:126,290). The layout of such neighbourhoods was thought to encourage social groupings and encourage social interaction (Gibberd 1972:93; Llewlyn-Davies 1972:102). However, Pitt notes that there was "overwhelming dissatisfaction" among residents with this design and it led to a "closed-in" feeling (1972:139).

Neighbourhoods and Community facilities

The notion of self containment, described as “having the full range of amenities” underpinned ideas about social interaction in the new towns (Aldridge 1979:108). Many of the early new town estates were based on the neighbourhood unit, in which there were schools, shops and community facilities within walking distance of each home (Gibberd 1972:90; Price 1972:118; Aldridge 1979:129). These were intended to provide for the day-to-day needs of the communities. Each of these neighbourhoods usually had a community centre, which was often little more than a hut but provided a focal point for organised social life (Pitt 1972:135). The provision of community facilities has varied through “luck and judgement” often experiencing long delays (ibid). Aldridge offers an example of such delays in East Kilbride where residents campaigned for a cinema from 1951-1955. It was finally received in 1966 (pg.55,74). Pitt also offers an example in Crawley where the only new public building, a civic hall, was designed as a foyer for an assembly hall that was never built and remains wholly unsuitable. Various schemes were planned but “never left the drawing board” despite years of local protest and pressure (1972:136). Duff echoes these sentiments (1961). He argues that the common suggestion of using local schools for community activities is inadequate and that even where development corporations have obtained planning permission to build community buildings, they cannot secure the finance to do so (1961:81-82).

There was no shortage of community activity and many note vigorous social, recreational and cultural clubs, groups and societies. Osborn and Whittick (1963) include Corby, Redditch, Harlow, Hatfield, Stevenage and Basildon among those with many diverse community associations, but entirely lacking in premises. However, Brooke-Taylor includes Harlow along with Crawley and Hemel Hempstead for having good community facilities (1972:131). Osborn and Whittick did not see the “provision of social life” as the responsibility of those building the new towns, rather it must “spring from the people themselves”. It was however, their responsibility to provide the setting and premises for such activity (1963:301).

Osborn and Whittick argue that population size is an important determinant in fostering community spirit and the continuing tendency to increase population targets goes against the principles on which the new towns were planned and inhibit this (1977:631). The lack of community facilities was a general criticism across many of the new towns and for those that had community facilities, obtaining them was a “long story of procrastination” (1977:457; Duff 1961). Because of the age structure of the new towns, some experienced a ‘bulge’ of 15-21 year olds (Self 1972:9). This presented particular problems with the provision of youth facilities.

Many new residents experienced a ‘gap’ between anticipation and reality of community and social facilities (Brooke-Taylor 1972:125). Thomas argued that “a little planned deprivation” was not necessarily a bad thing and that sharing a common adversary was the best way to engender community spirit (1972:52). This, he claims, was certainly the case in his experience at Hemel Hempstead. Osborn and Whittick also support this view, arguing that the absence of facilities “threw people back on their own resources” and a vigorous community life “sprang into being” (1977:19). In the early stages of development, the feeling of being a “pioneer” can, according to Denington, engender a sense of belonging and community spirit. However, there is a limit to the enthusiasm of the pioneer:

‘They have a strong feeling of being involved in something new and exciting and of ‘belonging’...They survive the mud and lack of facilities because they feel adventurous. They may have to put up with travelling shops or shops in converted houses and when the enthusiasm wears off, the time taken to get a substantial shopping centre built and operating or to provide places of entertainment, causes disgruntlement. They get tired of having no buses, no chemist, no doctor’s surgery and no competing supermarket next door. They find there is more to happy living than a good job and a nice house with a view.’ (Denington 1972: 146).

Howard's vision and the Reith committee had plans for recreational and cultural activities but they had disappeared from the new towns plans by the 50s and most centres were not started until 1954 (Aldridge 1979:55). The first phase of new towns did little with regards to 'social development' or community facilities. There were a few who had the foresight to appoint dedicated staff responsible for social development which included community development activities at the outset, although these were to fluctuate over the years (Hemel Hempstead, Harlow, Stevenage and Crawley) (Brooke-Taylor:1972:130). The attention, or lack of it, on social development began to change with the later new towns and there was increasing importance attached to this and informal social relationships in relation to encouraging a sense of belonging and attachment (Aldridge 1979; Brooke-Taylor 1972:130-131). This led to the establishment of social development departments in many of the development corporations.

Social Development Departments

The activities of these departments were wide ranging and covered community development activities, social planning, information and participation. The size and scope of them varied across the development corporations with some having no department at all. Any sense of how they might proceed was established by trial and error (Brooke-Taylor 1972:130). They helped new residents to establish social clubs and tenants associations, organised social activities, provided a feedback loop between residents and development officials and generally helped residents settle in and develop a sense of belonging (Brooke-Taylor 1972:130; Denington 1972:147; Gibberd 1972:98; Osborn and Whitick 1977:93; Aldridge 1979:113). Despite this range of activities and the increasing importance with which they were viewed, there was no comprehensive service in any of the new towns and the social development officers were not welcome by the planners and other professionals (Brooke-Taylor 1972:130). Nor were the resources to fund community development staff, buildings and activities forthcoming.

This remains the case throughout the New Towns programme. Funding for community projects varied across ministerial departments and no policy was developed to set aside cash for these. Development corporations in Harlow, Cwmbran, Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City commented in the 1953 annual reports on the limitations on spending for community facilities. Harlow development corporation reiterated this in 1957 but it remained unresolved in 1970 (Aldridge 1979:49,113). Milton Keynes was to have a social plan in parallel with the physical/financial plan, but it did not materialise (ibid). Despite being a large and active department in the second generation new towns, social development does not have a pivotal position. Throughout the New Town programme, expenditure cuts and squabbles over who should fund what, curtailed spending on "frills" such as community facilities (ibid:49). However, many saw this as an integral part of creating a complete community and recommended provision of staff and resources to achieve this. Such recommendations appear to have fallen on deaf ears.



3.5 Conclusion and Summary

Although there is no comprehensive evaluation of the New Towns programme, the review of the fragmented literature in the preceding section alludes to some common problems in the new towns even in the early stages of their development. Some general criticisms not covered in the previous section were *inadequate public transport* and an *inaccessibility* of the new towns to poorer sections of the community. Both impact on achieving balance and self containment. Some critics decry the suburban, low-rise style of the new towns but this was exactly what appealed to their new residents - typically the ambitious working class. It was only where architects and planners sought to create a brave new world that things went badly wrong. Cumbernauld, with its brutalist town centre and reliance on the motor car has been voted as one of the worst places to live in Britain (Jordison and Kieran 2003).

There was a *continuing* need for and *neglect of community provision*, despite persistent calls from several of the development corporations. This neglect was primarily related to *funding of such provisions, which were either not figured into the plans or were the first to be cut when there were limitations on spending and resources became difficult to obtain*. Despite, or because of this, many new towns were humming with community activities and community spirit. This sometimes appeared to “spring into being” and at other times was fostered by the community development officers employed in the social development departments. Although often marginalised in the administrative structure of the new towns, the *community development staff played a key role in settling in new comers and providing a link between them and the development process as a whole, and in establishing new communities*. Having community development staff in place at the outset “pays off handsomely” (Thomas 1972:52).

The English new towns have accommodated over two million people, provided more than one million jobs and on the whole have evolved into economically successful communities. Whether they are socially successful is probably, as Chou en Lai said of the French Revolution, “too soon to tell”.

Key Lessons

- Importance of community facilities for generating sense of belonging.
- Community and social outcomes should be given same attention and resources as economic outcomes.
- Community facilities developed in step with growing population.
- Importance of role of ‘social development’ staff in supporting new residents.
- Need reliable and consistent source of funding for community facilities and development staff.
- Clearly defined role and secure position for community development staff.



4. LEARNING FROM THE PAST –

Recent Literature on Communities and New Towns

4.1 Introduction

In 2002 the Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions was “astonished” to learn that the new town ‘experiments’ had never been evaluated. As such, urgent evaluation was called for which “identified good practice and mistakes before any major new settlements are considered” (para. 39, 40). Learning lessons from the New Towns programme is particularly pertinent given the government’s targets of providing three million new homes by 2020 through Growth Areas, New Growth Points and Eco-Towns. Despite these calls, there remains a paucity of research on the New Towns programme. There have been a few attempts in recent years to draw out transferable lessons from these for current new developments. The New Town programmes were wide-ranging and the recent research tends to be equally so. The focus of this chapter is less wide-ranging, concentrating on the development of communities. A selection of recent research is outlined below, identifying the key findings of each and suggestions for what these might mean for developing new communities. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key lessons across the research.

4.2 TCPA (2007) Best Practice in Urban Extensions and New Settlements

Aim and Scope

This report is carried out by TCPA and identifies transferable lessons for new developments from a series of case studies, each of which are at varying stages of development. The case studies included differ in composition and size and offer examples of urban extension and new settlement types. Each case study provides details of number and type of dwellings, community infrastructure and factors determining the overall aims of what the developments hoped to achieve. The themes which are of most relevance here are creating the identity of new developments, cohesion and community participation.



Community engagement

Lessons around community engagement in the context of new developments were identified in one particular new settlement. Caterham Barracks established a development trust (CBDT) comprised of local authority reps, the developer, new and existing residents, as part of s106 agreements which received awards for its level of community consultation during the development process. The methods employed by CBDT and achievements were:

- A community planning weekend which attracted over 1000 people.
- Themed workshops covering housing, the local economy, social provision, movement, transport, and the quality of the environment.
- Seven interest groups formed drawn from local community covering sports and leisure, townscape and heritage, arts and culture, environment, employment and enterprise and community management.
- Interest groups held further meetings and involved additional residents.
- Specific workshops targeting young people and children.
- Consultation exercises resulted in modifications to the original masterplan.

According to TCPA the consultation exercises have:

- Ensured integration of new development with existing neighbourhoods.
- Through the special interest groups the needs of existing the community as well as potential new community were identified and aided cohesion between the two settlements.

The CBDT is seen as “continuing success” and as such is recommended as a model for other developments to follow (pg.37).

Best practice

The remainder of the report includes examples of best practice across all areas of new settlement development in order to create successful, balanced communities. Although tangential to the focus of this review, the elements of new settlement developments are interrelated and the success or failure of one of these parts is likely to have an impact on the development as a whole. With this in mind, a summary of these wider elements of best practice are:

- New developments should have distinctive identities to provide sense of place and belonging whilst not being too out of character with adjacent/nearby communities.
- Shared public space based on short walking distances encourages cohesion and belonging.
- Design codes should be employed to ensure an overall coherent theme but also allow a degree of variation to avoid ‘visual boredom’.
- Mixed use areas and pepper pot mix of housing types and tenure.
- Infrastructure – strategic and community should be developed before residential areas and before residents move into area.
- Adequate public transport within development and linkages to adjacent settlements essential.
- Developments delivered most efficiently when there is a single land owner/developer.
- A single body such as Management or Community Trust is recommended to oversee overall development.
- Community involvement (existing and new) essential to ensure cohesion and interest in development.
- Upfront investment.
- Critical mass between 5000-10,000 dwellings.

Aldridge referred to the TCPA as 'uncritical cheerleaders' of the New Towns programme (in Bennett 2005:18). It is possible that TCPA are rather optimistic about what has been achieved in some of their case studies. Residents' websites indicated there were problems around the provision of community facilities, car parking, public transport, retail facilities, anti-social behaviour and crime (Solihull, online). This suggests that what looked good in theory may not have worked in practice (Bennett 2005:19).

4.3 DCLG (2006) Transferrable Lessons from the New Towns

Aim and Scope

This is an extensive literature review carried out by Oxford-Brooks University. The aim was to identify lessons from the New Towns programme that might be transferrable to the Growth Areas based on the assumption that these might act as a starting point for policy and practice. The research identified over 2000 books, articles and other published material, around 200 of which were reviewed. The range of sources included government/local government publications, journal articles, newspaper articles, books, research reports, conference papers, thesis/dissertations and other published materials from professional bodies (pg.18). The findings were structured around themes with key lessons for each presented in a series of tables. The theme of creating communities is of key relevance here. The authors note the difficulty of identifying transferrable lessons in relation to creating communities because of social and economic shifts that have taken place.

Creating communities

The authors make the following observations in relation to creating communities in the new towns:

- Identified community development officers (CDO) as playing a 'vital' role in creating new communities (pg.40).
- The activities and methods employed by CDOs varied across each of the new towns with little assessment of what worked best.
- Local Councils for Voluntary Service used as starting point to establish neighbourhood associations to facilitate residents' participation in decision making. This also identified as vital means to create integrated communities (pg.41).
- Most voluntary activity came from women in the new towns.
- Community and social infrastructure (multi-use community centres, sports facilities, children's facilities, schools, health centres, playgrounds, shops, post offices) were within walking distance and seen as central to making a 'living community'. The provision of this was seen as the responsibility of the development corporation (ibid).
- Housing stock is an important factor in creating cohesive communities. Earlier new towns were dominated by rented housing which failed to attract the middle classes; there was a lack of housing for older people and the needs of BME groups were not catered for. These factors inhibited truly cohesive and integrated communities from being achieved (ibid).
- There were often tensions between newly arrived residents and the established communities. It is important to treat existing residents with equal importance to new residents to avoid tensions (pg.42).
- Although there is no consistent evidence and further research is required, the authors cite evidence suggesting that it could take up to 15 years before residents of new towns established stable social networks and were considered 'integrated communities' (ibid).

- Master planning identified as playing a significant role in creating integrated communities. This worked best when there was a clear idea of the in-coming population, participation in the planning process, providing choice and adaptability and keeping community and social aspects on the agenda (pg.43).
- Where community infrastructure was already in place, social networks were formed more readily.
- New towns tend to have more community organisations than older cities with comparable socio-economic characteristics (pg.57).
- Issues around funding provision.

Lessons

In view of these observations, the authors put forward the following lessons:

- Put in place mechanisms for community support and social capital building. This can include community development workers; a 'community chest' for funding small scale community projects; working with the community and voluntary sector; working with church and faith groups; providing resources such as buildings, computers, etc. In the current climate, a Community Development Trust that could be funded by developer contributions may be considered.



Harness the support and collaboration of neighbourhood councils, neighbourhood associations and voluntary organisations.

- Ensure that local social facilities are already built before the community moves into the area, and that buildings can be multi-use.
- It is important to have a mix of housing stock, in terms of tenures and providers, and provide the appropriate facilities and services (families, older people, single people, etc.).
- There needs to be a consideration of the existing population, treating existing residents as being of equal importance as the new ones. Anticipate, and build a strategy for dealing with resistance to new settlements from the existing community in the area, or from communities nearby (pg.46).

There is a clear role for community development work in creating cohesive and integrated communities, which in turns rests on the provision of facilities to enable this. What is unclear is the definition of cohesion and integration being used by the authors and whether this is applicable to current policy conceptions. The nature of social networks is also unclear and whether these are strong but close knit or loose and wide-ranging. These are referred to in the current policy context as bridging and bonding social capital respectively and each accrues different benefits. It is suggested in recent social capital literature that the presence of both types is required in order to create cohesive and integrated communities.

4.4 Bennett, J et al (2006) Would You Live Here? Making the Growth Areas Communities of Choice IPPR

Aim and Scope

This report draws upon qualitative research with prospective and existing residents of the Thames Gateway growth area (Bennett and Morris 2006). It focuses on how inclusive and cohesive communities can be achieved in the face of social and economic challenges in the Growth Areas. The authors highlight the potential for tensions between existing and new communities and suggest that unless sufficient attention and resources are given over to community infrastructure and development, creating inclusive and cohesive communities will not be achieved (pg.27).

The 'Right Mix'

The authors argue that if sustainable communities are to be achieved, the right balance must go beyond tenure mix. The 'right mix' should also include considerations of income, household types, ages and ethnicities (pg.21). Looking at the experience of mixed communities to date, those that encourage mix are characterised by:

- Avoidance of mono-tenure social housing
- Local economies which support varied commercial services
- Good social relations between social renters and private owners
- Attractive places for families to move to

Although they support the notion of mixed tenure developments, they argue that there is "limited evidence" to support the benefits associated with mixed tenure communities (ibid). Furthermore, even where there is evidence of positive outcomes in mixed communities, it is not clear exactly why this is the case. They suggest it is a mix of households with different social characteristics which deliver benefits (ibid).

Another important consideration in creating sustainable communities is the extent to which the profile of the new communities will mix with that of the existing community (pg.22). The authors suggest that Growth Areas outside of London are likely to attract families with children rather than single households or childless couples. They also suggest that this depends on perceptions around the available facilities, such as schools, open spaces and health care, etc. Responses from research participants indicate that the capacity of public services to cope with population growth was a key area of concern for existing residents and many of them believed any improvements would only benefit newcomers (pg.23). Existing residents also expressed concern about the different social and ethnic backgrounds of newcomers and the extent to which they would integrate. Some of this was expressed using racist language and should "sound a strong warning about the prospect for community cohesion in some parts of the growth areas" (ibid).



Lessons

In order to achieve sustainable communities, Bennett et al suggest the following must be addressed:

- ‘tenure blind’ developments, so that social rented and affordable housing units are properly integrated with market housing and built to the same standards.
- include a high quality public realm, supported by a single management organisation.
- include public spaces and community facilities, which are essential to providing places for social interaction and as a focal point for community development action.
- include access to play and sports facilities for children and young people
- maximise the potential role for ICT to support the development of local social networks.
- have public services delivered alongside residential development and be accessible to, and reflect the needs of, existing residents as well as new residents.
- provision of resources to support community development work. Failure to do so risks new communities developing reputations similar to those of the new towns (lifeless) which can “significantly damage the ability to become places of choice” (pg.28).

Bennett et al draw particular attention to the last point, arguing that Growth Areas will have “significant problems” if this warning is not heeded.

4.5 Bennett, J New Towns to growth areas Lessons IPPR 2005

Aim and Scope

This paper attempts to draw out lessons from the New Town programmes which are applicable to the Growth Areas. Whilst recognising that the new towns were developed in a very different political and policy climate, the author argues those delivering the Growth Areas are likely to face similar challenges. The paper focuses on a number of themes that were key features of the New Towns Programme, which are most relevant to the Growth Areas comprising six in total. Two of these are of relevance for this chapter are balanced communities and commercial and social development.

Balanced communities

This section outlines the differences between the concept of ‘balanced communities’ used within the new towns and the current sustainable communities plan. Bennett asserts that the key difference is that the new towns had a clear vision of what kind of communities they wanted to create. This is lacking in the current policy framework but is underpinned by a presumption of a mix of people of different ages, household types and incomes and a wide range of other components, including economic, democratic, environmental and physical factors. The main public policy mechanism for achieving balance is the provision of a diversity of housing types, in terms of size, tenure and cost within a given area. Bennett suggests that there is a danger that the balance of communities in the Growth Areas could be determined by public expenditure constraints and the limitations of planning policy rather than what is appropriate for community sustainability or housing need, particularly given the absence of a clear vision of new communities in the Growth Areas (pg.9). Lessons along this theme are therefore:

- The need for a vision for the new communities in the Growth Areas.
- Priorities about who the additional housing is for should be part of comprehensive plans for delivery in each of the Growth Areas.
- The need for clear objectives about the appropriate housing types, including social housing, which must be delivered to achieve mixed communities.

Commercial and Social Development

The social and commercial development of new towns was dominated by excessive paternalism, despite efforts to avoid this, and represented a passive approach to addressing inequality based on a 'trickle down' effect. Commercial facilities were not prioritised, because of delays and financial difficulties in delivering some of the fundamental elements of infrastructure. Commercial development had to wait until housing development made them economically viable (pg.15).

There were significant numbers of social development staff employed to foster social networks of new residents, help them settle in to their new homes and address the 'new town blues', especially where local shops, facilities and public transport had yet to be developed. The social development staff also encouraged participation in sports and social activities, ensured planning decisions were sensitive to social issues and ensured residents were involved in planning decisions. Although never formally evaluated the author suggests that the continued strong emphasis on social development throughout the New Towns programme was indicative of the benefits (pg.16).

The lack of social and commercial facilities would have contributed to some of the stigma that built up about the new towns, which in the long run impacted on their ability to attract further investment. The Sustainable Communities Plan places significant emphasis on cohesion and local culture and a key lesson for the Growth Areas is the recognition that large scale housing growth requires skills and capacity to address social development. Therefore:

- Responsibility and resources for social development needs to be allocated to agencies with the capacity to deliver support to new communities.
- Capital funding to support the provision of social, cultural and community facilities will also be essential to the creation of sustainable communities.



4.6 Hall, P (1993) *New Town, New Home: The Lessons of Experience* Calouste Foundation

Aim and Scope

The focus of the book is on the new towns developed or extended under the provisions of the New Town Act of 1946, 1959 and 1965 and excludes NI new towns because of differences in structure and administration. Beginning with Howard's vision of a 'social city', Hall draws upon a wide range of sources including academic, policy and media reports to trace the evolution of the new towns. He goes on to identify lessons from the new towns in relation to the different outcomes they sought to achieve, such as employment, green spaces and better housing. Community development activity in the new towns was carried out under the remit of social development and often under a range of different titles. Key observations:

- Reith Committee 1964 identified a need for community development in order to promote a sense of belonging (pg.51).
- Although widely employed in the new towns, social development officers were not enshrined in legislation (pg.52).
- Obtaining development officers and community provisions, such as community centres, proved difficult and involved 'conspiracies' and conflict (pg.53-54).
- Social development the first to go in spending cuts (54).
- The status of social and community development was dependent on the priorities of the manager of the New Town (pg.54).
- Provision of social development officers based on an assumption that new towns had particular problems which existing settlements did not and that NT residents had weak community membership (pg.51, 56).
- Assumptions that 'neighbourliness' (the equivalent to today's notion of cohesion), could be created by the physical design of the neighbourhoods (pg.52).

- Activities undertaken by social development officers included providing information on planning, acting as a mobile CAB, organising social activities and get people together to respond to perceived injustices (pg.53-58).
- Importance of community development recognised in second generation of new towns which provided a dedicated budget (pg.58).

On the success of building communities, Hall concludes that although an elusive term, 'community' however defined was as present in the new towns as anywhere else (pg.147). There are two key lessons that can be drawn from these observations:

- Community development has a key role to play in creating new communities.
- In order for community development to be effective and reduce the risk of becoming marginalised, political, financial and policy provision must be made to accommodate it.



4.7 Conclusion and Summary

Common themes emerge across the literature in relation to creating communities in the new towns. In much of the literature there is an assumption that the physical environment and layout will create community cohesion. These assumptions also underpinned much of the design/layout of the new towns. Achieving community cohesion or neighbourliness as it was referred to then, based upon the physical environment did not happen in the new towns and yet is still sought, by the same means in contemporary developments. The literature also tends to ignore issues of tenure balance and lettings policy which were first highlighted by David Page in *Building for Communities* (1993). Although this report took a generic look at housing estates the lessons were equally applicable to new towns, and stressed the importance of avoiding mono-tenure estates, pepper potting social housing among market housing and applying a sensible lettings policy, so that disadvantaged tenants were not disproportionately housed in any neighbourhood.

It would appear that lessons from the original new towns have not been learned in relation to the limits of what the physical environment can achieve. New developments need co-ordination of all the parts, including funding and community infrastructure, to ensure that the failure of one does not signal the failure of the whole.

Despite being identified as an essential requirement in the creation of communities, community development work has not found a permanent and strategic position. This is symptomatic of the ways in which community development work has often been seen as an optional extra throughout its history (for example see Popple 1995; Taylor 2003). The research reviewed here provides opportunities to learn from the past. The fact that current new developments have highlighted similar issues to those of the new towns suggest these opportunities have been missed.

Summary of Key Lessons

- A clear vision of who the community will be and addressing their requirements.
- Adequate funding for community infrastructure is essential.
- Dedicated community development workers play a key role.
- Financial and policy provision is needed to ensure that community development maintains a strategic position and does not become marginalised or omitted.
- Neighbourhood design may *facilitate* community cohesion and integration but does not *determine* it.
- Involvement of new and existing community in the development to promote a sense of belonging.
- Holistic view of developments to ensure co-ordination of the parts.



5. CASE STUDIES – Cambridgeshire

5.1 Cambourne

Cambourne is a new settlement of 3,300 homes 9 miles to the west of Cambridge. It is not due to be completed until 2012.

The history of Cambourne illustrates the lengthy planning process that any major development goes through in the UK. Cambourne had its genesis in the 1986 consultation draft of Cambridgeshire County Council's structure plan which included proposals for two new settlements in the county. The exact locations of these were not shown, but after 3 years of consultation and deliberation the government approved the final draft of the structure plan in 1989, including proposals for a new settlement of 3,000 homes on the A45 (now the A14) to the east or west of Cambridge. It was not until 1992 that the district council received an outline planning application for Monkfield Park, as it was then known. Work did not begin until 1998, led by a developer consortium comprising Bovis, Bryant and George Wimpey, and is due to finish in 2012. Generally, the quality of design and construction is high and the settlement has an integrated feel, the design is pastiche neo-Georgian or Victorian.

Cambourne comprises three distinct villages – Great, Upper (not yet complete) and Lower Cambourne. The finished development will include over 3,300 homes, a business park, a supermarket and filling station, village greens and wildlife areas, a cricket pitch and outdoor sports area, a church and burial ground, two primary schools, allotments, a high street with shops, a nursery, a health centre and library and a hotel with conference facilities.

Approximately thirty percent of the new homes are affordable, provided by three housing associations. These properties have been split 50/50 between Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. For many new tenants, Cambourne was their first experience of living away from Cambridge or in the countryside. This led to some settling in/cohesion difficulties.

There were also concerns raised locally at the high proportion of properties being let privately, and feelings that this led to a high turnover of residents and acted as a barrier to community cohesion.

The overall density of Cambourne's residential areas is 30 homes per hectare, ranging from 49 per hectare in the village centres to 12 per hectare at the edges. Although there is a 20 minute bus service to Cambridge, public transport links are perceived to be poor, and most residents are reliant on private transport. Moreover, there is no secondary school or public swimming pool, cinema or theatre – which is not surprising in a community of this size.

By 2009, the settlement had an active community life with many groups and community websites up and running. However, the developers failed to meet many of the milestones in the planning agreement for the provision of community facilities and local campaigners had to battle hard to ensure these were provided. Paradoxically, these battles helped to bring the community together. South Cambridgeshire District Council has worked hard to build relationships with local people and encourage community activity; there is a vibrant network of social and community activity.



Cambourne – key lessons

- The section 106 planning agreement should set out a clear timetable for completion of all units, not just the affordable units.
- Developments of this nature require a strong master-plan and design code. Housing association partnerships need to be based on co-operation. Associations should not be forced to work together.
- Strong leadership from the local authority is essential, particularly where unforeseen events such as the credit crisis affect planning processes.
- The community needs to be involved in the procurement process for community buildings.
- Youth facilities (including youth workers) are an essential part of any new community; freely accessible ‘youth spaces’ are also crucial.

5.2 Orchard Park (formerly Arbury Park)

This is an urban extension of 900 homes on the northern fringe of Cambridge, of which 280 are affordable. The master developer, Gallagher Estates, sets out a vision on its website “to create a viable and sustainable community, which is integrated into the local area.” The site includes local shops, a hotel, a primary school, play areas and research and technology based premises to act as a noise buffer adjacent to the A14. The site is split into four notional neighbourhoods, The Hedges, The Square, The Circus and The Park.

Gallaghers carried out infrastructure and master planning but individual parcels of land were sold on to private developers and housing associations. Although the site sits in South Cambridgeshire, it is perceived as an urban extension to Cambridge. However, it could be argued that this site should never have been used for residential development as it sits alongside the A14 and no part of the site is less than 300 metres from this busy and noisy road.

The housing association partnership was put in place following a competition run by Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. The housing association consortium is led by Places for People group working with a partnership comprising bpha (lead), Papworth Trust and King Street Housing Society. Places for People and the bpha group did not bid together but were required to work together by the local authorities. It is fair to say that this partnership has been strained from the outset and has not delivered an integrated package of affordable housing.

Work began in 2005, and by the end of 2008 around 350 homes had been completed and the primary school was open. However, by this date, although all of the affordable housing had been completed, work stopped on the remaining private housing due to the impact of the credit crisis, leaving around 550 homes un-built.

As at February 2009 the site resembles a mouth with many missing teeth. It is a patchwork of finished sites surrounded by empty sites, often littered with untidy building materials. Many of the roads do not have their top surface and many street lights do not work. There is no timetable for completion of the properties. The overall design of Orchard Park does not appear to be co-ordinated and individual parcels of land appear to have been developed without reference to surrounding parcels. The commercial and research units alongside the A14 have not been built and it appears that the developer may be seeking a change of use for these units, or even seeking to build residential units along this strip.

A Scrutiny committee set up by SCDC in 2008 looked at the issues caused by the credit crisis, but the situation on the ground does not appear to have improved. A community development plan was put in place early in the development, led by bpha, but this has not been amended to take account of the cessation of work on the site. There has been little or no consultation with residents over the delay in completing the development and the opportunities this may present in terms of spare land, which could be utilised for a variety of community uses.

Orchard Park: Key lessons

- The section 106 planning agreement should set out a clear timetable for completion of all units, not just the affordable units.
- Developments of this nature require a strong master-plan and design code.
- Housing association partnerships need to be based on co-operation. Associations should not be forced to work together.
- Community development plans need to be flexible to take account of external changes such as the credit crisis.
- Strong leadership from the local authority is essential, particularly where unforeseen events such as the credit crisis affect planning processes.

5.3 Kings Meadow Cambridge

This development is on land on the northern edge of Cambridge, but just south of the Orchard Park development. Although it sits within South Cambridgeshire district it is an urban extension to Cambridge. In 1994 the City Council sought to develop the site for affordable housing and ran a competition among housing associations. This was won by Circle 33 Housing Trust in partnership with King Street Housing Society who provided some of the shared ownership homes. The design was put together by Cambridge City architects and included a large community centre with a youth wing, children's wing, sports hall and café. 260 new homes were provided, mostly for social rent, but with around 40 for shared ownership.

The scheme, built by Higgins, was completed in 1999. It is a low rise development of houses, bungalows and flats built in the style of a cottage estate. The properties have good space standards and are well built. There is an estate office at the centre of the estate. The housing associations carried out a great deal of pre-tenancy work and tenants were given significant choices over kitchen and bathroom fittings, garden fittings and colours of doors and decorations. A great deal of work was done to achieve a balance of residents – working and not working, households with a

range of younger and older children etc. The housing associations also invested heavily in community development work, providing a dedicated officer and a significant level of funds to run a number of projects. These included child care, IT training and help with starting new businesses. Strong partnerships were forged with the City Council's community centre team and the centre acted as a strong focal point for the developing community.

The City Council not only built a state of the art community facility, it provided extensive mainstream revenue funding for a community work team (which included youth and children workers). Crucially, the centre was operational as new tenants moved in and a comprehensive welcome and community development programme in place.

Although there have been some anti social behaviour problems on the estate, it is generally perceived as a success and a good place to live. However, it does have the feel of a "monolithic estate" and was one of the last developments to include such a high proportion of affordable housing.

King's Meadow: Key lessons

- Intensive pre-tenancy work with incoming residents pays off in the long run. Providing resources to aid community development is critical.
- Strong partnerships between housing associations, developers and local authorities also pay off in the longer term.
- Pepper potting of affordable housing within areas of private housing is preferable.
- Community infrastructure provided early and comprehensive community development programme has a real impact.

5.4 Eco-towns – New Towns revisited or ‘greenwash’?

In July 2007, as part of its response to climate change concerns, the Government launched a prospectus for a new generation of settlements to be called “eco-towns”. Up to ten new settlements were proposed.

According to the prospectus these would be “small new towns of at least 5 -20,000 homes” (although more recent government publicity proposes an upper limit of 15,000 homes). “They are intended to exploit the potential to create a complete new settlement to achieve zero carbon development and more sustainable living using the best new design and architecture.” These new developments “as a whole to achieve zero carbon” as well as a “separate and distinct identity but good links to surrounding towns and cities in terms of jobs, transport and services” and they would have “a good range of facilities within the town including a secondary school, shopping, business space and leisure”. Five new schemes were envisaged.

The prospectus made a passing and brief reference to community balance and cohesion and stated that the following were essential;

- ‘Community empowerment in both the development and operation of the eco-town to hold those who make the decisions affecting the town to account and give greater power for more people to control their lives with community ownership of assets.
- Encouraging active communities by creating the conditions for community participation and involvement in civic activity, for example residents undertaking formal volunteering on a regular basis. Encouraging participation in cultural and recreational activities.
- Community assets: An eco-town should enable greater community ownership and management of assets, for example through a Community Development Trust.

On 3 April 2008, the shortlist of fifteen sites for the next phase of public consultations was announced.

The short listed sites are:

- Bordon, Hampshire (Army base and existing town)
- Coltishall, Norfolk (RAF Coltishall airfield)
- Curborough, Staffordshire (Fradley airfield)
- Elsenham, Essex
- Ford, West Sussex
- Hanley Grange, Cambridgeshire (near Hinxton and Duxford)
- Imerys, near St Austell, Cornwall. (China Clay quarries)
- Leeds city region, West Yorkshire (site to be determined)
- Manby, Lincolnshire
- Marston Vale, Bedfordshire
- Middle Quinton, Warwickshire (army depot)
- Pennbury, Leicestershire
- Rossington, South Yorkshire (colliery)
- Rushcliffe, Nottinghamshire (site to be confirmed)
- Weston Otmoor, Oxfordshire



The proposals were met with considerable opposition, not just from those residents directly affected by the proposals, but by individuals and organisations as diverse as the CPRE, the LGA, the RTPI and Jeremy Clarkson. Many commentators felt that “eco-friendly development” was a contradiction in terms, as the development of new settlements by its very nature consumes vast amounts of carbon. Although the government prospectus pledged that eco-towns would be “as a whole” carbon neutral it was pointed out that their residents would drive to work, fly, consume goods and produce waste, so the developments “as a whole” could never be carbon neutral. Moreover, many of the proposed sites would have poor public transport links and the use of private motor vehicles would significantly increase. Many commentators condemned the proposals as “greenwash” (for example see Wiles 2008 *Inside Housing*).

Hanley Grange was one of the proposed eco-town sites, where 8,000 homes would be located on the junction of the M11 and A11 just south of Cambridge and a 30 minute drive to London. Most commentators could see that the site would be highly attractive to London commuters and the developer’s website made no mention of new public transport facilities. But local campaigners also discovered that Tesco was the principal developer behind the scheme. Unsurprisingly, Hanley Grange would have included a huge new superstore that would be “one of the first carbon-neutral stores ever” according to Tesco (Hall and Sawyer 2008). Campaigners quickly pointed out that a superstore selling produce that had been flown in from all over the world and that would attract drivers from every surrounding village could never be carbon neutral. Not surprisingly, every local authority in the area opposed the Hanley Grange proposal, even though it would have produced thousands of new affordable homes.

At a time when food prices were soaring and climate change forecasts worsening by the month it seemed incredible to eco-town protestors that the government should contemplate the creation of artificial new settlements on prime agricultural land, especially as the government had set a

target in its climate change bill of a 60% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050. Campaigners also felt that the proposed modest size of eco-towns, with a cap of 20,000 homes, would simply not be large enough to host a full range of community, retail and leisure facilities, forcing residents to drive elsewhere to access facilities such as cinemas or swimming pools. Eco-town sceptics proposed instead that future growth should concentrate on urban extensions of existing towns and cities and a re-definition of the green belt so that higher urban densities could be achieved in order to make public transport more viable.

Although it was not originally envisaged as a new town, the government prospectus included the new settlement at Northstowe, near Cambridge, which had been on the drawing board for some years previously. Its inclusion seemed to highlight the government’s confusion over the eco-town concept. Northstowe had originally been put forward as a new settlement that would act as an overflow for growth in the Cambridge sub-region, but it had never been very clear whether Northstowe was to be a market town, with its own identity and focus, an urban extension to Cambridge or a dormitory settlement for commuters to Cambridge and elsewhere. The eco-town issue seemed to further muddy the waters.

By the middle of 2008 the plans for Hanley Grange had been shelved, as had plans for Curborough in Staffordshire and Manby in Lincolnshire. Fierce opposition continues at many of the eco-town sites. But Margaret Beckett, the housing minister (as at February 2009) will make a final decision on the sites to be developed later in 2009. She has described eco-towns as “a unique opportunity to deliver much-needed affordable housing, built in a way which, by incorporating the very latest energy-saving techniques, benefits both residents and the wider community” (BBC News 2009).

6. CONCLUSION

The development of the new towns during the middle of the twentieth century is today seen as an adventurous social experiment which offered solutions to the problems of overcrowding, housing quality and economic growth. Many of the early successes have not stood the test of time however and several of the new towns now require substantial regeneration. Although they vary in social and economic needs, almost all of the new towns include areas of deprivation with high levels of unemployment and housing need (TLGR 2002: para 41). What has figured consistently across the literature is the importance of coordinating all the parts of new developments and the significance of community development in creating new communities.

In many of the original new towns provision of community facilities often lagged far behind population growth and other parts of the development. Despite much of the literature indicating the importance of community infrastructure, recent new developments appear to following the same path. Resident 'blogspots' in locations such as Cambourne, Orchard Park in Cambridge (formerly Arbury Park), Dickens Heath in Solihull and areas in the Thames Gateway all refer to a lack of community provisions and unfulfilled promises. Neighbourhood identity and reputation is influenced by such factors and established early in its development. Whether designated as 'good' or 'bad' these prove resilient to change and can have further impact on attracting investment and new residents (Robertson et al 2008). This has important implications for the current drive to establish sustainable communities.



Community development work has also been given prominence in the literature as an important feature in creating new communities. Its importance in the literature has not translated into equal importance in practice. In the few cases where staff and resources were available for this, they were often the first to go during expenditure cuts. This is symptomatic of the way in which community development work and indeed community infrastructure as a whole, has been seen as 'optional extras' to developments. This is also indicative of different views about what a community is, what the needs of communities are and ideas about belonging. Community membership is multiple, overlapping and at times conflicting and unequal. It has often been the task of community development workers to disentangle the complexities of community and manage the tensions and conflict that arise from inequalities between different communities. Time and again the literature has pointed to the critical role played by community development staff in creating cohesive communities that are vibrant, engaged and empowered.

Key Lessons

- Adequate and reliable funding for community infrastructure is essential.
- Dedicated community development workers play a key role in creating cohesive communities.
- Creating communities that are empowered requires long term commitment and resources.
- Financial and policy provision is needed to ensure that community development maintains a strategic position and does not become marginalised or omitted.
- All separate parts of the development need to be coordinated and aligned with the needs of the community and in step with its growth.

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Learning from the Past provides the reader with a critique of the New Town experience of building community and recent developments. It draws attention to the hard learnt lessons that can make a difference in creating new places that support vibrant communities.

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ISBN 978-0-9564398-0-2

