

MA in Disability Studies

Negotiated Study in Disability Studies

Including Disabled People in Urban Renaissance – Rhetoric or Reality?

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Date: 6 June 2005

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Abstract

This study examines the emergence of Urban Renaissance as a key issue on the national policy agenda and its local implementation in one designated 'Renaissance' town – Scarborough. It focuses particularly on the relevance of this policy initiative for disabled people, and their potential contribution to the 'Renaissance' process.

Using a simple four-stage model of policy making – identification, formulation, implementation and evaluation - the study traces the background to the 'Renaissance' White Paper and examines its content and subsequent implementation at local level. Particular attention is paid to the policy emphasis on inclusion and involvement of all members of the community through active citizenship. However, it argues that although steps are being taken locally to identify and address some barriers to participation, others remain which prevent disabled people from fulfilling their citizenship rights, as participants in, and beneficiaries of, the policy in practice. The paper offers tentative proposals as to how this situation might be changed and concludes that, unless other towns follow Scarborough's lead in promoting greater inclusion, the accusation of 'merely political rhetoric' could be legitimately applied

Acknowledgements are due to Tom Pindar (Chairman) and Peter Cooper (Co-Vice Chairman) Scarborough Town Team and Executive and to John Taylor (Renaissance Manager, Yorkshire Forward) and Nick Taylor (Renaissance Manager, Scarborough) for their support and helpful comments in the production of this study

Section 1 Introduction - Setting the Scene

This essay is an exercise in policy analysis, which takes the form of a Case Study exploring the emergence and development of Urban Renaissance ('Renaissance') as a key issue on the national policy agenda and its implementation in one northern town, Scarborough. It focuses particularly on the relevance of this policy initiative for disabled people, and the opportunities it potentially offers to them as a recognised disenfranchised group within society (BCODP, 1994; Morris, 1998).

The structure of the paper reflects a simple, four stage model for understanding the policy process - problem identification, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Section 2 examines the background to the policy, the perceived nature of the problem(s) to be addressed and the identification of 'Renaissance' as a key policy issue. This is timely because, in undertaking the study, the author has noticed an apparent dearth of academic research, literature and opinion in the 'Renaissance' field.

Section 3 turns to the resulting policy statement (the 'Renaissance' White Paper), its content and implications for disabled people, examining the key concepts of 'inclusion versus exclusion' and 'participation and active citizenship' which underpin this policy response. Section 4 considers how the policy has been implemented at local level and the ways in which practice reflects the stated policy aims, particularly in respect of disabled people. Section 5 evaluates

the extent to which these aims are being achieved, identifying problems (barriers to successful policy implementation) and possible solutions, which will facilitate the further inclusion and participation of disabled people in the ‘Renaissance’ of Scarborough. Section 6 draws together the various strands of the study and concludes that whilst the policy holds enormous positive potential, not just for disabled people but for all members of the local community, despite steps in the right direction locally, barriers remain which need to be addressed if full inclusion is to be achieved and the policy not being criticised as merely political rhetoric.

‘Renaissance’ has been selected for several reasons. The author has personal interest in the cutting-edge issues it raises, firstly as someone employed within an organisation responsible for successful ‘Renaissance’ policy implementation and secondly as a disabled person committed to raising the profile of disability issues and the inclusion of disabled people in the political process.

The study has been instigated, funded and conducted by a disabled person, with the aim of seeking to identify ways of promoting positive change on an individual and collective level. It is based upon ‘social model’ understandings of disability, and the ways in which disability is imposed upon people with impairments by societal organisation which takes little or no account of their circumstances and needs and so excludes them from full participation (UPIAS, 1975:14). It therefore acknowledges the principles set out by Stone and Priestley (1996), as characterising the ‘emancipatory research paradigm’.

Section 2 Identification – What is the ‘Problem’?

This section examines the difficulties inherent for the analyst seeking to unravel the ‘truth’ from what is stated, unstated or merely inferred, by policy makers within a complex process which does not comply with a series of neat, incremental steps. It also considers policy content; the articulated problem, or problems, to which the policy makers are seeking to respond, and the steps which are deemed appropriate to achieve this end.

Looking first at process, policies and policy objectives, whether social or otherwise, do not emerge or develop in a vacuum. Issues which are identified, how they are conceptualised and the responses they are believed to require are shaped and influenced by a range of factors, political, ideological, social and economic (Hill and Bramley, 1986:218).

Policy aims, whether explicit or implicit, are based on the intentions of policy makers and what they hope and expect the policies they have formulated to achieve (George and Wilding, 1984:1-2). However, even at the simplest level of analysis, successful policy implementation and outcome as intended, are fraught with difficulty.

Disagreements can still exist about aims in practice, even when there is apparent consensus about what policy goals might be. A myriad of barriers and distorting factors can arise throughout the process, as

policies move from identification and formulation to implementation and evaluation, and between structures and institutions at central and local level. Tensions between key players, different perceptions of what is desirable and achievable, misinterpretations and misunderstandings, lack of resources (time, money, commitment, skills and so on) or how resources should be allocated, the list of possible pitfalls is potentially endless. The loci and exercise of power play a vital and significant role in determining ultimate policy outcomes, some of which may be unanticipated and undesired. All of these aspects of policy making must be taken into account when policy analysis is undertaken (Hill and Bramley, 1986:137-159). Thus, whilst recognising the weaknesses and criticisms of a ‘stages model’ approach, this has been adopted because of its simplicity and in order to provide structure and clarity to the “messiness in public decision-making” (John, 1998:36) within the bounds of tight word limit constraints.

In terms of content and ‘Renaissance’, Tony Blair, in his first speech as Prime Minister, identified the ongoing failure of certain towns and cities nationally, characterised by high unemployment, the decline of traditional industries and other aspects of the work base, and the consequential demise of job opportunities and other life chances (educational, health and so on) within a deteriorating built environment (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 1999).

These towns and cities, though different in location and profile, can be seen as having one thing in common - they were experiencing a slow and emergent social and economic death; a steady downward spiral, not least because of changes to the structure and utilisation of town and city centre space. Once places to live, shop, work and enjoy leisure time, with moves towards suburbanisation, town and city centres were transforming into little more than unattractive, dilapidated and run down empty shells. In Blair's view, an appropriate response would be to "engage the interest and commitment of the whole of the community to tackle the desperate need for urban regeneration" (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 1999: unpaginated).

These concerns were not, however, new and bore marked similarity to those expressed by John Gummer, as Secretary of State for the Environment in the outgoing Conservative government, in his 1996 housing Green Paper (Lunts, 2003:9). 'Renaissance' is therefore unusual in that it seems to enjoy cross party support.

For the Labour government, having identified and conceptualised the nature of the problem a policy framework was needed which would contemporaneously facilitate the improvement of urban space, regenerate town centres and rebuild the economic infrastructure of the failing towns and cities, by promoting inward investment and re-skilling of the workforce. The anticipated consequences of such a framework would be a general improvement of the environment and

increased job opportunities for all, with positive benefits for health and wellbeing of the local communities.

Section 3 Formulation – How should the ‘Problem’ be addressed?

Between 1997 and 2000 the government launched a series of policy initiatives to address social exclusion and inequality, covering transport, housing, health, education, crime and including culture, leisure and sport. All these initiatives were aimed towards the same goal of improving living standards and life chances for all (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000).

In 2000, a new White Paper was published - ‘Our towns and cities: the future; Delivering an urban renaissance’ (Cm 4911). Specifically aimed at regeneration of urban areas, the White Paper sets out ‘A new vision for urban living’, to the benefit of everyone. Alongside this, the Urban White Paper, is its partner, ‘Our Countryside: the Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England’ (Cm 4909), focusing upon “prosperous, sustainable and inclusive … communities” (Cm 4909, 2000:1.10). Both White Papers carry the same message “opportunity for all” (Cm 4909, 2000:15.4 and Cm 4911, 2000:2.38).

In urban areas, the stated vision is for:

tackling poverty and social exclusion and fostering economic growth in a way that benefits *all citizens* … **of towns and cities and suburbs which offer a high quality of life and**

opportunity for all, not just the few [with] **people shaping the future ... living in attractive, well kept towns and cities ... in a more environmentally sustainable way ... able to create and share prosperity ... and [with] good quality services** (Cm 4911, 2000:2.38, emboldened as original, my italics). (All subsequent paragraph references relate to Cm 4911).

Although disabled people receive only a passing mention in the White Paper (see 3.36 and 4.29), they are, after all, members of the community and so part of the '*all, not just the few*' at which this policy initiative is aimed.

The White Paper is also very clear about who should be involved and how:

people have a right to determine their future and be involved in deciding how their town or city develops ...
[and] **everybody must be included** ... local people, councils, regional bodies, businesses and voluntary and community organisations (3.10, emboldened as original, my italics).

The importance of achieving this and why are made crystal clear.

Local authorities need to engage local communities. Too often local people feel powerless to influence what happens in their community. They are daunted by, or alienated from, officialdom. They certainly do not see it as working on their behalf and interested in their views. We want to change this. We want local participation from all local communities, irrespective of their origins. Without real commitment from the

community we will not be able to make the best use of the resources available (3.13).

'Renaissance' is therefore a 'bottom-up' and inclusive process, with *all* members of the local community taking ownership of the project and in the "driving seat" (3.10), working predominantly in a voluntary capacity, to identify what needs to be done, how progress can be achieved and actively participating in making change a reality. Thus, the policy response is premised on two key concepts - 'Inclusion versus Exclusion' and 'Participation and Active Citizenship'.

3.1 *Inclusion versus Exclusion*

Although the number of disabled people means that, in numerical terms alone, they represent a significant proportion of the population (almost 1:5) in a given locality (Neighbourhood Statistics, 2001), the inclusion of disabled people in political activity is problematic and confounded by socially constructed barriers to active involvement in the political system (Morris, 1998).

The British Council of Disabled People (BCODP,1994) has noted how exclusion from the electoral register, barriers to physical access to buildings, problems with transport and the inaccessibility of information, serve to disenfranchise disabled people. To this list can be added other problems and personal difficulties such as those associated with fatigue and discomfort (Crow,1996:58) and with lack of the confidence, skills and perceived ability/self identification as

having something to contribute (Thomas, 1999:48) which also play their part in excluding disabled people from the political process and, thereby, involvement in active citizenship. This exclusion from the political realm is accompanied by the social exclusion of disabled people, from education, employment and other life chances, with a consequential negative impact on opportunity to achieve their full potential and enjoy improved social and economic status (Barnes, H. et al, 1998; Barnes, 1999).

In 1966 the disabled political activist Paul Hunt argued that

(t)he quality of the relationship the community has with its least fortunate members is a measure of its own health. The articulate person with a severe disability (sic) may to some extent represent and speak on behalf of all those who perhaps cannot interpret their predicament, or protest for themselves – the weak, sick, poor and aged throughout the world. They too are rejects from ordinary life, and are subject to the same experiences of devaluation by society (1966:17 in this version).

Thus, disabled people have a role to play in representing and expressing the needs and rights, not only of themselves but also of other disadvantaged, disenfranchised and excluded groups, a positive role which they are not often ascribed.

The importance of participation is also noted by Titmuss. In his view social policy is not simply about therapy for the dependent but about how people interact; and ought most of all to focus on processes, transactions and institutions which promote an

individual's sense of identity, participation and community and allow him (sic) more freedom of choice for the expression of altruism and which, simultaneously, discourage a sense of individual alienation (Titmuss, 1973:283).

This is particularly apposite in respect of disabled people. It is not just about being prevented from participating by physical barriers, it is also about the negative psychological and social impact of exclusion, imposed upon the individual by society, and resulting in loss and impoverishment at both levels.

The obverse of altruism is 'anomie'. For Durkheim (1966) this is a situation of 'normlessness', brought about by rapid social and economic change, increased social division of labour and an emphasis on individualism and self interest rather than social duty and responsibility. This is not to suggest that disabled people in Scarborough will rise up en masse to rebel against their exclusion from 'Renaissance' and, thereby, from society. However, at the extreme, Durkheim's work points to the risks failure to achieve participation and social inclusion potentially presents to social unity, solidarity and order.

These risks have been recognised by the government:

Everybody must be included. This is both a mark of a decent society and plain good sense ... We must be prepared to invest more in people to enable all to have the opportunity to share in and contribute to our national prosperity. If we fail in this we both demean the individual and waste a valuable resource.

Allowing people to be excluded also risks alienation and disruptive and anti social behaviour (3.10).

However, this quotation from the White Paper is not applied to disabled people, women, or to older and younger people – it applies specifically to “the rich diversity of different ethnic cultures in our towns and cities” because “we should value and foster this” (3.10).

The author has no hesitation in endorsing this sentiment, because she believes that citizens from different ethnic cultures have indeed experienced poor treatment within, and been excluded from, the political and social systems of this country. However, it seems somewhat narrow-minded to conclude that only one disadvantaged group poses an apparent threat to social stability if excluded from opportunities to participate as full and active citizens.

Voluntarism is also implicit within the White Paper and the ‘Renaissance’ vision. Many of those directly involved in its implementation are not employees of the state but altruistic individuals, giving freely of their time, energy, skills and views for the public good. The process of ‘Renaissance’, with its joint emphases on voluntarism, participation and community, therefore, conforms to Titmuss’ recipe for inclusion, and its concomitant outcomes on a personal and social level.

Inclusion, however, is like empowerment. In other words it is “not something that can be bestowed by the powerful onto the powerless” (Lister, 1993: 331 reviewing the work of Oliver, 1993). To be

meaningful, inclusion is an active not passive undertaking; it is not something simply ‘done to’ others. Inclusion cannot be ‘given’ to individuals or groups, although a commitment to achieving inclusion and providing opportunities which facilitate involvement and minimise the barriers which prevent it, can be put in place by others. In the final analysis, true inclusion requires action, on the part of society, in eradicating those barriers, and on the part of excluded individuals, through their engagement with, and involvement in, community activity. In other words, inclusion involves participation, at all levels, and participation is an important aspect of active citizenship.

3.2 *Participation and Active Citizenship*

Drawing upon the work of Marshall (1950), Barbalet (1988:2) defines ‘citizenship’ in terms of “participation in or membership of a community”. This point is endorsed, in respect of disabled people, by Morris (1998:2).

Citizenship is about what it is to be a full member of a community... [involving]:

- participation in political processes ...[and]...
- participation in the social life of the community.

On one hand citizenship carries with it position and rights within the social (status), civil (legal) and political (suffrage) systems. But citizenship is not only about rights; it also carries with it duties and responsibilities. Nor is it sufficient to enshrine citizenship rights only within the social, political or civil systems; there is also an economic

dimension. As Barbalet points out “(a) political system of equal citizenship is in reality less than equal if it is part of a society divided by unequal conditions” (1988:1). This does not mean that citizenship cannot co-exist with inequality, but rather that it opposes ‘illegitimate’ or ‘excessive’ inequality; in other words, when “inequality ... cannot be justified on a basis of equal citizenship rights.” (Barbalet, 1988:48).

Lacking resources, economic (money), social (for example physical access, skills, education) and personal (confidence) can act as barriers to the exercising of full citizenship rights and carrying out citizenship duties. These barriers have been particularly evident in respect of disabled people and considerable literature exists to indicate the material disadvantages experienced by them. Abberley (1987:170), citing Townsend (1979), identifies “a picture of low pay, longer hours, worse working conditions and housing [than ‘able bodied’ members of the community], coupled with a higher likelihood of unemployment”. Referring to the work of Durkheim (1966), Abberley (1999:4) also emphasizes the significance of work to social membership and citizenship.

The venue where ... solidarity is to be forged is ... occupational associations. Thus to be deprived of such a role is to be deprived of the possibility of full societal membership.

If inclusion, participation and active citizenship are key aspects of the ‘Renaissance’ vision, then disabled people start at a considerable disadvantage to their ‘able bodied’ co-residents. As seen above,

there are inbuilt and institutionalised social barriers which deny disabled people the opportunity to exercise their ‘rights’ and fulfil their citizenship duties by participating as full and active members of their community. The question then becomes, what steps have been taken to include disabled people in the ‘Renaissance’ process at local level, and, if necessary, how can the remaining exclusionary barriers be addressed?

3.3 *Urban Renaissance and Disabled People – An Inclusive Society?*

We want all who live in urban areas to have the opportunity to achieve their full potential – regardless of irrelevant factors such as race, age, gender, faith or disability. We also want all to have their say in policy development and implementation, and to have equal access to services (3.35).

The above quotation opens the White Paper’s comments on “An inclusive society”. But are all of the ‘irrelevant factors’ to which it refers treated equally? The answer is a simple, but emphatic - NO.

For women, they are described in the White Paper as “often the backbone of local community life” contributing particularly as “mothers, volunteers, residents and workers” (3.37), and concern is expressed about the need to promote their opportunities, despite perceived barriers such as child care responsibilities. Concern is also specifically noted at the continuing disadvantaged position of women

with regard to unequal pay and the gap between their earnings and those of men (3.37-3.40). For ethnic minorities, they are seen as contributing to “a richly diverse culture”, whilst concerns focus on employment and inequality (3.41-3.44). For faith communities, the emphasis is on their contribution to the voluntary and community sectors (3.45-3.47). With regard to age, the need to involve older people in decision making and ensuring their opportunities for active participation and fulfilment are emphasised, whilst for young people, their significance as the next generation of adults is implicit. For both age groups, access to services, benefits, leisure facilities, affordable transport, safe and secure housing, employment and learning are the key issues (3.48-3.53) in them achieving their full potential.

In contrast, with regard to disabled people, everything to be said is contained in one paragraph (albeit a long one) - 3.36 (other than a brief mention in 4.29 with regard to changes to Building Regulations). Whilst the paragraph stresses that “disabled people should have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate as equal citizens in our towns and cities”:

- no mention is made of their positive contribution to society and the community, as people, parents, volunteers and workers;
- nor to their needs and unequal position with regard to education and training;
- nor to their position with regard to employment, such as the disproportionate number of disabled people who are unemployed or under employed;

- nor to the pay divide between disabled and non-disabled people (Barnes 1991; 1999).

The only mention made relating to disabled people and employment is in respect of parking concessions (3.36). Everything else is left to the workings of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) with its accompanying Codes of Practice (focusing particularly on access to buildings and ‘land-based public transport’), and to the Disability Rights Commission “whose goal is a society where disabled people can participate fully as equal citizens” (3.36). The weakness of this legislation, and its monitoring and regulatory powers in practice, have been seriously called into question by Barnes (1999:12-15). The challenge posed, of making “all urban areas successful places for all people” (3.36), does not appear to apply quite so wholeheartedly to disabled people as to the rest of the community’s members.

Section 4 Implementation – How can ‘Renaissance’ be Achieved?

For the ‘Renaissance’ policy to succeed as intended it requires a complex and diverse network of key players to work together towards common goals. As we have seen above, part of this network are disabled people, as individual members of the community, participants in voluntary and community organisations, employees of local businesses and other organisations, and officers and members within the local government structure.

4.1 Policy Implementation at Local Level

In Yorkshire and the Humber, Yorkshire Forward (YF), the Regional Development Authority (RDA), became the key players in ‘Renaissance’. Six towns asked to participate in phase one of YF’s ‘Renaissance’ programme, all of which had experienced change in their commercial and industrial bases (Simpson and Lewis, 2002:57) and all demonstrated deprivation, measured against factors such as levels of health, crime, housing, educational attainment and employment. The towns comprised Barnsley, Doncaster, Grimsby, Huddersfield, Scarborough and Wakefield (West 8, 2003). Scarborough, for example, has two of the most deprived wards in the country (Cooper, 2003) and was deemed to be sitting “poised uncomfortably on the sharp edge between further, perhaps irreversible, decline, and the promise of an urban renaissance” (John Thompson and Partners, 2002:7).

The process was begun with information gathering and an “Audit of Scarborough Today” was undertaken. “(P)eople with disabilities (sic)” feature only twice in the resulting document; as people not currently active in the workforce, but who, with education and training, could participate in growing sectors of the local economy (like information technology) because “conventional’ channels” are running dry (John

Thompson and Partners, 2002: 82-83); a clear expression of disabled people as part of the Marxian ‘reserve army of labour’.

A series of meetings took place, between representatives from the Borough Council, community representatives including individuals, businesses and other groups. Also involved were members of the newly formed ‘Town Team’ (hereafter referred to as the ‘Team’) (West 8, 2003:3), and experts from the regional ‘Panel’ set up by YF to advise and support their work (Simpson and Lewis, 2002:7). Made up of local people, the only criteria for membership of the ‘Team’ is an interest in ‘Renaissance’ and a commitment to getting things done, although it is noted that the membership needs “to accurately reflect every sector of the town’s activity” (Yorkshire Forward et al (2002:4).

All members of the local community were invited to attend a widely advertised ‘Community Consultation Weekend’ in April 2002. No figures are available as to the number of disabled people who attended this event, nor whether any of the publicity materials advertising it were produced in alternative formats. Nevertheless, over 1000 people did attend during the course of the weekend, and key themes were identified as enjoying common agreement (Yorkshire Forward et al, 2002:13-15). All of these themes would require change, and change is not always easy (Burnes, 1992:261-263), particularly when it is dependent upon significant numbers of people from a range of social backgrounds, with various interests and different perceptions about what constitutes ‘positive’ change, indeed

whether change is desirable at all, needing to work together with common aims and objectives.

Following the Consultation event, a ‘Public Space Plan’ was drawn up by local volunteers, working in co-operation with a team of consultants, from which a strategic framework for implementation emerged (Yorkshire Forward et al 2002). The package of proposals was costed at c £40.74 million, to be implemented over three years. Total funding available to RDAs for ‘Renaissance’ stood at £1.3 billion in 2002, rising to 1.7 billion in 2004; it therefore potentially represents a “once in a generation chance” (Douglas Anderson, cited in Simpson and Lewis, 2002:197).

4.2 *Disabled People and the ‘Renaissance’ Process in Scarborough*

Community involvement in the implementation of ‘Renaissance’ policy is channelled through the ‘Team’, which meets on a monthly basis, to discuss what is happening within each of the local projects which fall under the ‘Renaissance’ umbrella and to raise and debate issues as they arise. The gender balance of members is fairly evenly split, with a predominance of older rather than younger people in attendance. This is not surprising given that 27.5% of the Borough’s population are aged over 60, compared with a national average of 20.9% (Neighbourhood Statistics 2001).

Of the Scarborough Borough population, 99.4% are white (including white irish), 99.2% are Christian or have either declared themselves as having no religion or not stated their religious position. Exact figures for disabled people are not available but 21.6% of survey respondents declared long term illness compared to 18.2% nationally. This was out of a total population of 106,243, roughly half of which live in Scarborough Town (Neighbourhood Statistics 2001). Using the long term illness figure as a baseline, a simple calculation suggests as many as 10,000 people with impairment live in the town.

It is unknown how many disabled people attend 'Team' meetings and it is debatable whether individuals should be asked to supply this information. 'Team' members attend on a voluntary basis and it could be considered an invasion of privacy and 'singling out' of particular groups of people if personal questions where to be asked, especially when, in terms of the White Paper, such factors as gender, age, ethnicity and disability are regarded as "irrelevant". Obvious indicators of impairment (such as wheelchair use) are unreliable and invalid as they cannot provide a consistent and accurate indicator of actual numbers of people with impairments. The observed presence, or absence, of other possible indicators would constitute little more than supposition (for example, this person does not wear a hearing aid therefore he/she is not hearing impaired).

The views expressed at the 'Team' meetings are taken up and progressed by the Town Team Executive. The full Executive comprises members of the 'Team', Action Group Leaders (whose

groups have responsibility for particular aspects of the ‘Renaissance’ Project, such as, transport, festivals, tourism, and so on), officers of the Borough and County Councils, representatives from YF and other key figures in the town (from education, employment, business and the voluntary sector).

The Executive also has links with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), a larger and more comprehensive mix of local government, service provider, business, community and voluntary group representatives, and with a geographically broader, strategic, co-ordinating and monitoring role than the Executive. The relationships between the different groups is not, however, a hierarchical one (see Appendix 1) and, in keeping with the White Paper, the emphasis is very much on ‘joined up’ government (3.24-3.29).

Section 5 Evaluation – Is the Strategy Working?

Evaluation is an ongoing aspect of the ‘Team’s’ role. However, no one has ever undertaken an audit of how successful it has been in meeting the White Paper’s articulated goal of promoting inclusion and participation, with particular reference here to disabled people; that is, not until now.

5.1 *The problems – Barriers to Inclusion*

Venues and Transport

The building currently used for ‘Team’ meetings is accessible for disabled people, including wheelchair users, with limited free car parking and appropriate toilet facilities, though there appears to be no induction loop system in place. However, it is poorly served by public transport and there is no on-street parking nearby. It is difficult to know how many people are prevented from attending meetings simply because of transport and parking difficulties. The issue is therefore more fundamental than just the accessibility of the building for disabled people, it is about access to the venue for everyone. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to find an alternative meeting place because the existing building is scheduled for demolition as part of the redevelopment of that area of the town.

Documentation

Scarborough’s documentation and approach to communication have been held up as a model of good practice (Simpson and Lewis, 2002:191). A monthly newsletter, is produced to inform ‘Team’ members of progress and is available on the ‘Renaissance’ website. Visually impaired members are therefore in a position to alter the font and format to enable easier access if the hard copies which are circulated at present are not suitable. The website is currently being further developed and will include new features which will improve its accessibility. For example it will not be possible to include pictures unless they are accompanied by captions so that visually impaired users with speech recognition software will also receive commentary on their content. However, not everyone has ready access to

computer technology and the fonts used in the hard copies are generally small (12 point or less) to keep production costs down.

Exclusion and Self-Exclusion

'Renaissance' is about the inclusion of all sectors of the community. It is a community based project, with women, men, younger and older people, members of ethnic minority groups, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as well as disabled people, all forming part of that community. However, economic and social advantages are not evenly spread within and between these groups; exclusionary and thus 'disabling' barriers can apply to all members of the community, regardless of the presence or not of impairment. If inclusion and active participation are to be achieved, the project has a responsibility to identify and respond to these 'disabling' barriers for all sectors of the community.

One particular barrier that can be especially exclusionary is self exclusion; the absence of personal identification with, and confidence in, contributing to the 'Renaissance' process. A thousand people attended at some point over the course of the community planning weekend which set the process in motion. This is a laudable figure, but Scarborough town has a population of over 50,000 (Scarborough Borough Council, 2005) and, because of the counting method adopted, those who attended on all three days would enter the statistics at least three times. The question must therefore be asked -

what happened to the rest? Why did they not grasp the opportunity to potentially make a positive difference to their town?

The author does not and cannot know in the absence of the appropriate data. However, it is possible to speculate. Illness, other commitments, lack of financial resources, transport issues, apathy, lack of awareness that the event was taking place and that anyone could attend (although attempts had been made to publicise the event extensively, see Simpson and Lewis, 2002:60) all could have played their part. Many of these factors are currently outside of the direct and indirect control of the project, although in the longer term it can seek to affect matters such as transport systems, availability of employment and learning opportunities and so on through the promotion of inward investment. But this is for the future. Solutions need to consider what is possible now.

5.2 Possible solutions

Venues and Transport

A new venue for meetings must be found in the near future. The ideal would be to find an accessible, fully equipped venue with adequate car parking facilities, in the town centre. Project provided, or co-ordinated, accessible transport could be considered, but would still leave difficulties in completing the journey to and from home, given the spread of the town and outlying villages. Costs to the project would be an important consideration, along with the complexity inherent in adopting a co-ordinating role. One solution

would be, not only to ensure that the new venue is as readily accessible by public transport as possible and with good parking facilities for those who rely on their own cars, but also to explore the possibility of co-operative working with the existing voluntary sector 'Dial a Ride' scheme. This collaborative approach fits well with the ethos of both the White Paper and the 'Renaissance' project.

Documentation

In Scarborough, one solution to the inaccessibility of documentation has been to offer alternative formats for the newsletter, minutes and agenda, and large font versions will be made available upon request. The newsletter is being used as a vehicle to pass this message to members and such an approach both keeps cost increases to a minimum and is relatively easy to provide. It also overcomes the problem of asking people to disclose their difficulties if they do not wish to do so; the choice whether or not to disclose remains with the individual.

The broader question of advertising, does, however, require greater thought if disabled people and other groups who do not currently attend 'Team' meetings are to be informed of the relevance of the Project to their lives and be encouraged to attend. More importantly advertising could be used to emphasise the value of their experience and opinion to the Project.

Exclusion and Self Exclusion

Enabling the development of the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary for individuals to feel able to participate and express their point, through capacity building, could significantly reduce barriers to inclusion. This would both facilitate active citizenship on the one hand and demonstrate a meaningfully emancipatory approach to the aims of ‘Renaissance’ on the other. It is one element where a real difference could be made, by encouraging ‘ordinary’ individuals in the community to believe that they have, and can make, a contribution to the process, and providing opportunities whereby this might be achieved. Involvement of the local Disablement Action Group in promoting the relevance of ‘Renaissance’ to disabled people and advertising the opportunities it potentially presents might also advance their active engagement.

Section 6 Conclusions - Including Disabled People in Urban ‘Renaissance’: Rhetoric or Reality?

Without doubt, ‘Renaissance’ is an under researched, under theorised and under published area. It offers great scope to the student or academic to plumb uncharted waters and forms an exciting and challenging case study, though it has only been possible to touch the tip of the iceberg in a work of this length.

As we have seen, the ‘Renaissance’ programme presents the communities involved with ‘a once in a generation chance’ to utilise the finance and expert support on offer, and to make a real and far reaching difference to their social and economic infrastructure. There

is much to be applauded about the inclusive and participative strategy which has been proposed by national government and adopted at local level but, with regard to excluded groups generally and disabled people specifically, there is less evidence to suggest that full inclusion is a reality. That is not to say that greater inclusion cannot be achieved, but this will depend upon the way in which the policy goals are interpreted and translated into practice at local level; in particular the extent to which full inclusion is seen as a genuine priority rather than merely a desirable consequence IF it should happen to occur.

In Scarborough, barriers to inclusion are beginning to be identified and addressed but there is a long way to go before the policy goals of inclusion and active participation by all members of the community are achieved. The challenge for Scarborough is to continue and extend the process which it has begun; for other ‘Renaissance’ towns it is to follow Scarborough’s lead, otherwise the accusation of ‘merely political rhetoric’ could be legitimately applied to this aspect of the policy in practice.

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Appendix 1

(Source: Renaissance Constitution, Draft version, 2005)

RENAISSANCE STRUCTURE

