THE STRATEGIC DIMENSION OF THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY IN CULTURAL PROJECTS WITHIN URBAN REGENERATION SCHEMES

Isabelle FREMEAUX

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
London Guildhall University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt to those who kindly accepted to lend their time and to answer my relentless questions. Quite simply the following 200 pages would not exist without them: Razia Newaz Shariff, Sunawhar Ali, Ansar Ullah, Golam Mostapha, Mahmoud Rouf, Warren Lakin, Annie Bungeroth, Phil Maxwell, Anthony Lam, Jagtar Semplay, Ruhul Amin, Rehan Jamil, Clive Sall, Kazi Ruksana Begum, Hanea Khan, Sheikh Khairun Nessa, Sania Choudhury, Tippu Shamsu Uddin, Maggie Pinhorn, Liz Weston, Nicki Burgess, Janet Poorman, Andrew Bramidge.

I am greatly indebted to Pr John Eade, who not only showed interest in my work but also provided me with more opportunities than any research student could hope for.

I am grateful for the way Pr Jerry Palmer let me conduct my research on my own terms, whilst supporting me during some difficult times.

This work owes more than I can express to David Garbin. Without his always-insightful comments, I would have missed out on (too) many facets of the analysis presented here. When collaboration gives way to friendship, work cannot get more pleasurable and exciting. Our alcoholised "brainstorming sessions" will without a doubt remain my best memories of this doctoral process.

Special thanks go to the "Corleone Family" for showing so much understanding and miraculously managing to make me relax and laugh during the last few weeks of writing up, when stress levels had reached their worst peaks.

Finally my deepest, warmest, most special thank you go to my parents, to whom I owe everything and more; to my brother, for being my closest friend and an example to look up to; and to Ian, for giving me the life I was dreaming of*.

*Mes remerciements les plus profonds, les plus chaleureux, les plus sincères vont à mes parents, à qui je dois tout et plus; à mon frère, pour être mon meilleur ami et un example à suivre; et à Ian, pour me donner la vie dont je rêvais.

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the strategies at work around the notion of community in the framework of cultural projects developed in regeneration schemes.

The concept of community has taken a prominent position in political discourse and ideology in recent years. This is most striking under New Labour, which, in the words of the Prime Minister himself, has made community its 'governing idea'. The thesis begins with the examination of this complex and multi-facetted concept, fraught with positive and normative connotations.

On the other hand, as problems in urban areas (e.g. poverty, unemployment, violence) have increasingly taken centre stage in governments' concerns, there has been a parallel growth in the monies and attention paid to urban regeneration policies. Concurrently there has also been mounting interest in the potential benefits of cultural strategies for urban regeneration. An outline of the evolution, over the last three decades, of urban regeneration and cultural policies in Britain, as well as the increasingly instrumental role given to the notion of community in their design, will provide an account of the practical and ideological issues at stake in each sphere as well as in their convergence. The supposition of this thesis is that this convergence provides a specific framework in which the notion of community is used strategically.

This will be explored through the empirical investigation of two festivals celebrating Bangladeshi culture in the East End of London and organised as part of the local urban regeneration programme. Archive analysis and participant observation have constituted the chosen methodology of investigation.

The study sheds lights on the manipulations of the notion of community by all actors in order to serve their own interests within the policies framework. I suggest that these strategies both reflect and underpin the power position held by these actors.

Moreover I suggest that the understanding(s) of the two concepts of community and culture offered by the institutional framework of urban regeneration and cultural policies pave the way for processes of cultural essentialisation and reification as well as cultural and spatial commodification. In the specific context of an urban regeneration programme dealing with ethnic minorities, the policies carried out lead to a consumerist version of multiculturalism.

INTRODUCTION

'At the heart of my beliefs is the idea of community. My argument... is that the renewal of community is the answer to the challenges of a changing world.'

Tony Blair. 8 June 2000. *The Guardian* (cited by Carvel, J)

I had been living in Britain for a year when I decided to commit myself to a PhD in Communications. As an avid reader of the British press I was struck by the recurrent use of the term 'community' in a variety of contexts. Being French and having lived all my life in France, this observation intrigued me all the more since the use of this word is far less frequent in my mother tongue. This discrepancy certainly played a part in giving me the instinctive impression that this ubiquitous mention of the notion of community was not co-incidental. I thus became interested in investigating the discursive status of this term and its potential strategic dimension[1].

From another point of view I had always been interested in the study of cultural projects. My Maîtrise (French MA) dissertation explored the communications strategy of a famous regional rock festival and the impact this festival had had on the newfound profile of Rennes, the town in which it was organised - from boring provincial city to young and dynamic cultural centre. In other words, I had studied an aspect of the role played by this cultural project in the regeneration of the city.

Living in a neighbourhood in the East End of London typically described as 'the heartland of the Bangladeshi community in Britain', one of the most deprived in the country; my interest in 'community' could only grow. This was certainly emphasised as an important urban regeneration programme was carried out in the area and rather loudly marketed and advertised in local newspapers and flyers slipped through my door. As I noticed that a cultural strategy was integrated in this urban regeneration project, I soon realised that I could pursue a long interest of mine... just by watching what was going on on my doorstep.

In that sense this thesis is the result of a great sense of curiosity arising from a phenomenon that I felt puzzled by, combined with the luck of living in one of the most fascinating areas in Europe. My thesis is thus based in the convergence between two key elements:

[1] strategic in the widest sense: 'used with a purpose'

community, considered as a point where politics and culture come together; and arts organisations, considered as one way in which culture is created and maintained. In order to clarify the aims and objectives of this thesis, I would like to go over the some of its underpinning points.

The British Prime Minister has asserted his faith in community on innumerable occasions[2]. In that sense he seems part of a new trend in which it has become normal to apprehend the notion as though it was a kind of new religion: how many times have I heard, when asked about the topic of this PhD, 'Community? I myself don't really believe in it.' For some, community had thus become something one would 'believe in'... or not.

For Mr Blair community, or rather 'the *renewal* of community', should be seen as the 'answer to the challenges of the world'... Following this understanding, a desirable form of community would thus have had existed, had gone and a reformed version of this would be back as the solution to most of our ills... Social exclusion would be ended if we could foster a 'spirit of community'. Society would be a better place only if we were able to re-build strong communities.

But the word is so widely used and to refer to such a variety of categories that it is difficult to resist the temptation to ask 'which (kind of) community?' Indeed as Baumann points out

> Even plain common sense would, in any case, suffice to warn one off the word as used in public rhetoric. In Northern Ireland, the "Catholic community" and the "Protestant community" are exhorted to make peace for the sake "of the community", the BBC speaks of stockbrokers as "Britain's financial community"... (1996: 14).

Undoubtedly not everybody refers to the same thing when using the term in such diverse situations. If the term certainly invokes the notion of some sharing, the object of this sharing seems rather open to interpretation: Locality? Values? Culture? Interests? The concept is so muddled and contested that it led Ignatieff to the conclusion that 'community' is a 'dishonest word' (quoted in Baumann, 1996: 14).

Yet when tackling the prickly problem of deprivation in urban areas, the concept of community became central – and seemingly without needing clarification. Social exclusion, poverty, violence were all rooted in 'the lack of community' that allegedly characterises the inner cities. The 'sense of community' had been destroyed – even though no one would ever

---

[2] An archive search on the Guardian online search engine, between 1998 and June 2002, under the keywords 'Blair and community' brings up no less than 2453 entries.

dwell too long on the "what by?" question – and had to be recovered so that strong communities would reverse the downward spiral of deprivation in urban areas. Yet simultaneously the language of community would constantly be used. Thus I still would hear many of my neighbours on Brick Lane and countless people in these derelict council estates, where community was supposed to be shattered and gone, speak of their own community or of the community of others as though it was alive and well.

Could it be that politicians and bureaucrats had misinterpreted the social situation of the inner cities? Could it be that they thought 'community' had gone, where actually it was still present? Possibly. Yet the discrepancy between this 'here/not here community' was also characteristic of the discourse of those who denounced its baneful destruction. Indeed in order to sort the inner cities out, policy makers were adamant that urban regeneration needed to be carried out by 'involving the communities', by 'tapping into the communities' talents', by 'making the communities feel they owned their areas again'.

Community was thus at once destroyed and existing, actual and virtual, local and global, problem and solution... The striking diversity of meanings given to the notion of community as well as its transformation into a core political concept led me to wonder why this particular notion had emerged as such a crucial idea in New Labour's ideology and especially in the urban regeneration framework? Did the notion of community have specific attributes that would facilitate this newly allocated status? It also led me to assume that it was to be used strategically by all those who would mobilise it. How would different actors understand the term? And, importantly, how would they *use* it? Indeed even though the notion became central in urban regeneration policymaking, it was introduced in such a multi-facetted way that it paved the way for it to be mobilised accordingly.

In parallel, urban regeneration increasingly resorted to cultural strategies to achieve its aims and goals. Thus the newly established Social Exclusion Unit commissioned a report about the potential benefits of the arts and sports to urban regeneration from the Policy Action Team 10 attached to the Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS, 1999). Even though Britain had seen a number of culture-led urban regeneration experiences over the 1980s and the first half of 1990s, these were seldom carried out with such focus on 'community'. As a matter of fact, most of these attempts had been heavily criticised for focusing merely on prestigious flagship projects that would cause, among other things, gentrification and municipal debts. On the other hand, the approach that consisted of linking culture with themes such as social exclusion, participation and involvement could have sounded like a return to the philosophy of Community Arts. These were indeed the very subjects that Community Arts were about. Indeed this movement that started in the late 1960s and took root in the radical social movements of the time (anti-Vietnam war, feminism, etc) aimed to address social deprivation and inequality through an innovative approach to arts production

and consumption. At the heart of the Community Arts practice was the idea that participation and involvement were efficient methodological tools to open ordinary people to their own creativity and in turn transform unequal social patterns. This radical agenda obviously was rather remote from New Labour's own agenda, which since the mid 1990s had deployed many efforts in order to distance themselves from radical socialism (one of the most symbolic moves in that direction being the famous rewriting of clause 4). Moreover cultural policies developed and implemented in Britain over the last two decades had very little in common with Community Arts, which had withered away by the late 1970s. Coherent with their overall approach, New Labour did not show any willingness to carry out radically different cultural policies.

Did this mean that this culturally-led urban regeneration would be a new approach to urban regeneration, at the heart of which the concept of community would feature in a unprecedented and strategic way? My aim is to investigate the phenomenon that emerges at the intersection of these three spheres: community, urban regeneration and cultural policies. This study is thus clearly empirically grounded as my interest lies in the ways the formulation of policies and their integration of a new concept affects the practical implementation of the policies in question. I will therefore attempt to investigate how such an urban regeneration programme can affect the area in which it is carried out. Moreover, as the notion of community has been given a crucial status in New Labour ideology, I will try to evaluate the extent to which a detailed study of this concept in a particular context (i.e. that of culturally-led urban regeneration) can indicate some features, and potential contradictions in the ideology in question[3].

I want to emphasise here that examining the place of the concept of community in New Labour's rhetoric and ideology is not a novel enterprise: a number of commentators have dealt with this issue, whether to defend New Labour's position (Giddens, 1998; 2000) or to criticise it (Hall, 1998; Levitas, 1998; Callinicos, 2001). Moreover the importance of the concept in the narrower framework of urban regeneration has also been looked at by some commentators (Cochrane, 1986; Burns et al, 1994) - however not in as much detail as I have undertaken in this study. Finally the incorporation of cultural strategies within urban regeneration has been analysed for some years (Bianchini, 1990; Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993). Nonetheless a thorough investigation of the convergence and integration of the three subjects into one has, to my knowledge, never been undertaken. This particular approach has allowed me to shed light on the role of the concept of community in shaping the ways in which a culturally-led urban regeneration scheme is concretely implemented. It has also

[3] I use the term ideology here in a non-Marxist sense, i.e. the body of ideas held by, or comprising the mission of, some organised body

provided the example of a well-bounded space in which the deep consequences and implications of New Labour's ideology can be analysed through the angle of its rhetoric.

There are many elements that are at work in each sphere (i.e. community, urban regeneration and cultural policy) and which play a role in the resulting phenomenon constituted at their intersection. It is not my aim to study each of these elements in great detail but only to the extent that helps to understand how they shape the phenomenon in question.

Thus I will outline the development of urban regeneration policies and cultural policies over the last three decades, as this importantly sheds light on the current profile of these policies and their convergence. Indeed in exploring whether a new model is produced, it seems indispensable to understand the genesis of such a model.

The investigation will be conducted through cases studies located in Spitalfields and its Bangladeshi population (I will present my reasons for choosing this methodological tool in the fourth chapter). This neighbourhood, located in the East of London, a stone's throw away from the City, is the residence of the largest concentration of Bangladeshi people in Europe. This highly deprived area is also the site of an important urban regeneration programme, which, since 1994, has been carried out through a cultural approach and following the 'community involvement' method mentioned above. Two festivals organised within this urban regeneration framework have thus been studied as examples of the phenomenon that I set out to examine.

Discussing the discursive sphere of community whilst drawing on empirical data about an ethnic minority obviously calls for the exploration of a number of issues, especially those related to race, transnationalism and diasporic identities. However, as I have mentioned earlier, these topics are only tackled to the extent necessary to understand how they affect understandings of community by the actors. These issues have therefore not been explored in great theoretical depth as I do not believe that such an approach is indispensable to apprehend their importance in the phenomenon observed. Indeed we will see that if the transnational nature of the 'Bangladeshi community' is a fundamental aspect of the phenomenon that I propose to observe, it is only to the extent that it shapes particular understandings of 'community' by different actors. Even though urban regeneration policies have recognised that ethnic minorities tend to be the most deprived 'communities' in Britain, this acknowledgement is only made in terms that are internal to this specific sphere: poverty, unemployment, deprivation, etc. The transnational character of ethnic minorities does not enter this section of the argument and therefore this research does not require its exploration. Even though this dimension will turn out to have a significant impact on the area in which the urban regeneration model is carried out, it is clearly rooted in the discourse on

community, and does not have an autonomous capacity to influence the phenomenon observed.

First of all, this thesis will seek to identify, describe and analyse each of the spheres that constitute the framework of this research. The theoretical framing of the work will thus consist of an examination of the concept of community, of an outline of urban regeneration policies and of cultural policies in Britain over the last three decades. Indeed in order to evaluate whether current culturally-led urban regeneration policies represent a new model, it seems necessary to locate them in a framework that provides an understanding of the developments that they result from. This first theoretical part will lay the ground to a better understanding of the relations between community, urban regeneration and cultural policies. This will then be put in perspective through the analysis of the empirical data.

In that sense this piece of research is exploratory. Rather than an attempt to (dis)prove a theoretical or practical hypothesis, it seeks to observe a phenomenon arising from a particular context. For that reason, I have restricted the theoretical framing to the three spheres that constitute the context in question. All other issues have been treated as externalities that would reveal their greater or lesser importance during the research. I want to point to one of these externalities, that proved to be of prime importance: the notion of power. Indeed we will see in chapter seven that most manoeuvres engaged in by actors around the notion of community within the given framework of our object of study, were done so as part of power struggles. This particular dimension proves particularly interesting as the concept of community strikingly lacks a sophisticated conceptualisation of power as part of its own structure. As we will see in the first chapter, this is actually one of the most striking and most problematic features of the concept of community. However even though the question of power runs through the three spheres that I decided to investigate, it is an essential and problematic dimension only in so far as the notion of community is concerned. Indeed if urban regeneration and cultural policies are also characterised by power issues, it is only, in the conceptual framework that I set out to explore, insofar as they relate to government apparatuses, which classically are seen as domains characterised by a power dimension (Weber, 1978). In that sense the sphere characterised by a highly challenging conceptualisation of power for this thesis would be that relating mostly to the notion of community. The observed phenomenon will thus shed light on the process by which the uses of the notion of community in a particular institutional framework will open a space for power contestations and struggles as a result of this specific institutional arrangement. It has to be highlighted here that conceptualisations of the notion of power are particularly contested. Power is an important concept in the social sciences and has been the object of a wide range of theories that produced much, except agreement. It is beyond the scope of this research to provide an account and a discussion of the concept of power, as it remains an externality to

my object of study, in so far as it either impinges from without on the process I describe, or arises within them, in which case I analyse the way in which it functions in this context. In the framework of this thesis, I will therefore use the term of power in its basic definition of the ability to exert control over others.

The first chapter will critically outline the different conceptualisations of the notion of community in social sciences in order to ground some understanding of the ways it has been used in political discourse, especially by New Labour. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate that the concept of community has intrinsic attributes, which are partly a consequence of its development in social sciences, that make it a potentially very efficient political tool.

The second chapter will draw a brief historical account of the development of urban regeneration policies since 1968 and emphasise the ideological and practical shifts that characterise these policies. The second part of this chapter will delineate the main features of the current urban regeneration policies and stress the issues at stake.

The third chapter will outline the evolution of cultural policy and its rationale in Britain from the post war period. Two aspects of this development will be given particular attention: the Community Arts movement and the convergence of urban regeneration with cultural policy since the 1980s.

In the fourth chapter I will expose and explain the chosen methodology for conducting this piece of research.

The fifth and sixth chapters will present an analysis of the empirical data from the two angles of community and culture. Thus the fifth chapter will focus on the various interpretations given to the notion of community by the different actors in the context provided by the cases studies. The way this will in turn be applied in the 'community strategies' of the two festivals will emphasise the strategic manoeuvres around the concept. Finally the fragmented nature of the 'community' in focus will be highlighted in order to demonstrate the instability of the concept. In the sixth chapter will emphasise the tensions arising from the convergence between the notion of community and culture, through an analysis of some aspects of the two case studies. The use of culture as vector for tourism promotion, which is an important dimension of current culturally-led urban regeneration, will also be analysed in the neighbourhood in focus. I will also show that I believe that, in Spitalfields, the convergence of community, urban regeneration and cultural policy has given rise to the specific phenomena of gentrification and 'consumerist multiculturalism'. I will finally point out the extent to which I believe the findings of this research illustrate what I see as some inner contradictions in New Labour's ideology.

CHAPTER 1 – A PROBLEMATIC CONCEPT: COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

Community is a fundamental concept in social sciences. As Nisbet points out

> The preoccupation with, the search for community and concern with anti-community are to be seen in all major ages of Western social philosophy. Ages may differ in type of community sought and in degree of fear of the social void. But there is quite literally no age since social philosophy began (...) when concern with community has not been present in social thought (1973: 2).

Despite this long interest in the notion, it remains characterised by a great deal of haziness and a multitude of connotations (and very little denotation), which are so diverse as to become paradoxical. Moreover the concept of community is undergoing a parallel revival in both the academic field, which, after having somehow abandoned it for a decade or so, has found new interest in this pervasive notion, and within the political sphere, where Mr Blair has unequivocally presented it as 'the governing idea of modern social democracy' (2001: 5).

My aim in this chapter is to attempt to understand some of the reasons why the concept of community has reached such status in the rhetoric of New Labour, and examine some of the of consequences of this direction. My point is that the concept of community encapsulates a number of features, both through the connotations it encompasses and through its specific status in social sciences, which make it a particularly convenient rhetorical tool in political discourse. The particular understanding of the notion of community by New Labour can thus be powerfully informed by an analysis of the concept in social sciences.

This chapter sets out to conduct an analysis of the concept in the academic field in order to examine its status in the political realm. This chapter is not about finding a new, better definition or to choose the best one among those (numerous) existing ones. It is about highlighting the difficulties inherent to the concept and its paradoxical – some would say irreconcilable – dimensions in order to demonstrate why and how it is a convenient rhetorical tool for political purposes, by focusing on New Labour's use of the term.

1. COMMUNITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

1.1 The old tradition of community studies

The above passage quoted from Nisbet points to a salient feature of the issues linked to this prominent notion: the articulation of community as antagonistic to social void, and therefore as a type of social organisation that is sought after. As such, and following Williams' remark, one of the characteristics of the concept of community is that

> [it] can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. [U]nlike all other terms of social organisation (state, nation, society, etc) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing terms (1976: 76).

However this dimension never proved sufficient to make community a widely agreed, encompassing and well bounded notion. On the contrary, the concept is one of the most elusive of all, marked by a lack of substantive sociological theory of its own (Bell & Newby, 1974).

There have been over the past decades a very large number of 'community studies', but the non-cumulative nature of the works has prevented them from attaining a satisfying theory of community. Thus the study *Definitions of community: Areas of agreement* undertaken in 1955 by G.A Hillery analysed no fewer than 94 definitions of the term to reach the conclusion that

> There is one element (...) which can be found in all the concepts, and (if its mention seems obvious) it is specified merely to facilitate a positive delineation of the degree of heterogeneity: all the definitions deal with people. Beyond this common basis, there is no agreement (1955: 117).

This lack of clarity about the meaning of the term and issues involved in the development of satisfactory typologies is a legacy of the 'old tradition' of community studies, that developed during the first half of the century and which was itself under the profound influence of the 19th Century analysts of social and economic changes – Durkheim, Comte, Weber, Marx and most notably Tönnies. His theory hinges on a typology expressed as a dichotomy between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, i.e. community and society, which represent the polar types on a rural-urban continuum. Broadly speaking *Gemeinschaft* refers to a type of human grouping in which relations are intimate, enduring and based on a clear understanding of

where each person stands in society, while *Gesellschaft* is an aggregation of individualistic and atomistic elements forming society. For Tönnies, there are three central aspects of *Gemeinschaft*: kinship, neighbourhood and friendship. This differentiation of different kinds of human association was marked by an ideological concern: first of all, it was inspired by the transformation of society towards a capitalist one, more and more industrialized and urbanised, marked by unequal exchanges and encapsulating a pervading nostalgia for rural social organisation. The latter was assumed to consist of close-knit and happy inhabitants, who lived as self-contained groups. Moreover this approach was highly idealistic and fuelled by conservative as well as nostalgic feelings. Community, *Gemeinschaft*, was thought of as a good thing, whose passing was to be feared and regretted. It was thus not an analytical construct; it reflected the thinker's images of the good life, what human relations ought to be. For Tönnies, it was the symbol of a past and better age. Thus, as Elias points out,

> ... the use of the term community has remained to some extent associated with the hope and the wish of reviving once more the closer, warmer, more harmonious type of bounds between people vaguely attributed to past ages. (1974, xiii)

The power of the idea of community thus lays in the fear of what is seen to be its opposite (i.e. social void, alienation, loss of identity, etc) (Nisbet, 1973).

The relevance of the rural-urban continuum as a founding principle for the conceptualisation of community was criticised on different grounds. First of all, one of the main problems in this dichotomy is that it takes societal evolution as linear and tends to define changes as radical and irremediable. Yet, as Elias points out,

> The emergence of new social functions or the greater occupational differentiation of previously undifferentiated functions has its counterpart in the decay of older functions and of the social positions whose occupants perform them. A spurt towards closer integration or towards the emergence of a new level of integration goes hand in hand with a spurt towards partial disintegration (1974: xi).

In other words, the equation that saw industrialisation and urbanisation as a necessary source of anomie, alienation and social disintegration was a conceptual oversimplification. Moreover the emergence of suburban, commuter villages proved difficult to fit on such as continuum.

Furthermore the focus on community as a critical tool of industrialisation and urbanisation, grounded in the same urban-rural continuum concept, was used as an analysis of the dilution of localism as a structural principle of contemporary society. In his vision of the *Eclipse of community*, Stein (1964) saw the growth of bureaucracy and the centralisation of power as a process, which was taking important decisions affecting people's lives away from their locality and destroyed the very fabric of their social network. This particular, widely shared, outlook led researchers to concentrate their attention on urban working classes, in order to understand – or rather to observe – the baneful effects of the structural economic and social changes at work.

One of the paradigms driving these studies was that coming from the Chicago School, which extensively studied suburban neighbourhoods in the twenties and thirties, and whose influence in urban research was paramount, especially for the general hypothesis about 'the decline of community', strongly inspired by the *Gemeinschaft / Gesellschaft* dichotomy. They used an ecological approach based on biological analogies for the study of community, (Park & Burgess, 1925; Lynd and Lynd, 1937; Warner, 1941, 1945, 1947), which was apprehended as an organism, excluding notions of social interaction, as 'solidarity and shared interests of community members [are] a function of their common residence' (Bell & Newby, 1971: 33). The emphasis was on the physical nature of the neighbourhood and community was seen as the collective response to the habitat, the adjustment of the organism to the environment (Thrasher, 1963; Zorbaugh, 1929). In their spatial analysis the ecologists saw the urban spatial structure made of 'natural areas', which are themselves occupied by 'sub-communities'. The central idea is that human behaviour tends to reflect the physical characteristics of the area in which it occurs; an 'urban way of life'. The influence of the School of Chicago in social sciences can be attributed in part to the importance it gave to empirical enquiry, which at the time was rather rare (Bulmer, 1984) and to its manner of conducting fieldwork, as they were the precursors of participant observation. Yet for Bell and Newby, 'ecology at its finest provided sharp and accurate descriptions of the spatial aspects of communities... what [it] often fails to do, however, is to provide explanations for these relationships' (1971: 34).

The 1950s marked a slightly different direction in community studies as doubts started emerging about the validity of 'urbanism as a way of life' (Newby, 1980). A large number of studies established 'the existence of some disturbingly *gemeinschaftlich* communities' (Newby, 1980: 24) in the centre of large cities. The most famous of them in Britain was Young and Willmott's *Family and Kinship in East London*, published in 1957, and investigating community life in Bethnal Green. They 'discovered' an urban village characterised by stable, homogeneous, and close-knit social relationships. However this study, like many others such

as Hoggart's in Hunslet (1957) or Gans in Boston (1962), did not avoid the ideological bias of the primary conceptualisation of Gemeinschaft and the depiction of these communities was highly romanticised. The consequences of the importance of kinship as it was uncovered during the investigation were thus ideologically read.

> Here the family does more than anything else to make local society a familiar society, filled with people who are not strangers... Bethnal Greeners are not lonely people: whenever they go for a walk in a street, for a drink in the pub or for a row on the lake in Victoria Park, they know the faces in the crowd (Young & Willmott, 1957: 116)

The necessary positivity of such familiarity with one's neighbours was exaggerated, due to the ideological fear of the anonymity of the city. Young and Willmott somehow replicated the myth of the rural community, one which had been powerfully criticised by Lewis in his account of *Life in a Mexican village* in 1949, when going back to a village investigated by Redfield in the 1930s and portrayed by the latter as deeply homogeneous, well-integrated contented and stable, he found a highly divided place featured by individualism, tensions, factionalism, fear, envy and distrust (Bell & Newby, 1971).

The plethora of community studies, which flourished during the first half of the century, followed often-comparable methodological approaches characterised by the complete immersion of researchers in the local social life of a given 'community'. One of the main problems with this tradition of investigation was that, despite the wealth of monographs produced, the work tended to prove non-cumulative and resulted in a mere abundance of idiosyncratic and non-comparable investigations. Even though they provide rich descriptions of the every day life of ordinary people in terms of kinship networks, work patterns, political and religious attachments and voluntary associations they tend to lack systematic ethnographic procedures, thus producing 'impressionistic' data without real theoretical or methodological rigour. Consequently community studies referred to a profusion of realities, and, as we have seen, were often problematically paradoxical.

Moreover there are major problems generated by these sixty years of theoretically biased and methodologically weak investigations. First of all, the vast majority of these studies took as a starting point that modern society was characterised by a 'loss of community', an underpinning stance hinging on the 'myth of a golden past' (Rex & Moore, 1967: 213) and producing the theoretical fallacy highlighted above. As Abrams remarked 'the paradox of community is the coexistence of a body of theory which constantly predicts the collapse of community and a body of empirical studies which finds community alive and well' (1978: 12).

The ideological stance taken on community has led traditional studies to offer an interpretation of relationships characterised by harmony, affection, consensus and stability, whilst overlooking the coercion and power relations that occur both externally and internally. This dimension has been persuasively illustrated by Elias and Scotson in their research *The Established and the Outsiders*. Studying a local community, they demonstrate the existence of what they called 'the normative image of community' (1971). Their investigation thus showed that, in a strongly cohesive group, the chances of getting individuals' opinions are very slim, partly because there is an eagerness to present a common front and partly because internal power relations are so strong that there is a sort of 'self-censorship' generated by fear of the consequences. They thus conclude that the tendency to argue in general terms as if close integration of a group were purely positive and loose integration were purely negative is a dry oversimplification: close integration is often bound up with specific forms of coercion as the community functions as a moral and normative ordering, exercising social control over their members. This fundamental aspect will remain a stumbling block for the conceptualisation of community.

Furthermore the idea, largely disseminated by the Chicago School in the 1920's and 30s, that a society featured by a large number of people with highly specialised roles is somehow more complicated than one in which a small number of people play a similar or even a larger variety of roles, proved pervasive. This tended to provide a quantitative distinction, assuming that complexity varies proportionately with scale and proliferation of institutions; what Cohen rejected as 'the myth of simplicity and face-to-face society' (1986: 28).

Elias and Scotson also remind us of the erroneous understanding of the traditional conception of 'community' as opposed to that of social anomie, which was seen as the inexorable result of the growth of industrial cities. Indeed anomie tends to be presented as an absence of structure, a chaos, a 'bad social order'. Yet for the authors this is merely a misunderstanding by which the 'social structure' (seen as the antithetical phenomenon of anomie) is a type of social order approved by the observer making anomie undesirable. A 'good social order' is thus seen as an order in which social behaviour is well regulated and predictable. For Elias and Scotson, not only this is a misuse of Durkheim's concept of anomie (which was defined as a specific type of social structure, with its distinct sociological regularities) but it gives an impression of sharp moral dichotomies where factual enquiries reveal only differences in social structure.

The romanticisation of community has also consistently presented the affectionate and solidary bonds in the networks observed as natural. Not only was this a disputable and biased interpretation, but also, as Abrams argues, these networks of solidarity in traditional working-

class communities were mainly the consequence of necessity due to extreme levels of poverty, rather than natural as the ideal community is supposed to refer to (1986). He argued that, if given the opportunity, people would prefer limiting their network of interdependence.

These theoretical and methodological weaknesses led Stacey to assert that 'it is doubtful that the concept "community" refers to a useful abstraction' (1969, in Bell & Newby, 1974: 13).

1.2 Criticisms of the old tradition: local social life

Consequent upon the recognition of these erroneous paths, the late 1960s and 1970s saw increasing criticisms of this prescriptive and nostalgic dimension of the notion and the theoretical and methodological assumptions linked to 'community studies'. The interest in empirical investigation of community vastly decreased.

The 1980s saw a regain of interest in the subject. Not only was there a need of up-to-date studies about ordinary people's everyday activities but also

> a new generation of sociological and geographical researchers appear to have registered the fact that outside of the seminar room the idea of community appears to remain alive and well and people, misguidedly or not, continue to refer to it (Hoggett, 1997: 6).

This invocation of the notion outside the academic field and the need for a clarification of what it referred to is illustrated by numerous political pamphlets such as *Southall, the birth of a black community* published by the Campaign against racism and fascism in 1981. In this document the term strikingly refers to a variety of categories, all grounded in the different connotations attached to the notion: locality, ethnic minority, solidarity constituency, etc. In none of the following statements does the term seem oddly invoked, yet some have very little commonality with others: 'What brought the whole community of Southall – men, women, the old and the young, Asians, West Indians and white racists – on to the streets on April 23?'; 'This pamphlet is about the history of the black community in Southall'; 'The Sikh community of Southall'; 'In the early days the Asian community in Southall'; '...make plans to work as a community' (1981: 3-10). It is noticeable that these different uses of the term are still currently employed, pointing to the sustainability of the fuzzy nature of the notion.

Awareness of the pitfalls of the old tradition of community studies and the geographical basis of most investigations gave rise to a multitude of 'locality studies' in an attempt to evade the ideological undertones of previous studies by avoiding the concept. Thus for Cooke the research conducted was better captured by the concept of locality than by that of community (1989). Highlighting one of the most prominent problems of the old conceptualisation of 'community' he asserted that the concept suggested social relationships that are 'only reactive and or inward-looking' in which 'stability and continuity prevail' (quoted in Crow & Allan, 1994: 17). This direction was not completely new: Stacey had suggested, in a famous article entitled *The myth of community studies* (1969)[4], the concept of local social system as a more appropriate tool than that of community. For her, a social system is 'a set of inter-related social institutions covering all aspects of social life, familial, religious, juridical, etc and the associated beliefs systems of each' (1974: 19); a local social system occurs when such a set of inter-relations exists in a geographically defined locality' (1974: 19). However she warns that 'physical proximity does not always lead to the establishment of social relations' (1974 23). Likewise if she points to the fact that the longer the local population will have lived in an area, the more likely a local social system will develop, she points to the fact that this will not necessarily be the case. However the major problem of such an approach is, as in any purely structuralist method, that it does not have much to say about the *content* of relationships within the network. This can be linked to one of major attractions of the concept of community – i.e. its embodiment of the idea that living in an area provides a potential basis for mutual participation and involvement with others also residing here. The question is generally about how far 'localities can act as a viable base for social mobilisation and exert influence on outside forces which help shape their destiny' (Cooke, 1989: 3). If this is principally taken as an opportunity to investigate the nature of relationships of solidarity, indifference and discord within a specified locality or neighbourhood, then the issues are in essence no more complex than studying any other administrative or organisational unit, be it an industrial plant, a religious sect or a prison.

In their research in mining communities in Yorkshire, Warwick and Littlejohn have thus offered to see community as 'the probability of the settlement of a number of persons within a locality leading to the formation of local social network' (1992: 14). For them shared residence is likely to produce over time the development of these networks that would in turn generate 'common traditions, common sentiments and common values' (1992: 14). In their opinion, the presence of certain factors (e.g. common work situation, propinquity, kinship), 'especially if these are overlapping' (1992: 14) increase the probability that "'latent communities" become "manifest communities"' (1992: 14), the latter being featured by 'friendliness, closeness and solidarity' (1992: 17). Yet the relationship between place and the

[4] Reprinted in Bell & Newby, 1974

capacity to support particular types of social relationship is not straightforward. Furthermore such conceptualisation is based on the understanding that residence is a stable dimension, whereby people live in the same area for many years and have friendly – even if superficial - relations with their neighbours. Yet recent economic and social restructurings have led to the increase of geographical mobility and to global trends which have greatly affected this state of affairs, as less and less people live all their life in the same neighbourhood. Furthermore, as will be analysed below, globalisation has modified the significance of the local in social relationships.

In the same study, Warwick and Littlejohn argue that some communities (e.g. mining communities) have a potential to become 'historical communities' even when the structural factors holding the community together have disappeared, which points to a common confusion between community as social structure and as meaning. Their hypothesis relies on the idea that communities develop a local culture that permits this mental sustainability. Such an example not only demonstrates the variety of factors that feed the idea of community, but also the fluidity – one might say the inconsistency – of their conceptualisation for the community to exist or not. Place, kinship, common work situation, common social background, common values, solidarity are thus all related but the issue of which factors need to be present to make others emerge in order to decide that the resulting entity is or not a community has not yet been resolved.

Moreover the focus on local social life emphasises the complexity inherent in the notion of boundary. First of all, the concept of locality implies that a geographical area is a stable and easily delimited variable, and implies that there is a natural dimension to it. Yet, as Suttles suggests, 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 (1972). Furthermore these cognitive maps, fundamental bases for the theory of the local social life, are not automatically shared by the inhabitants who might have differential vision of what constitutes 'their' locality. The discrepancy between physical and cognitive geography and the subjective dimension of the former points to the unstable basis of the local social life model, regardless of the emotional content of 'community'.

The importance of boundary needs also to be emphasised regarding the notion of insider / outsider in a community. Wallman's comparative research in Battersea and Bow thus demonstrated that the processes that lead inhabitants to be considered, or not, as 'local' are multiple and highly dependent on numerous structural factors such as economic structure, housing patterns, patterns of leisure and other social activities. The factors which participate in the drawing of the boundaries are thus not comparable for different groups. Her research shows that acceptability in the area of Battersea, which is socially rather heterogeneous, is

easier than in Bow. Indeed in the latter - a rather homogeneous area - a number of boundaries have to be breached at once before reaching the status of insider, whilst in the former industrial, housing and wider social boundaries do not coincide making local community boundaries more permeable. Elias and Scotson (1965) had also showed the complex processes of acceptance and rejection into a locality. These studies point to the contested and negotiated notion of membership, which is essentially different from solidarity and co-operation. It also points to the impossibility of conceptualising the 'boundary' as an objective factor, as the inclusion / exclusion process, even though it is affected by structural elements, remains mostly subjective and consequently partly random.

Thus as Crow and Allan notice

> whatever their merits, those alternatives have run into conceptual difficulties of their own, not least their failure to capture the subjective dimension of community attachments and identities' (1994: xv).

Indeed community is connoted with more than a network of solidarities concurrent with shared residence: it inherently refers to the emotional ties that people have to a group, which it thought of as a source of rooting and identity. This dimension of the concept is reflected in (and explains) Anderson's choice to depict the nation as an 'imagined community' because it echoes both 'communion' and 'horizontal comradeship' (1981). It is indeed no coincidence that in order to convey the multiple yet coherent connotations of commonality, solidarity, attachment and loyalty, the analogy resorted to was with community.

The notion of inclusion / exclusion is also fundamental to the concept of community, in the sense that as a bounded entity source of identity, it is as much defined by its relation to the outside as it is from the outside.

1.3 Community in a global era

The theorisation of community through the conceptualisation of local social life is essentially determined by place as a common factor to the actors involved. Yet in a global era where modern technology enables people to maintain social relationships across the globe and leads to a greater interconnectedness world-wide, the conceptualisation of locality is being transformed. Recalling the place of the 'urban' in classical urban sociological thought, Smith pointed out that 'in the contemporary period the "urban" has been replaced by the "global" as a metaphor for the central "outside" threat to the primary social ties binding local communities' (2000: 103). The analogy is striking especially if the work of Harvey is examined. First of all, he sees capital as the author of social change, which is characterised

by 'the disruptions of home, community, territory and nation' (1989: 238). The local is therefore under threat under global flows as

> defensive place-bounded movements are represented as cultural totalities expressing entirely place-bounded identities in a world in which the dynamic flows of globalisation exist entirely outside their purview (Smith, 2000: 103).

On the other hand, Castells, theorising the informational development of late modernity, sees the economic and technological flows in a global space, but with the space of cultural meaning remaining local (Castells, 1984). According to him 'on the one hand the space of power is being transformed into flows. On the other hand, the space of meaning is being reduced to microterritories of new tribal communities' (1984, quoted in Smith, 2000: 104). The result is a dialectic domination/resistance, where global domination produces local resistance. This resistance takes the form of two modes of identity formation: 'project identities', such as religious fundamentalism or ethnic nationalism, and 'resistance identities', micro-territorial defensive community formations. For Castells, 'the "local" dimension of urban social movements is precisely something that produces meaning *entirely against* the dynamics of global processes' (Smith, 2000: 105. Emphasis in original).

Therefore even though Harvey sees localism as a dead end whilst Castells sees local identities as communal resistance to global capitalist hegemony, for both '"place" is understood as the site of cohesive community formations existing outside the logic of globalisation' (Smith, 2001: 106).

This position seems to have been joined by Giddens. He defined globalisation as 'the intensification of world-wide social relationships ...[which] link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa' (1991: 21). This affects the local in the sense that '*local transformation* is as much part of globalisation as the lateral extension of social connection across time and space' (1991. Emphasis in original). He qualified this position almost ten years later in *The Third Way. The renewal of social democracy* by clarifying his view on this local transformation, the impact of which on British national politics will be analysed below.

> Contrary to what is sometimes assumed, globalisation creates favourable conditions for the renewal of communities. This is because globalisation has a "push-down" effect, promoting the local devolution of power and bottom-up community activism (2000: 63).

The vision of globalisation as a hegemonic trend that has unilateral effects has been challenged by conceptualisations, which have offered more dynamic and fluid understandings

of the dialectic global/local. Thus Appadurai's concept of disjunctures between economy, culture and politics depicts socio-cultural economy as a 'complex, overlapping, disjunctive order which can no longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery' (1990: 296) provides a fruitful framework to investigate of issues of place and space. He presents a fivefold structure to examine those disjunctures made of global flows (ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, finanscape and ideoscape), which are 'deeply perspectival constructs': situatedness is a major facet of globalisation. Each 'scape' has to be seen as landscape, which, following Anderson's terminology, are 'imagined worlds' and which are not sharply delimited or side-by-side entities but overlapping and penetrating each other.

In this context, social relationships are characterised by deterritorialisation, a term coined by Albrow to mean 'disconnected contiguity': locality becomes a site for multiple coexisting worlds, some of which are only focused on the local area. This leads people to 'inhabit social spheres which intersect at the locality they occupy for the moment without interfering with each other' (Albrow, 1996). This undermines one of the underpinning ideas of the concept of community, which implies that common residence provides a strong potential for mutual involvement to emerge.

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) have also offered an interesting perspective on the conflation of place and culture. They point out that

> representations of localities as cohesive community formations fail to recognise and deal with a variety of boundary penetrating social actors and processes now very much a part of the transnational world in which we live (Smith, 2000: 110).

These include border-dwellers, migrants, diasporas, refugees, etc who organise their lives through social networks across vast distances around the world: in such situations localities can be constructed by global processes. Thus the second-generation Bangladeshis in East London engage their construction of belonging as Bangladeshis/British/Muslim by maintaining links across UK, in other Western countries, in their countries of origin and other Muslim countries. This global network allows them to produce an identity and a sense of belonging, which make sense of the locality they are in: we are here in presence of transnational cultural formations (Eade, 1997). For Gupta and Ferguson (1997), the growing interdependence (economic, socio-cultural and informational) across linked spaces diminishes the potential for discrete, autonomous local cultures. Furthermore

> the emergence of wider discourses and practices of postcolonial politics ... is producing a variety of hybrid cultures, even in geographically remote localities, that problematise the very notion of "authentic cultural traditions" (Smith, 2000: 111).

The importance of the notion of 'imagined communities' needs thus to be highlighted because it provides the possibility of representing the absent and distant as being integral to the local.

This dimension of community is particularly important as the term is also often made to equate with ethnic identity: the Bengali community, the Asian community, the Black community, etc. In his magnificent study of young Southallians, Baumann sets out to investigate the 'ethnic reductionism' that seems 'to reign supreme' (1996: 1) in Britain. He powerfully shows how the dominant discourse of community based on ethnicity is rooted in a process of cultural reification. This process of reification is defined as in Berger and Luckmann, as

> ... the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is, ... the apprehension of the products of human activity as they were something other than human products – such as facts of nature (1967, cited in Baumann, 1996: 13).

As a result, 'community' as much as 'culture' tend to be seen as fixed, homogenous, coherent entities. The process that makes one the equivalent of the other is thus rooted in the same reifying tendency. As Baumann suggests '"community" can function as the conceptual bridge that connects culture to ethnos' (1996: 16) and the situation is one of a dominant discourse which relies on equating community, culture and ethnic identity. It is thus, to a certain extent, in the ethnic framework that the downfalls of the concept of community become the most apparent. Obviously any process of reification artificially fixes boundaries and oversimplifies a social and cultural reality, which proves always more complex. Baumann demonstrates the extent to which both notions of culture and community are contingent, relational and contextual. More interestingly he establishes the way people themselves engage the dominant discourse as well as the demotic one and the way they reify cultures whilst making culture.

The political consequences at stake behind such a reification of ethnicity has been well described by Rothschild, who coined the term 'ethnopolitics' to describe the process of

> mobilising ethnicity from a psychological or cultural or social datum into political leverage for the purpose of altering or reinforcing... systems of structured inequality between and among ethnic categories (1981, quoted in Baumann, 1996: 11).

The issue of ethnicity is somehow distant to that of locality in the sense that it is usually thought of in terms of culture and identity. However for most diasporic communities the three issues of culture, identity and place are inextricably linked to each other.

As a conclusion to the issue of globalisation and its relation to locality and identity, one can refer to Hall who, focusing on diasporic communities, presents an articulation between 'the local' and 'the global' where globalisation can 'lead to a *strengthening* of local identities, or to the production of *new identities*' (1992: 308. Emphasis in original). These two forms of impact of globalisation on identities, he called 'translation' or 'tradition'. The former refers to 'those identity formations which cut across and intersect natural frontiers and which are composed of people who have been dispersed forever from their home lands' and the latter referring to attempts 'to reconstruct purified identities and restore coherence, closure and Tradition' (1992: 310). For him therefore the 'general impact remains contradictory' (1992: 309). For Gupta and Ferguson on the other hand 'the "global" relations that we have argued are constitutive of localities are therefore centrally involved in the production of "local" identities too' (1997, quoted in Smith, 2000: 111). The idea of the locality as cohesive community formation or as an inexorable space of resistance to globalisation is thus challenged by these theorisations. As Hoggett points out, '"place" now becomes reconceptualised as an identity one chooses as much as one which is accepted as fate' (1997: 8).

1.4 The symbolic construction of community

A number of researchers have theorised 'community' along more innovative lines, which attempt to evade the enslavement to locality and the risk of cultural reification. Indeed the concept of community encapsulates more than the existence of reciprocal arrangements and relationships as the feeling of belonging is essential to the notion. As theories of globalisation show, in contemporary societies, boundaries of place do not necessarily coincide precisely with the sense of community that people hold (Harper, 1992). Moreover the sociology of identity and identity politics movements has 'played an important role in opening out the conceptual space within which non-place forms of community can be understood' (Hoggett, 1997: 7). The constructed and negotiated dimension of identity highlights its unfixed nature. 'Identities are constantly shifting and mutating as the groups and communities such identities draw from and contribute to change over time' (Hoggett, 1997: 8).

In order to encompass these multiple and heterogeneous dimensions, Cohen (1986) has suggested a definition hinging on the importance of symbolism and boundaries. By emphasising the dual component of inclusion and exclusion, which every community encompasses (community implies simultaneously similarity and difference), Cohen insists that the consciousness of a community is encapsulated in the perception of its boundaries. It is therefore in the very concept of boundary that the idea of community itself is essentially

enshrined. The fundamental element of his model lies in the symbolic dimension of the boundary. If some boundaries are marked in a specific manner (e.g. national boundaries are statutory), their specificity and importance lie in the meaning given to them.

> Such categories as justice, goodness, patriotism, duty, love, peace, are almost impossible to spell out with precision (...) But their *range* of meanings can be glossed over in a commonly accepted symbol - precisely because it allows its adherents to attach their own meanings to it. They share the symbol but do not necessarily share its meanings. Community is just such a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members' unique orientations to it (...) The reality and efficacy of the community's boundary - and therefore of the community itself - depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment (Cohen, 1986: 15).

For Cohen, community is where one learns to be social, to acquire 'culture' by acquiring symbols. Referring to Geertz (1975), he asserts that the concept of community is encompassed in the relation between symbolism, culture and meaning. One of the most salient elements of his analysis is the variety of meanings behind the same symbols in/of a community. Somehow symbolisations of the community are umbrellas under which diversity can flourish, marks behind which a considerable degree of heterogeneity is possible because symbols are mainly used to mark the boundary of the community (as much for inclusion as for exclusion). 'The "belonging" of "community" is symbolically constructed by people in response to or as defence against their social categorisation by outsiders' (Jenkins, 1996: 112).

The interpretation of the reality of the community becomes almost an individual matter, as the community does not represent the same thing for everybody. Nonetheless their shared symbols allow them to believe that they do see and understand things the same way as their fellows and in a different way from other communities. Cohen therefore rejects any structuralist construct of community, and denounces 'the myth of inevitable conformity'. This model reflects that of 'imagined community' as theorised by Benedict Anderson (1981).

This conceptualisation of community highlights the intangible dimensions of sense of belonging and shared identities, and allows for internal heterogeneity as well as for lifting the concept of community from the local, which constitutes a great leap from both the traditional conception and the local social model. It emphasises the impossibility for communities to be completely self-contained and the importance of the negotiated dimension of membership. It also permits a more flexible approach to the possible belonging to multiple communities. As Mouffe suggests

> many communitarians seem to believe that we belong to only one community, defined empirically and even geographically... But we are in fact always multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities (as many... as the social relations in which we participate and the subject positions they define), constructed by a variety of discourses and precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of these subject positions (1988, quoted in Smith, 2001: 132).

The conceptualisation of community as a symbolic construction proves very useful notably in order to avoid the excessive reliance of community on locality and social structures. Moreover this conceptualisation allows a partial answer to one of the most difficult facets of the concept, which lies in the implicit equation between social structures, solidarity and attachment to the idea of one's community. This has proved an arduous correspondence to demonstrate as a number of studies uncovered the fragmentation and lack of unity of certain communities.

In his study of Southmead, Brent investigates the idea of wholeness and oneness that pervades much writing on community and which has consistently been presented as a promise of hope, especially when applied to social policy and urban planning (1997). His proposal consists of exploring 'community without unity' along four lines of argument: community as multi-dimensional, not reducible to a unitary phenomenon; exclusion and splitting, rather than union, as constitutive of community; splitting as not a simple insider/outsider division but as internal to community and finally conflict as inherent within community as a concept, community therefore always being an ambivalent practice (Brent, 1997: 73). For Brent, 'community formation is intrinsically about creating difference... it is a site of division' (1997: 75). Drawing on the postulate that the creation of boundaries (inherent to the community formation and existence) finally makes unity impossible, he shows that the progressive unity of community in diversity is limited, if not impossible. The boundaries are shifting and multiple (exemplified by a local Rastafarian praised during a local concert as an insider thanks to his talent, source of local pride, but viewed with defiance and suspicion when he first grew his dreadlock years before; is he insider or outsider?). Southmead is split off both from outside as disreputable 'by those who construct themselves as safe and respectable' (1997: 78) but also from inside with regards to the youngsters who are seen as destroyers of the community because of their attributed responsibility in local crime. In a typical association with crime, demonstrated by Brown (1995) young people are thus seen as 'both symptoms and cause of the collapse of the moral universe' (1995: 36). The position of young people within the internal splitting of Southmead is to be related to other areas of splitting: gender relations, sexuality, race, class and poverty. These lines of

fracture are important to emphasise. Indeed as the concept tends to be 'power-blind', it overlooks specific faultlines that potentially divide: gender is certainly one of the dimensions that have been steadily ignored in the light of community conceptualisation. If the issues of power inside a community are not new, Brent presents an interesting outlook on community activity, which is

> Not just about uniting against an outside world, but also about dividing off, even denying, what are seen the unacceptable parts within, the parts that create doubt and ambivalence (1997: 80).

This vision of community as *essentially* without unity complexifies even further the conceptualisation of the symbolic construction of community. However it does not contradict Cohen's theory. Indeed by focusing on the symbolic construction of community, the disjuncture between meaning and social structure is by-passed, and enriched by the conceptualisation of community without unity, it takes into account Calhoun's suggestion that

> the experiential dimension is not independent of the structural; the sense of belonging is directly founded on the social relationships through which one belongs to a community (1983, quoted in Crow & Allan, 1995: 151).

Indeed despite the attractiveness of such conceptualisation it is hard to think of purely symbolic communities, which in the words of Bauman would be 'brittle' (1992: xxi). Throwing the theory back to the notion of social relationships would have been the equivalent of 'going full circle'. Yet Brent's contribution seems to illuminate some of the most ideologically problematic facets of the notion of community.

It is interesting to notice that the realisation that lack of internal homogeneity was recurrent in most studied communities, gave rise to a number of models trying to accommodate this dimension. Thus the conceptualisations of community as a continuum 'fragmented-encapsulated' or following a distinction between 'coercive' and 'co-operative' (Crow & Allan, 1995: 161) have attempted to accommodate for this disturbing element which tends to belie the traditional understanding of the concept.

Yet this does not resolve the tension, which remains yet to be resolved, between community as a set of social relations – whether or not in a geographical area - and community as meaning, reflecting a sense of belonging to a group with all the positive connotations that this is supposed to entail (i.e. solidarity, common purpose, fullness of relationships, etc). Following Williams, 'community' is thus

> the difficult interaction between the tendencies originally distinguished in the historical development: on the one hand, the sense of direct common concern and on the other hand the materialisation of various

> forms of common organisation, which may or may not adequately express this (1976: 76).

As Plant argues '[i]t refers both to the unit of society as it is and to the aspects of that unit that are valued if they exist and desired in their absence' (1974: 13). Community is thus an essentially heterogeneous and fluid concept and has to be considered both as fact and as value. This is also demonstrated by a number of empirical studies (Evans, 1997; Brent, 1997), which showed the lack of consensus about what community is for social actors or so-called community members themselves.

However, despite the confusions attached to the theorisation of community, it remains 'a concept that just will not lie down' (Day & Murdock, 1983, quoted in Crow & Allan, 1995: xv). Its unicity lies in the fact that it combines absolute positivity with extreme vagueness, making it, among other things, a very malleable notion for rhetorical purposes. We will now turn to the ways the term has been used in political discourse, by focusing mostly on social policy and New Labour rhetoric. Indeed in both these areas, the term has been highly prominent, and its exploitation offers interesting new angles on the notion.

2. COMMUNITY IN POLITICAL RHETORIC

2.1 Community in social policy

The impact of the conceptualisation of community has been important in all political and social spheres and the notion of community as a deplorable loss of a certain social organisation has had great effect beyond academic circles. This was highly visible in urban planning where, in the late 1960s - early 1970s, the sense of a loss of community in urban industrial cities had great influence. As Newby reminds us

> On the basis of some rudimentary social engineering [planners] have attempted to promote a renewed sense of community in urban life through the creation of neighbourhood units, garden cities, urban villages, and other such local forms of sub-division of the urban environment... The long historical pedigree of their value judgements has brought about the taken-for-granted assumption that the desired content of human relationships (affection, integration, identity, and so on) can only be promoted through the creation of local forms of territoriality and local social structures (1980: 10).

This was mainly fuelled by the redevelopment of many urban areas, usually traditional working-class neighbourhoods, which in the 1960s had been bulldozed and their population moved to new housing estates and high-rise flats. These turned out to be criticised for their soulnessness and lack of 'community spirit'. Ironically many of the old urban neighbourhoods, which had triggered so much suspicion in the nineteenth century, were now being revered as intimate and vital communities (Newby, 1980).

Meanwhile, as economic changes as well as the massive programmes of public housing, transport and urban renewal, which had disrupted a number of spatial communities started to transform the social landscape, the notion of community increasingly referred to a particular set of meanings. A certain discursive tradition began to emerge consisting of connecting the idea of community with social deprivation and 'system dysfunction':

> the problem of community was seen either in terms of the dysfunctional outcome of social and economic progress or in terms of dysfunctional families and social networks (Hoggett, 1997: 9).

'Community' became the answer to the predicament of the poor and underprivileged, a connotation which remained ever since as, since the late 1960s, policy makers have quite consistently used the term to refer to the socially excluded. I will show below how New Labour has maintained this association between the community and social exclusion, one of the underpinning notions of its ideology.

Furthermore the idea of community in social policy was strongly linked to the concept of 'grassroots forms of action'. Indeed as early as 1969, the Skeffington Report drew attention on to the necessity of involving the people in the design and implementation of urban renewal programmes if these were to meet their objectives. Effectiveness of public policy and need for public participation therefore began to be seen as obviously coupled. However 'participation' and 'consultation' were often confused notions, covering a large range of understandings. In the late 1970s the Community Development Projects (CDPs) started to question the earlier dysfunctional models of community and linked social deprivation and social inequality, coming to the conclusion that analysis in terms of 'community' served to obscure these inequalities. Support was therefore given to forms of action focused on strategies of conflict rather than participation. Nonetheless this idea of participation did not lose its importance, especially as it got recognised as an 'efficient tool for sustaining administrative stability and subduing potentially troublesome elements' (Hoggett, 1997: 9).

In the early 1980s, radically different views and discourses on communities appeared side by side, with the conflicts between leftwing local authorities, (such as the GLC), and the central

government. The former were implementing decentralising programmes and supporting radical oppositional and new groups formed around gender, race and other elements of identity, whilst the latter was committed to re-centralisation. But the resources for the decentralising programmes got drastically reduced and groups not only became highly dependent on them, but got into dire competition for scarce resources. This process resulted in the exacerbation of lines of tension between 'communities of difference'. The abolition of the GLC marked the near disappearance of the term from social policy rhetoric, since the ideology defended by Mrs Thatcher largely rejected even the very existence of such a thing as community.

The political importance of the use of the notion of community on the basis of ethnicity is also to be highlighted. We have seen earlier that the equation of community and ethnicity is based on a process of reification of culture. As Baumann rightly emphasises, this process points to a particular discursive process:

> The discourse about ethnic minorities as communities defined by a reified culture bears all the marks of dominance: it is conceptually simple, enjoys a communicative monopoly, offers enormous flexibility of application, encompasses great ideological plasticity, and is serviceable for established purposes (1996: 30).

Baumann also reminds us that the discourse of community has a line of ancestry 'rooted in the colonial administration of ethnic groups in East Africa' (1996: 28). He shows how this colonial administration took on the recruitment of skilled manual labour from Africa following the doctrine of Indirect Rule and therefore 'dealt in the currency of tribes' (1996: 28). However as this could not be applied to South Asian migrants, the discourse of communities was 'invented'. The reminder of this African episode aimed to 'highlight how the dominant discourse is based upon, and reinforces, a denial of the cross-cutting social cleavages that characterises plural societies, even colonial ones' (1996: 28). Moreover 'the division of people-to-be-governed into communities is a time-honoured colonial strategy... [which] may help to account for the appeal of the community discourse among Britons who associate ethnic minorities with social problems' (1996: 29). As has been shown above community is traditionally associated with deprivation in social policy discourse and the link with ethnic minority is, in such a framework, more than usual.

The notion of community has thus been used in social policy for decades, in ways which are not neatly congruent with the evolution of its conceptualisation in social sciences. For this reason, as Evans argues

> [t]he term "community" must be critically evaluated, not least because it is used with such regularity by those who are involved in the management and control of [inner-city neighbourhoods] and the people who live within them but also because this term has been invoked by both national and local government personnel in order "to make a difference" at a local level (1997: 34).

The access to power by New Labour in 1997 has shed new light on 'community' as it has been made a fundamental concept in the new ideology of the party, with repercussions both on local and national levels.

2.2 New Labour's core idea

The political project that the New Labour government has set out to carry out since 1997 has widely been referred to as the 'Third Way'. Tony Blair himself asserted that 'the ideas associated with the third way are still the wave of the future for progressive politics' (2001). The expression aims at describing politics which transcends both the 'old left' and the 'new right', leading to the much debated question regarding the actual place of New Labour on the political chessboard: centre-left, radical centre or – as some would argue - centre-right. This question is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the blurred boundaries of New Labour's political project can be illustrated by the way some major themes of their rhetoric are being manipulated. In that sense, I argue that their recurrent use of the concept of community and the fundamental place that has been attributed to it in their ideology is significant of this unclear position regarding traditional political ideologies.

The Third Way. The Renewal of social Democracy (1998) and *The Third Way And Its Critics* (2000) by Anthony Giddens have widely been accepted as texts exemplifying New Labour's ideology. The description of the notion of community in these two books is therefore highly significant. In *The Third Way*, Giddens asserts that the theme of community is

> fundamental to the new politics, but not just as an abstract slogan (...) Community doesn't simply imply trying to recapture lost forms of social solidarity; it refers to practical means of furthering the social and material refurbishment of neighbourhoods, towns and larger local areas (1998: 79).

In this extract, which reflects New Labour's position on the subject and reinforces Mr Blair's description of community as the 'governing idea of social democracy', the double dimension

of community as locality and value-laden entity is clearly exposed. It indicates the instrumental function of the notion in the implementation of policies, especially as far as urban strategies are concerned; an aspect that will be returned to later. Moreover Giddens refers unequivocally to 'lost forms of solidarity', locating himself in the old tradition of community studies. As seen above, this nostalgic conceptualisation has been denounced not only for its theoretical and ideological bias, which affected the rigour of the studies conducted, but also on empirical grounds. Thus if common sense understanding of 'community' is generally linked to notions of social cohesion and solidarity, locating its desirability within a model found in a traditional – and better - past indicates moral and ideological values that go beyond a plea for improved social conditions.

This positioning towards community denotes a general socio-political stance partly resulting from the influence of communitarianism on New Labour. Following theories such as that put forward by Amitai Etzioni (1993), this model hinges on the idea of responsibilities that individuals hold towards their community as the other side of rights. Etzioni's definition of community relies not only on a particular form of social interaction, but on the function of this interaction in maintaining social control

> 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 (1995: ix).

In this framework, he unequivocally admits his doubts about non-geographical communities whose 'foundations may not be as stable and deep-rooted as residential communities', even though 'they fulfil many of the social and moral functions of traditional communities' (1993: 121). Despite his insistence that his proposal is not 'a simple return to Gemeinschaft' (1993: 122), Etzioni's understanding of community relies on the mythical existence of such a model. Unsurprisingly, then, one of the underpinning elements of the community-as-answer is the 'normal' family (i.e. consisting of two-parents in a heterosexual relationship), as it lays the proper moral ground for successful communities. This dimension of Etzioni's communitarianism is to be found in Blair's rhetoric: in 1996 in a document entitled *Strategy for women*, the Labour Party insisted that 'strong families build the social cohesion of our nation and its communities' (1996, quoted in Levitas, 1998: 122) whilst Mandelson and Liddle clarified the understanding the party had of a strong family as one

> where partners show long-term commitment to each other, children learn discipline and mutual respect, and family members help each

> other to cope with their personal crises and achieve their individual potential (1996, quoted in Levitas, 1998: 122).

The concept of community as promoted by New Labour is thus to be understood in moral terms, rooting a discourse which easily slides into an authoritarian one (which is exemplified in the policies tackling youth crime and drugs or unemployment). As Levitas powerfully demonstrates, the community appears in different guises, especially when it relates to the issue of crime: 'it is the locality in which crime occurs, and that which has broken down, ...[it] is the potential victim, ... [and] the potential judge, as well as the instrument of social control' (1998: 124). Also

> The different guises of community are blended in the idea of community safety – which always means safety from crime and disorder, and not safety from traffic, air pollution, poisonous food, contaminated water supplies, collapsing sewers or exposure to radiation leaks from nuclear installations (1998: 124).

These themes – law and order, family and community – become thus easily merged, as Mr Blair confirmed in 1994 during his campaign for Party leadership

> The break up of family and community bonds is intimately linked to the breakdown of law and order. Both family and community rely on notions of mutual respect and duty (1994)[5].

This emphasis on a law and order rhetoric associated with the crucial notion of family is somewhat reminiscent of Thatcherist rhetoric. Interestingly, the focus on community by Blair does not prevent him from valuing the individual above all things: he actually sees the former as the 'collective ability to further the individual's interests' (2001: 5). The new politics of solidarity to be drawn from community should thus not be mistaken as revamped collectivism but rather as a new strategy to nourish individualism. In his virulent criticism of New Labour, Stuart Hall pointed to this obvious paradox:

> The "Third Way" discourse... is disconcertingly devoid of any sustained reference to power. Mr Blair is constantly directing us, instead, to "values". But when one asks, "which values?" a rousing but platitudinous vagueness descends. He can be very eloquent about community, an inclusive society, with the strong supporting the weak, and the value of facing challenges together. The problem arises when

[5] Blair, T (1994) Speech to the family breakdown and criminal activity conference. 24 May. Quoted in Fairclough, N (2000) *New Labour, new language?* London: Routledge

this communitarian side of the Blair philosophy meets head-on the equally authentic, rock-like, modernising, targeting, moralising streak in "Blairism". In practice it is difficult fervently to believe in "the politics of community" and at the same time to hold unshakably to the view that the task of government is "to help individuals to help themselves", especially when the ways of implementing each so often point in diametrically opposed directions (1998: 11).

The tendency to associate 'community' with social exclusion has also been emphasised by New Labour thus sustaining the 'tradition' already mentioned of equating community with the socially excluded. This is even more striking in New Labour's language since the very notion of social exclusion has been made an underpinning one for the government.

Thus the Manifesto of New Labour *Because Britain deserves better* consistently amalgamates these two ideas, clearly locating community in the realm of deprivation: '[we will] fulfil our objectives of promoting work incentives, reducing poverty and welfare dependency, and strengthening community and family life' (1997). Community somehow becomes both problem and solution.

The implementation of community as solution takes the form of community-based initiatives, which form the core of most social policy programmes, most notably urban regeneration schemes. These initiatives take as a grounding view the pre-existence of communities as local entities, encompassing latent community 'values' that suitably devised government programmes would revive, and even define. Indeed, to his own question 'who decides where "the community" ends and others begin?' (1998: 85), Giddens provides the telling answer: 'government must adjudicate on these and other difficult questions' (1998: 85). Even though, as seen above, many theorists have challenged both the naturalness of community solidarity and the congruence of the boundaries of place with the sense of community that people hold, this conceptualisation of community as an efficient tool for the local organisation of government initiatives is undoubtedly at the heart of numerous policies, as the next chapter will examine in detail.

This approach to community as locally based is interestingly informed by New Labour's view on globalisation. As has been shown above, the notion of community as strictly equivalent to locality has been problematised by theories of globalisation. New Labour has taken a specific outlook on this issue, which hinges on the notion of globalisation as an unavoidable and external factor that is responsible for the limitation of the power of governments. Moreover Blair tends to see it as, in Hall's words 'a single, unidirectional, uncontradictory phenomenon,

exhibiting the same features and producing the same inevitable outcomes everywhere' (1998: 11). This fatalist approach to globalisation is combined with an understanding of its 'push-down' effects, which in turn justifies even more the invocation of 'community' as a fundamental concept for modern governance. This also highlights the resolutely traditional model for community that New Labour has chosen as an inspiration; one that actually comes in tension when the unavoidable issue of diversity is tackled especially regarding identity.

In that sense New Labour's frequent emphasis on the internal diversity of Great Britain (devolution of power in Wales and Scotland, ethnic minorities, etc) is in line with 'traditional multiculturalism', one which recognises cultural difference but tends to essentialise it (Hall, 2000). The distinction between 'multi-culturalism', as a neutral demographic description, and 'multiculturalism' as a broad political ideology implies not only a semantic need but a necessary concern over the strategies adopted by policy makers and nation-states to overcome the ambiguous heritage of assimilationist approaches (Hall, 2000). The reification process underlying most multiculturalist projects goes hand-in-hand with New Labour's understanding of community, as a well-bounded, culturally specific entity. The vision of Britain where 'cultures are supposedly sealed from one another forever by ethnic lines' (Gilroy, 1987: 55) still frames a widespread institutional ideology of multiculturalism. However within the race relation industry some attempts have been made to conceptualise multiculturalism without essentialising the notions of 'culture' and 'community'. In the *Parekh Report*, elaborated by the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain in 1998, it is thus argued that

> People have competing attachments to nation, group, subculture, region, city, town neighbourhood and the wider world. They belong to a range of different but overlapping communities, real and symbolic, divided on cultural issues of the day. Identities, in consequence, are more situational (2000: 25).

The debate revolves thus again around the necessity of a more fluid understanding of the concepts of identity and community in order to open a space for all citizens to evolve in society without being essentialised and reduced to a specific and institutionally defined identity, which inevitably constrains the development of all groups, but most of all the most deprived ones.

CONCLUSION

Thus if the haziness that characterises the conceptualisation of community in social sciences is somehow reflected in the political discourse of New Labour, I argue that the latter has

been able to 'pick and chose' from the variety of connotations attached to this ill-defined notion in order to shape it and manipulate it in a convenient way for its own purpose. This has been made possible by the pervasiveness of an ideologically biased theorisation of the concept, which has made the term of community refer to a multiplicity of empirical realities whilst being fraught with evaluative connotations. Even though in recent years some attempts have been made to evade some of the most unrelenting myths associated with 'community' (e.g. internal homogeneity, indestructible solidarity, reciprocal and harmonious relationships), New Labour has undoubtedly chosen to by-pass these recent theorisations in order to use community as a discursive strategic tool. We have thus seen that community has become the encapsulation of certain moral values. Moreover it has also become the embodiment of the new relation between citizens and the state that New Labour has set out to implement. For Mr Blair

> People don't want an overpowering state. But they do not want to live in a social vacuum either. It is in the search for this different reconstructed relationship between individual and society that ideas about "community" are to be found. "Community" implies a recognition of inter-dependence but not overweening government power (1995: 17)[6].

As such, Hoggett is right to assert that 'Community is a fundamentally political concept' (Hoggett, 1997: 14) in the sense that 'the idea of community is saturated with power', which explains why 'community is a continually contested term' (1997: 14).

Moreover recalling the underlying purpose of the conception of community by Tönnies, which was fundamentally idealised as a potent myth of cultural integration to stabilise the state in a period of essential restructuring informs the current use of the notion by New Labour. Indeed the use of the notion of community is integral to the 'renewal strategy' encapsulated by the 'Third Way'. The discourse of 'ideological revitalization' (Blair: 2000) is significant of an attempt to adapt to a fast-changing world, where the 'rules of the games' are yet unknown. In our global era featuring profound economic and cultural restructuring, one can wonder whether this kind of discourse isn't located in a traditional conception of the nation, where emerging delocalised identities and communities could be seen - to take Gellner's term - as entropy-resistant. Gellner uses this notion from thermodynamics to express the supposedly essential stability of the nation. His analysis of industrial society leads him to detect the possible emergence of categories of people, which would jeopardize this stability.

> A classification is entropy-resistant if it is based on an attribute which has a marked tendency *not* to become, even with the passage of time

---

[6] The Guardian 23.03.1995

> since the initial establishment of an industrial society, evenly dispersed throughout the entire society. In such entropy-resistant case, those individuals who are characterized by the trait in question will tend to be concentrated in one part or another of the total society.(...) Entropy-resistance creates fissures, even veritable chasms, in the industrial society in which it occurs (1983: 64).

The concept of community as described by Blair could thus be seen as a tool to impose his vision of the nation, a way to fight off entropy-resistance. This would justify the resorting to the notion as an underpinning element of a large number of policies, and especially in urban regeneration schemes. The next chapter will examine the extent to which the invocation of the concept of community has impacted not only on the conceptualisation of urban strategies but also their implementation. The analysis of urban regeneration policies since 1968 will attempt to demonstrate that the centrality of the notion of community in New Labour's discourse does not necessarily represent an important leap from previous strategies, as far as the implementation of the schemes is concerned. I will argue that the situation described by Brent has thus not been greatly altered despite New Labour's claims that social democracy has been rejuvenated.

> Community is too often used rhetorically as a positive and unambivalent word to weigh against the negatives of disintegration by writers and policy makers across the political spectrum, without an understanding that any formation of community brings with it a whole range of further questions, difficulties and struggles. Community is not a term for use as an unequivocal slogan of redemption (Brent, 1997: 82).

CHAPTER 2 - URBAN REGENERATION IN BRITAIN

'The Government believes that regenerating our communities adds to our well-being, as lasting improvements help balance our social, environmental and economic life'. DETR. Annual report 1999.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter one has presented the way in which the notion of community has been introduced as a central element in urban regeneration policies. We have seen that the concept of community is both inherently ideological and political, and that it is characterised by highly positive connotations. As such it is thus a malleable concept, which has been brought to the forefront of political rhetoric by New Labour, particularly Mr Blair.

This chapter aims at demonstrating that over the last three decades urban regeneration policies have become a major framework within which local development is carried out. A historical account of urban policies since 1968 will show that important ideological shifts have occurred in the way urban regeneration has been addressed in Britain over the last three decades. The current urban regeneration has been very much informed by these ideological shifts, which have had important impact in the localities in which the policies have been implemented. A detailed examination of the major features of current urban regeneration policies will be presented in order to evaluate some of the issues at stake with them. We will especially scrutinise issues associated with community involvement. This chapter aims at clarifying the institutional framework in which urban regeneration operates.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN REGENERATION POLICIES SINCE 1968

The term 'regeneration' appeared in the 1970s, borrowed from the United States, which had implemented specific policies in run-down cities to rid them of specifically urban problems: high unemployment, derelict housing, drugs, social break down. Their underlying aim was the attraction of private sector developers into these decayed urban core areas, using public money and city government promotion and co-ordination as 'levers'.

These 'born again' cities were seen as role models and the terminology was absorbed in a first step towards a fuller wave of policy imitation. In the UK context this means that, by and

large 'regeneration' is a narrower term than 'urban policy'; the former referring to urban redevelopment of derelict areas or buildings by private property developers whilst the latter is a wide embracing, rather objective term (Colenutt & Tansley, 1990).

In other words,

> From one perspective, regeneration is the pragmatic application of land-use planning, deregulation, and financial incentives to revive the urban economy. From an alternative point of view the term is a euphemism for the process which has been occurring in the economy as a result of the restructuring of international capitalism. (Hill, 1994: 165).

1.1 Labour's approach to the urban problem

The post-war period featured an emphasis on universal programmes, national standards, and economic growth. The concern with specific areas within cities was reduced to the need to rebuild war damaged housing and industry, and to clear and replace slums (Hill, 1994). This was dealt with mainly through the town planning apparatus.

But the 1960s brought new problems and the consensus over this strategy began to erode. Cities started to present a shared pattern of pockets of extreme poverty in which race relations were very tense. A new term appeared, the inner city, which became a metaphor for the combination of these two issues. The dockers marched through the East End of London to ask the Labour government to move the cities higher up in the agenda after Enoch Powell gave his infamous 'rivers of blood' speech. In an effort to satisfy these demands, a new policy was introduced in 1968: the Urban Programme. It was managed by the Home Office because it was responsible for police and immigration. Urban policy had shifted from universalism to a concentration on particular areas. However innovative it was at the time, the scheme was not appropriate to its target. The budget was limited, never rising above £30m; there was little negotiation between central and local government; it was essentially project-led rather than strategic. It had a mostly economic focus, assuming that the individual failings of those lacking the skills to succeed economically was the source of the inner cities' predicament. 'In other words, it blamed the victim [and]... the urban problem was ghettoised in more than one sense' (Parkinson, 1996: 8). This became even more visible when one of the major schemes of the Urban Programme, the aforementioned Community Development Projects, published in 1977 a bitter final report emblematically entitled *Gilding the Ghetto*, which was highly critical of the government's policy. The dysfunctional models were questioned by tracing the links between social inequality and social exclusion; urban poverty was analysed as a major structural social and economic problem. Structural economic changes were insufficiently

addressed as programmes concentrated mainly on social consequences. Furthermore, by the end of the 1970s the Urban Programme based on welfare initiatives became overlaid with concerns over unemployment.

The 1977 Labour Government's White Paper *Policy for the Inner Cities* marked a change of emphasis. The socio-pathological understanding of city problems was abandoned and replaced by a recognition of the cohesiveness of urban problems. Thus the new policy focused on the economic, as well as the social, causes of decline, calling for regeneration of businesses and industry. However the welfare dimension of the previous urban programme remained to a certain degree. The Urban Programme was handed over to the Department of Environment, its budget enlarged from £30m per annum to £125m per annum and in 1978, the Inner Urban Areas Act introduced the 'enhanced' Urban Programme, which covered economic and environmental as well as social projects. This Act also inaugurated the concept of 'ranking' local authorities, by establishing three divisions of urban local councils, or 'designated districts'. At the bottom of this classification, nineteen districts were identified in England and Wales, in which some economic development powers were given to the local authorities (e.g. 90% loans could be granted for acquisition of land or carrying out industrial improvement) (Lawless, 1989).

This threefold division also marked the creation of new institutions in the six largest cities, the Inner City Partnerships. The Partnerships received about £66m of the £125m total budget. Both these partnerships and the 1978 Act pointed to values and priorities to be seen years later in the 1990s. Indeed it marked a shift from state-provision to a more mixed approach through stressing the importance of partnership between local and central government. It also sought the involvement of businesses, even though local authorities were still the leading partner. The funding allocated to the Partnerships was small and is regarded by some as being 'diversionary because it deflected attention from the cuts that were occurring in the orthodox funding mechanisms for current and capital expenditure' (Lawless, 1989: 42).

The Urban Programme was devised in such a way that Partnerships and programme authorities were eligible to receive seventy five percent government grant for regeneration projects, with local authorities meeting the remaining twenty five per cent. This strategy did not prove very successful, mainly because the incoming Conservative government drastically cut support to Labour initiatives from 1979. The Partnerships were based on optimistic assumptions that local and central governments could work in harness and incorporate other interests (e.g. the police, the businesses, voluntary organisations) into a coherent whole. In other words success was reliant on consensus and co-operation. It had been overlooked that most of these agencies have very different agendas and motivations and that, very often, politics prevent reasonable collaboration. It also contained design weaknesses: the agencies were time-limited and the mainstream funding was restricted.

Thus Labour's urban policy cannot be perceived as anything more than meagre. Marginally more resources went to the Urban Programme but mainstream expenditure was reduced. The Partnerships proved a largely bureaucratic device, with little influence and minimal funding. In effect as Mc Kay and Cox pointed out: 'no sensible observer inside government or out could expect the limited measures announced in 1977 to transform the inner city' (1979, quoted in Lawless, 1989: 50).

1.2 The Conservative revolution

The 1979 election resulted in a severe shift in the way Urban Policy was to be tackled. The new Conservative government challenged the main axis that had driven, despite changes of emphasis, the policies under Labour: the maintenance of welfare delivery, the importance of public expenditure and the vote of local governments. The Conservative ideological drive meant that a completely new strategic response to urban decline was proposed: private sector-led urban entrepreneurialism. An antagonistic attitude to local government, seen as inefficient, excessively bureaucratic and anti-private sector, led, despite its declared intention, to a major re-centralisation of government. This emphasis on economic factors was implemented in 1981 in the Urban Development Grant (UDG), a programme modelled on the American Urban Development Action Grant introduced by President Carter in 1977. This programme aimed at encouraging private-sector investment by means of development grants administered through local authorities. The UDG was transformed into the Urban Regeneration Grant in 1987, in a move to further reduce the power of local authorities as the monies for large projects were going directly from the central government to the private sector.

This redirection of policy towards private-sector investment was also carried out through a number of new structures such as the Enterprise Zones, in 1981, Task Force and City Action Teams (CATs) in 1986. These initiatives were all furthering the 'fragmentation, privatisation and centralisation of resources' (Parkinson, 1996: 9). Both CATs and Task Forces were inter-departmental teams. Resources were targeted on capital rather than revenue projects and overall the results were mixed. While redevelopment schemes had been brought forward and employment created, it was mainly job displacement from elsewhere. Moreover it was widely agreed that this was an expensive way of creating employment.

In 1987 the 'traditional urban programme', which had supported specific projects by 150 local authorities, was transformed and resources were concentrated on the fifty-seven Urban Programme authorities, now termed 'priority areas', managing Inner Area Programmes (IAPs).

The launch in 1988 of the Action for Cities programme, which was in effect a reordering of existing programmes, re-stated the necessity of facilitating economic revival by promoting private investment, improving infrastructure and creating new businesses in the most deprived areas.

The policy was designed not to increase government expenditure but to promote private enterprise. It was

> distinctive in that it proposed a set of transforming values – the enterprise culture – which would have not only material outcomes but moral ones as well (...) The strategy was to promote the private sector, limit central government expenditure, and curtail the role of Labour-led local councils. (Hill, 1994: 176).

Among all the initiatives taken by the first Conservative government the most famous, and controversial, one is the Urban Development Corporations (UDCs).

The UDCS

Inner city problems were seen by the Government as partly due to a 'loss of confidence' of private property investors in urban areas. Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, argued that, if private investors could be encouraged back in, inner city problems including deprivation and racial conflict would be alleviated. He even suggested that the reason the private sector was not investing in inner cities was because it was actively discouraged by local authorities (Colenutt & Tansley, 1990).

UDCs were non-elected bodies directly accountable to central government and had a remit to regenerate their area by taking over local authority planning powers while receiving direct Government grant for land purchase, reclamation and other means of making the Urban Development Area more attractive to private developers. Typically they were run by board members appointed directly by the government, with heavy representation from the private sector. Their financial support was increased at a period of the 1980s when other parts of the Urban Programme and main local authority services (e.g. housing, welfare, transport, education) were being cut down.

Two were set up in 1981 (London Docklands and Merseyside), five more in 1987 and four extra in 1988-89. It is fair to argue that the UDCs encapsulate most of the Conservative government's approach to urban regeneration. Their strategy, especially during the early years, hinged mainly on property-led forms of regeneration and hinged on two principles: leverage and marketing. Even though the Department of Environment (DoE) had failed to clearly define the kind of regeneration that UDCs were supposed to achieve, White Papers

seemed to suggest that the extent of dereliction was the principal issue to be addressed by UDCs rather than other critical aspects of urban deprivation (Colenutt & Tansley, 1990).
From 1987, the UDCs started to attract fierce criticisms. Thus although UDCs were set up with the intention of regenerating derelict inner city areas, in fact a large number of these areas chosen for UDCs were city centres or city fringe sites rather than inner city stress areas. This suggests that the Government wanted UDCs to take responsibility for strategic sites which were at the same time perhaps more marketable than the host of non-spectacular sites, commercial, industrial and open-space areas in the inner cities.

The results displayed by the UDCs showed undeniable physical regeneration through prestigious 'flagship' projects aimed at improving the image of their area and attracting private sector investment. However, as pointed out by the House of Commons Employment Committee, 'UDCs cannot be regarded as a success if buildings and land are regenerated but the local community are by-passed and do not benefit from regeneration' (1989). Indeed a major criticism directed to them was that they clearly lacked accountability and that they imposed their own vision of what regeneration was about. The London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) provided an illustrative example of an area which, after being 'regenerated', had lost touch with its original population and created jobs which mostly did not benefit the locals. In its first decade the LDDC received a billion pounds from government grants and the sale of land. The Department of Transport spent £638 million improving access to the area, and the extension of the Jubilee Line was costed at a further billion. Hardly any attention had been paid to training, jobs or low cost housing. Therefore if the designated area for regeneration had improved on many accounts, with property developers enriching themselves greatly, the surrounding areas had most often worsened. Moreover institutions such as the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Royal Institution of British Architects began to raise their voices about Docklands, complaining of social imbalance, and the lack of coherent planning and design – a 'missed opportunity' for creating a high quality environment in inner London (Colenutt & Tansley, 1990: 15). There were also serious criticisms regarding the handling of derelict land and property selling; thus the Committee of Public Accounts had 'serious reservations that the developers made no provisions for a public share of any "super profits"' (1989: vi).

After such harsh comments, the much-reproved LDDC could not but improve their services in terms of community involvement and bettered social provision (Brownhill, Razzaque & Kochan, 1998).

Yet it is fair to argue that the LDDC mode of regeneration had been traumatising[7], especially in Tower Hamlets, where the gentrification effects had rippled through. Despite some late adjustments, the UDCs were seen until the end as 'the precursor of the much reviled quangocracy' (Parkinson, 1996: 9). They represented the typical example of the regeneration as idealised by the Thatcher government: a physical, property-led regeneration, dominated by private sector interests and values and neglecting the more far-reaching, social consequences of urban deprivation. This is dramatically illustrated by David Plunkett, in the foreword to a monitoring report of the UDCs:

> UDCs have hung on by their fingertips, due to the injection of massive amounts of public money diverted from essential urban programmes. While local authority initiatives have been blocked, property-led development has emphasised the divide between private affluence and public squalor.
>
> Openness and accountability have been sacrificed, and local communities by-passed by centralised decision-making. The lesson is that democracy is a vital contributor to regeneration – not a diversion from it (quoted in Colenutt & Tansley, 1990: 9).

As a consequence of these different programmes, the local authorities found most of their responsibilities for urban social and economic problems taken away by a complex network of agencies. The result was decreased accountability to local citizens and an urban policy which was criticised for its piecemeal nature (Hill, 1994: 176). The Audit Commission even talked about a 'patchwork quilt of complexity and idiosyncrasy ... [within a] ... strategic vacuum and weak co-ordination of local strategies' (1989: 2).

This bad press and unsatisfactory results led the Major government to start a redirection of urban policy. It insisted on effective management and co-ordination of the Urban Programme resources, on the need for a strategic approach to economic renewal of tightly targeted inner-city areas and on collaboration with local interests including the private and voluntary sectors in the strategy and delivery of the programme (Atkinson & Moon, 1994). Yet the dominant idea remained: the right conditions had to be created for significant private-sector investment to be levered-in. The Urban Programme Annual Guidance stated that 'roughly 50% of the content of programmes will be aimed at promoting economic regeneration (in most cases the percentage will be higher' (1991: 6). Moreover the Government recommended that

---

[7] For a fascinating and extensive account of the regeneration carried out in Docklands, see Foster, J (1999) *Docklands. Cultures in conflicts, worlds in collision*. London: UCL Press

> projects for UP [Urban Programme] support will be selected for maximum impact (including their impact collectively within a package), it is likely that the trend will be towards fewer projects in total, and a number of highly visible projects chosen for their wider benefits to the community as a whole (DoE, 1991: 6).

City Challenge

The major initiative illustrating this new orientation was City Challenge, a scheme implemented in 1991. An important aspect of this initiative was its new approach to allocating monies: competitive bidding would be the way to access funds. Michael Heseltine, who had returned to the DoE, argued that 'competition is the vital catalyst for the new approach' (1991: 7). Indeed the temporary suspension of local government as a major player in urban regeneration had been withdrawn by Chris Patten. However there was still a strong perception of urban administration as inefficient and stuck in a 'dependency culture' generated by the needs-based Urban Programme. The institutionalisation of intra-urban competition aimed at reconciling the rehabilitation of local administration and the mistrust of the public sector.

This must have been seen as a convincing argument as, a decade later, this dimension is still in place (and raises similar levels of controversy). Twenty-one of the fifty-seven Urban Programme Authorities were invited to submit competitive bids, for which ten of them would win additional funding. The bidders were to 'enter into five year agreements with the Department of the Environment to tackle some of our worst social conditions' (DoE press notice quoted in Atkinson & Moon, 1994: 122). In the first year eleven of the twenty-one bids were successful. They shared £82.5 million per annum over a five-year period, with each receiving an average of £7.5 million per annum. In February 1992 a second round of City Challenge was launched, in which fifty-four of the fifty-seven Urban Programme Authorities took part in a competition to gain a share of £750 million over a five-year period.

It is important to note that City Challenge funds were not additional funds: they were top-sliced from seven DoE inner city and housing programmes (DoE, 1992: 9). Moreover it was expected that additional resources drawn from other sources such as the private sector would come to supplement the monies available through the scheme.

The DoE's summary of the first successful bids reveals that all included the participation of the private sector and most were either in or adjacent to central city areas; they focused overwhelmingly upon infrastructure, and environmental works and site preparation for the private sector. Overall the primary aim was clearly to attract additional private investment in the hope of creating new jobs. The results were not very convincing: if jobs had been created (DETR, 1999a: 5), it seemed to have repeated a pattern observed under the UDC initiative:

they were not offered to local residents, thus not solving the deep roots of local deprivation. Moreover the overwhelming emphasis upon economic regeneration and the Government's clear preference for 'highly visible projects' led high profile flagship private sector developments to be defined as beneficial for the community and thus be placed high on the bids, securing approval. The lesson from the UDCs had only been half learnt.

An analysis of the pros and cons of competitive bidding as an allocation strategy will be conducted later, however it should be highlighted that there was no apparent relationship between the success of a bid and a bidder's place in the DoE's own ranking of multiple deprivation. All authorities, regardless of the problems they faced, received identical sums of money. As De Groot has commented, 'City Challenge requires councils to obtain money for inner city regeneration on the basis of a highly politicised competitive bidding process which has no objective relationship to levels of need or even ability to deliver' (1992: 197).

Moreover, because City Challenge funds were top-sliced from other funds, it has been argued that they deprived Urban Programme Authorities of funds they might well have received in any case and redirected them to a preferred few. According to Labour Party figures, Urban Programe spending was to be cut in 1992/3 by £14.3 million and Housing Investment by £48.5 million in order to fund City Challenge (Atkinson & Moon, 1994: 125). The successful local authorities were also expected to bend their own programmes to bring additional funds to bear on the City Challenge areas; this might mean that other deprived pockets within local areas could have lost funds, as City Challenge took in strictly delimited areas. Nonetheless the 1992 Conservative Party Manifesto emphasised the benefits arising from the City Challenge approach:

> Competitive bidding has already galvanised towns and cities into bringing forward imaginative proposals for regeneration. It has improved coordination, secured better value for money and encouraged programmes which tackle problems on a number of fronts (1992: 39).

Despite the flaws pointed to above, some positive attempts were to be noticed. Thus for the first time, the involvement of local communities was set as a requirement for the bid to be successful. Thus, the requirement for broad based partnerships has been seen by De Groot as 'funding of urban regeneration [which] has been associated with a comprehensive and integrated approach to development' (1992: 205). Yet the final national evaluation of City Challenge was significantly vague on how successfully this had been conducted. The only comments were recurrent recommendations on the necessity to include this dimension, but there were no findings on where or how it had effectively been achieved. 'There was a link between low levels of community involvement and poor Partnership performance. A

comprehensive regeneration programme cannot be imposed on local communities' (DETR, 1999a: 2).

However in late 1992, the new Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Howard, was reported to be rather disappointed by City Challenge. As a matter of fact it was announced that there would be no round in 1993/4 and by 1994, it was effectively abandoned. This period of time was also marked by continued pressure on public expenditure. In November 1992, Michael Howard announced that the Urban Programme would be drastically cut: by £61 million for 1993/4, by £85 million for the following year and by a further £11 million in 1995/6 (Atkinson & Moon, 1994: 121). From £240 million per annum, the Urban Programme would then be scaled down to a mere £79.5 million (Mawson et al, 1995: 21). It was estimated that between 1993 and 1997/98, £6bn of public sector expenditure was to removed from programmes which assisted the regeneration process. The sole development was the release of an additional £20 million for inner city capital projects through the Urban Partnership Fund, launched in late 1992. Forty–six local authorities shared the sum.

The Single Regeneration Budget

In April 1994, a new initiative aimed to create 'sweeping measures to shift power from Whitehall to local communities and make Government more responsible for top local priorities' (DoE, 1993). It was constituted by twenty separate programmes under five different departments which were to be merged into one Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) totalling £1.4 billion for 1995/6, to be used within a timescale of one to seven years. The initiative also established a network of ten Government Offices for the English Regions (GORs), bringing together the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Environment, the Employment Department and the Department of Transport. Resource allocation spanned the policy division between urban and regional issues (Mawson et al, 1995). Due to existing commitments (such as the UDCs and City Challenge) only £125 million of the total SRB was to be made available for new programmes in 1995/96. Likewise in 1996/7 the total SRB commitment was £1.12bn with only £40m available for spending in the first year of the second round. 'One significant consequence is that the SRB has been perceived by many people as a mechanism for masking cuts in resources rather than ensuring that they are deployed in a more effective and responsive way' (Mawson et al, 1995: viii).

In terms of the technical aspects, the competitive bidding process and the partnership structure were maintained. The bids from local partnerships were expected to meet one or more of the nine following set objectives: enhance local people's employment prospects, education and skills, particularly the young and those at a disadvantage; encourage

sustainable economic growth and wealth creation by improving competitiveness; improve housing; promote initiatives of benefit to ethnic minorities; tackle crime and improve community safety; protect and improve the environment and infrastructure and promote good design; and enhance the quality of life of local people, including their health and cultural and sports opportunities (GOR, 1994).

The accountability for public money was listed high on the agenda of SRB as well as each partner having 'a say defining the objectives of the bid and the allocation of resources' (GOR, 1994: 8). The partnerships were obviously expected to lever in as much external resources as possible to complement their SRB funding. It was envisaged that the bids would be led by local authorities and/or local Training and Education Councils (TECs) although other possible partnership combinations were not excluded. These proposals raised concerns since local authorities had previously held the responsibility for co-ordinating bids under City Challenge. 'It was felt this might lead to unnecessary duplication and overbidding' (Mawson et al, 1995: 22). As a matter of fact, the first Round proved these concerns right as there was massive overbidding: 649 full bids had been submitted in 1994, among which only 201 were winners. Another area of concern arose from the little experience in working as a formal partnership shown by most winners. The majority had no track record of working with general government-sponsored discretionary regeneration funds and of liasing with civil servants. 'Any objective assessment of local need and capacity to deliver based on a 25 page document in an area with no track record is bound to be contentious' (Hutchinson, 1997: 41).

The ten regional Government Offices had a central role in enabling the bidders to proceed with their bids: they distributed copies of the bidding guidance document, encouraged and discouraged bids (without preventing any willing partnership from bidding), helped filling in the forms and formulating the bids, and finally set up panels to assess the bids to be judged by the DoE. SRB was therefore a decentralised process.

In December 1994 the Secretary of State announced the successful bids. According to him the SRB package would create more than 300,000 jobs and generate 20,000 new businesses. Other beneficiaries would be two million school pupils, 5,000 community organisations, 500 community safety initiatives and 1,200 youth crime projects. 50,000 homes would be built or improved. A survey conducted by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (University of Birmingham) showed that on the first Round, bids greatly prioritised economic growth and employment, followed by housing and environment; quality of life, crime and ethnic minority concerns remained in bottom place (Mawson et al, 1995: A).

A concern arose from the many voluntary organisations: the way the SRB was making other programmes 'vulnerable'. This was mainly with reference to Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act, which empowers the Home Secretary to make special payments to local authorities and other institutions when special provision is necessitated by the presence of

ethnic minorities. This covers the employment of additional staff to help minority groups dealing with language barriers or other specific problems. Section 11 is used to fund projects such as home/school liaison or specialist business advice. In 1994, 55% of the Section 11 was transferred in to the SRB; yet the type of activities funded by Section 11 was not 'replaced' by bids proposed under SRB.

The Single Regeneration Budget 1993/94 – 1997/98

Real figures on 1993/94 base (£000s)

	Outturn (cash) 1993/94*	Estimated outturn (real)* 1994/95	1995/96	Spending plans (real) 1996/97	1997/98	% change 1993/94 – 1997/98
Ring fenced SRB	612	569	513	487	473	-22.7
Other SRB	999	863	751	739	727	-27.2
TOTAL SRB	**1611**	**1432**	**1264**	**1226**	**1200**	**-25.5**

*: Figures include end year flexibility (underspend on capital provision rolled forward from previous years) (Source: Mawson et al, 1995)

Overall the Conservative government's urban regeneration expenditure was mostly focused on the UDCs as the table below demonstrates. This points to the great emphasis put on economic regeneration and infrastructure in the Conservative's approach to the urban problem, despite efforts towards slightly more integrated policies towards the end of their regime.

Expenditure on programmes within the SRB 1981/82 to 1994/95 (£m)

	81/2	82/3	83/4	84/5	85/6	86/7	87/8	88/9	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	total	%
UDCs	73	114	167	148	130	137	234	347	609	718	667	552	387	286	4,569	29
HATs											11	29	81	88	209	1.3
URA													23	181	204	1.3
City Grant (1)			14	25	38	37	41	38	50	53	45	47	25	-	413	2.6
DLG	59	112	120	117	119	126	117	106	83	84	99	124	103	-	1,369	8.7
Urban Progr. (2)	186	295	275	466	404	365	359	305	285	267	264	253	177	83	3,984	25.3
Task Forces							7	31	26	25	23	26	19	16	173	1.1
CATS									5	9	9	5	3	1	32	0.2
City Challenge												56	230	214	500	3.2
Estate Action						69	110	191	243	213	297	373	372	373	2,241	14.2
Rest of SRB (3)	98	111	118	106	110	113	111	95	120	128	251	230	269	201	2,061	13.1
TOTAL	416	632	694	862	801	847	979	1113	1421	1497	1666	1695	1689	1443	15,755	100

(Source: Mawson et al (1995: 31))

1- Includes UDG and URG

2- Includes Urban Crime Fund Payment in 1992/3

3- Up to 1994/95. Rest of SRB is made up from: Regional Enterprise Grant, Safer Cities, Section 11 Ethnic Minority Grant, Ethnic Minority Business Initiatives, Programme Development Fund, TEC Challenge, Business Start-Up Scheme, Local Initiative Fund, Compacts, Education Business Partnerships, Teacher Placement Service and GEST. From 1995/96 Rest of SRB also includes Urban programme, Task Force, City Action Scheme (CATS), City Challenge and Estate Action.

1.3 New Labour

The New Labour slogan 'investors in people' was certainly aimed at powerfully demonstrating the will to distance themselves from the much-decried strategies carried out by the previous government. Thus the Good Practice Guide for Sustainable Regeneration published by

Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)[8] in July 1998 clearly asserted that

> the shift towards a more comprehensive interpretation incorporating issues of finance, management, partnership and participation as well as social and economic issues marks a widening of the understanding of sustainable development - previously thought of in terms of physical, capital, land and buildings related activity (DETR, 1998c: intro).

The emphasis on Agenda 21, which had motivated Mr Major to inflect a new direction to urban regeneration, seems to have lost its appeal and references to the famous Rio Summit are nowadays very scarce. However it is beyond doubt that current regeneration policies demonstrate a distance from the ideology of privatism and present integrated strategies, combining concerns for education and training, housing, unemployment, economic revitalisation, etc.

In July 1998, the deputy Prime Minister John Prescott confirmed that the SRB would be retained but reshaped so as to concentrate 80% of the resources in the most deprived areas. It was planned that fifty schemes would be running by 2002: at least one in each of the most deprived areas. The spinal components of the programme (partnerships and competitive bidding) would remain. It was indeed thought that

> SRB partnerships have proved effective at working "horizontally" across traditional departmental boundaries demonstrating what can be achieved through synergies with other spending programmes and through leverage of private investment (DETR, 1998b).

The new re-launched SRB was also to include a new emphasis on building the capacity of local partnerships to devise and implement regeneration initiatives.

In April 1999, the SRB administration passed to the Regional Development Agencies to allocate the budget in the context of their wider regional strategies.

Six years after its launch, the Single Regeneration Budget remains one of the main regeneration programmes. It has 'survived' the access to power of New Labour government and is now starting its seventh bidding round.

---

[8] This department was renamed Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) in June 2001. DTLR itself became the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in May 2002. The issues dealt with in this thesis have not been affected by these successive reshuffles as they took place after the research was carried out.

It is fair to say that the SRB has marked a number of improvements in the conduct of urban regeneration. Undoubtedly it promoted a holistic approach to regeneration with evident benefits of synergy being realised including improved co-ordination (especially between local and national policy), the removal of unnecessary duplication and improvements in projects design (Wilks-Heeg, 2000: 15). We will see below that despite these improvements some weaknesses remain.

New Deal for Communities

Launched in 1998, New Deal for Communities (NDC) is a neighbourhood-focused 'strategy to tackle multiple deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country' (DETR, 1999e) organised in the context of the Social Exclusion Unit's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (projects focus on areas which typically include between 1,000 and 4,000 households). NDC is also delivered by partnerships, which must address five key issues: worklessness and poor prospects; improving health; tackling crime; raising educational achievement; and housing and the physical environment. NDC funding is thus not attributed through competitive bidding but through an application process. Seventeen pathfinders were announced in 1998, followed by a second round of 22 in 1999; just under £2bn have been committed over the next ten years for these 39 partnerships which will not have follow-ups. The DETR is eager to emphasise that

> the key characteristics of the NDC are: community involvement and ownership; joined up thinking and solutions; action based on evidence about 'what works' and what doesn't; long term commitment to deliver real change; communities at the heart, in partnership with key agencies (DETR).

Because the New Deal for Communities concerns only 39 partnerships in Britain, which do not include the area that my case studies encompass, I will not develop the case of this particular programme further. However it is worth bearing in mind that the prominent themes put forward by New Labour as far as urban regeneration is concerned are at the top of the agenda of NDC. My interest will therefore focus more on the SRB as this scheme is on-going with further rounds to come.

This short presentation of New Labour's set of urban regeneration policies aimed at highlighting the differences and similarities between this government and the previous regime. I will conduct a full analysis of New Labour's urban regeneration policies below.

2. CURRENT URBAN REGENERATION POLICIES

2.1 Distanciation from property-led regeneration

As was said above, the term regeneration emerged in the 1970s referring to a particular type of approach to urban deprivation. This approach hinged on an ideological shift undergone under the Thatcher government, marked by privatism as the key to city revitalisation. Property-led development became a prominent strategy for urban regeneration and was mainly seen as an *alternative* to development by and through the public sector. The most spectacular example of this policy was the creation of the Urban Development Corporations. As Healey suggests (1991), a property-led focus is primarily concerned with overcoming supply-side constraints in local economies, especially the streamlining of the planning system, speeding up the process of land acquisition and assembly and utilising leverage planning to bring back previous 'unmarketable' sites into the land market. The leverage model is particularly premised on the utilisation of public subsidies to stimulate weak and / or declining property markets to create confidence in localities marked by large stretches of derelict land. 'The popularisation of a leverage approach to city revitalisation is closely related to a wider rhetoric which seeks to discredit public planning, while lauding the efficacy of the market' (Imrie & Thomas, 1992: 89). Indeed a large set of measures (statutory and fiscal) on local authorities forced a redirection of economic strategies where property was seen as a straightforward mechanism for attracting private funding. The main issue lay in the 'simplistic conceptualisations of the link between physical development and socio-economic change' (Imrie & Thomas, 1992: 90). Even though many argue that property development remains an essential dimension of an efficient regeneration policy (Brindley et al, 1989; Solesbury, 1990) especially as it facilitates investors' confidence, it appears evident that additional strategies and measures are indispensable for sustainable change. Thus it is beyond doubt that investment in basic infrastructure, in education and training must be part of regeneration packages. Moreover, property-led strategies have more often than not neglected the social and other needs of those living in the area to be 'regenerated'.

As we have seen above, New Labour has distanced itself from this restrictive approach to urban regeneration. Yet they have maintained one important aspect of urban regeneration policies as devised under Mr Major: competitive bidding. Thus the distanciation from a property-led strategy focused solely on the economic dimension of urban renewal has not, by any means, meant a reversal to post-war welfare interventionism. A somehow irreversible shift, in which the concept of individual responsibility is central, seems to have taken place across the social policy spectrum.

2.2 Competition

The competitive approach to the allocation of funding for regeneration projects has thus become a widely accepted strategy among policy makers.

This recent procedure comes partly from a recognition that urban policy is not only about the resolution of problems (whether these are economic disadvantage, physical obsolescence, racial unrest or social exclusion) but also that urban performance and the performance of the economy as a whole should be drawn into a positive and dynamic relationship (Stewart, 1996). It is also part of a wider orientation, most visible in the European urban policy which shifted its direction from urban decline to growth and competitiveness (Stewart, 1996). Completion of a Single Market 'presupposes that the area is organised in a manner which is compatible with decentralised competition and which encourages new business and employment creation and that, while the area is diversified, each individual part is competitive' (CEC, 1994). There is therefore a competitive paradigm at play in the application of urban policies.

> The competitiveness of cities (or urban areas) is seen as not only lying in its economic – and possibly spatial, social, environmental and cultural – relative advantage, but also in its political and administrative capacity to compete in the market of cities (Stewart, 1996: 21).

This allocation system highlights the pervasive aspiration to break away from a 'dependency-culture'. Moreover it clearly represents a shift towards the contractualisation of policy implementation.

Beyond the ideological drive at work behind this choice, there are also some particular practical issues and concerns raised by competition that are worth considering. First of all, the bids are judged according to a set of criteria, among which the establishment of efficient partnerships between local authorities, the private sector and the local community is of major importance. This aspect will be analysed further below. If competition has generally been seen as encouraging innovation, collaboration and partnerships, there are concerns over the overuse of this system, which would lead local authorities to have to enter more and more competitions for ever-decreasing rewards. Moreover the impact of competition for unsuccessful bidders tends to be a key issue. The interim evaluation of the SRB showed that out of 263 unsuccessful bids (out of 401 submitted) in round one, nearly two-third did not resubmit in any form. Nineteen per cent resubmitted and were successful in round two, eleven percent were discouraged from resubmitting at the outline stage and ten percent resubmitted at round two but were unsuccessful again (DETR, 1998: 5). Putting a bid

together is a long-term, costly, enterprise. If it has been shown that some partnerships go ahead with their projects without regeneration funds, most bids are simply abandoned. This has been seen by many as wasteful, not only incurring monetary costs for abortive work but also as destabilising in terms of self-confidence and 'partnership-building' (Mawson et al, 1995). Losers can thus lose more than an opportunity for funding.

Moreover the attribution of resources is conditional upon the delivery of agreed outputs. For that purpose the leverage capacity of the bid is crucial. Excessive reliance on public funds is a common reason for failure of the bid. This particular aspect raises concern about the difference between needs and potential. Suitable conditions for partnerships to be built vary greatly across the country; some areas do not have the organisational and structural (e.g. presence of a strong voluntary sector) capacities to bid effectively. Furthermore the ability to generate matching funding can prove a (dis)advantageous factor for getting funding. There is thus a concentrating effect as interdependent funding regimes engage in matching funding. This consolidates localities where there are multiple eligibilities, whilst other less eligible have disproportionately fewer opportunities to exercise leverage. Hence one recurrent concern hinges on the question of competition as a way to 'fairly' allocate resources. It is important to note that efforts have been made recently in this direction. Indeed the bidding guidance for Round 6 of SRB emphasises that 'nationally 80% of new SRB funding between 1999/2000 and 2001/2002 will go to support large comprehensive schemes in the most deprived areas. At least 50 new comprehensive schemes must be set up and running in the most deprived areas by the end of this period' (DETR, 2000). However the possible discrepancy between potential and needs and the cost effectiveness of unsuccessful bids are still major concerns, as the leverage capacity of the bid remains a major criterion for selection. This may engender competitive disadvantage for areas in which the social and economic fabric is marked by decades of dereliction and therefore present a reduced capacity to deliver. In this context, deprivation and social exclusion are increasingly seen not only as indicators of social injustice but also as obstacles to the achievement of economic success.

2.3 Partnerships

Another major criterion in the current attribution of funding is the capacity to establish efficient partnerships. As Parkinson noted 'partnership has become the vogue word in policy making' (1996: 13). This process firstly aimed at marking the return of local authorities as key players in urban regeneration, whilst maintaining the role of the private sector. When Heseltine presented his new idea, combining competition and partnership, he clearly summarised his inspiration

> ...when I speak of the need for a sense of partnership in our modern cities, it is today's equivalent of that Victorian sense of competitive drive linked with social obligation. Success and responsibility go hand in hand today just as they did a hundred years ago (Heseltine, 1991 quoted in Parkinson, 1996: 94).

This approach to managing the regeneration projects was trusted to induce greater innovation as well as overcoming the potential discrepancies between different actors' aims and goals. Constituting partnership would allow the combination of different visions and priorities and make them converge rather than diverge. However commentators have related the Conservative government's promotion of partnership to its wider political objective. They have thus interpreted this new structure as a way to reinforce the privatisation of urban policy (Lawless, 1991; Bailey, 1995; Hastings, 1996), mainly conducted through the promotion of 'enterprise culture' in urban regeneration (Deakin and Edwards quoted in Hastings, 1996).

Moreover, if partnerships were easy to establish in name, it proved more difficult to achieve partnerships in which all partners were fully involved at all stages and equally able to shape policy priorities (Mawson & Hall, 2000). Barriers to the full involvement of private and voluntary sector bodies quickly appeared, and most partnerships showed an imbalance in organisational capacity between these organisations and lead members, particularly local authorities (Mawson et al, 1995). The strongest concerns have been expressed about the involvement of the community and voluntary sectors. Their lack of experience of partnership, their limited financial and personnel resources, the short timescale, the low priority to the community and voluntary sector given by lead bidders all participated in the difficulties for this sector to be fully involved in partnership. They were most often co-opted as delivery agencies.

Another major problem pointed to regarding partnerships was the lack of mechanisms to ensure their accountability to their local community.

The New Labour government has fully endorsed the concept of partnership as the best means to implement their regeneration policy

> Regeneration programmes work through partnership and lever in substantial income from the private sector. SRB partnerships have proved effective at working horizontally across traditional Departmental boundaries. This integration promotes an approach

> that balances social, environmental and economic issues, in pursuit of sustainable development (DETR, 1999c).

The structures of partnerships have not essentially changed, it is therefore legitimate to argue that the same kind of criticisms apply. However although partnerships are consistently presented as a good tool against excessive bureaucracy, detailed analysis of some partnerships at work might very well question this type of assertion. A recent emphasis has been put on an increased involvement of the community in which regeneration projects take place. This is the dimension I would like to turn to now.

2.4 Community Involvement

I have shown in the first chapter that the use of the term community in social policy has been marked by strong ideological connotations, highlighting the issue of social exclusion and deprivation. This dimension is important to bear in mind when 'community involvement' in urban regeneration is tackled. Community involvement is a long-standing stumbling block in the history of urban regeneration. As mentioned earlier the lack of it was one of the fiercest criticisms against the infamous UDCs and since then every policy document has mentioned the necessity for the local residents to have some involvement in the decision making process. Moreover the late 1980s saw an acceleration of the process through which attributions of government resources were made according to pre-set performance criteria rather than need. As Hoggett (1997) explains, 'civic boosterism' was becoming a central aspect of local government strategy in urban areas and the idea of 'community governance' led to a competition between community and voluntary organisations to participate in the emerging partnerships between local governments and the local private sector.

As we saw earlier, the realisation that 'community involvement' was necessary to the efficiency of regeneration policy has been a long-standing process (Skeffington Report, 1969). In a good practice guide to urban regeneration published in 1988, the DoE reasserted that 'projects that have been influenced by local pressure are more likely to be appreciated by the local community' (1988: 12). The spirit of the time being such, it also reminded us that the underlying goal of creating confidence is to bring about the conditions and climate for private investment (DoE, 1988).

However it is really with the creation of the Single Regeneration Budget that 'community involvement' became an essential part of the regeneration process. We will therefore turn to a close reading of bidding guidance documents (as they are those which essentially frame the policy intentions) in order to see how this notion has evolved since the early 1990s.

The first SRB Round bidding guidance shows that the issue of community involvement was not yet a priority. The definition of possible partners is mostly vague, and still very much focused on the private sector. Point 6 of the Round 1 bidding guidance shows

> At the local level, there are many public and private partnerships, involving local authorities, TECs, businesses and others with a stake in regeneration which bring public and private resources to bear on the needs and priorities in a coherent and responsive way, taking full advantage of the talents and expertise of local communities (GOR, 1994: 4).

The amalgamation of local authority, TECs, businesses and the (significantly nebulous) 'others' points to the absent recognition of the essential difference between these agents. The different, sometimes divergent interests of these organisations have been overlooked. Even though point 12 of the guidance asserts that 'bids also aim to harness the talents and resources of the voluntary sector and volunteers and involve local communities' (GOR, 1994: 5), it remains on the level of recommendation rather than requirement and is sufficiently imprecise to be interpreted in many ways. As we have seen, the result has been that a small number of bids actually showed representation of the voluntary sector at strategic level, and that most organisations of that sector ended up, at best, delivery agents. The major shift from earlier, heavily criticised, regeneration projects, such as the UDCs, is the insistence that the 'planned outputs will be delivered ... to the members of the community it is intended to benefit' (GOR, 1994: 13). No risk was taken of being accused once more of offering forms of local regeneration that would by-pass locals. Finally, and we will see below how significant this is, the bidding guidance for Round 1 presents in its 'check list for successful bids' a question that bidders should answer clearly about Implementation and Management:

> Were the beneficiaries of the bid proposal and others with an interest e.g. local businesses, voluntary sector, community groups involved in working [the bid] up and how will they be kept involved and informed of progress throughout the life of the initiative? Will they have a continuing say in how money is spent? (GOR, 1994: 17).

Once again, local businesses, voluntary sector and community groups are put on the same level as being 'beneficiaries' (noticeably, the three categories are listed as replaceable). But more importantly the very question amalgamates being 'involved' and being 'informed' as equivalent processes.

This problematic approach to community involvement was rapidly rectified, as the bidding guidance for SRB Round 3, in 1996, clearly demonstrates. Thus point 6 of the guidance

points out that 'Bids should harness the talents and resources of the voluntary sector and volunteers and *involve local communities, both in the preparation and implementation of bids*' (GOR, 1996: 2. My emphasis). It is also stressed that

> Given their role in local regeneration and development, local authorities and TECs can be expected to play a central role but partnerships must include other relevant interests in the private and public sectors, *and* in local voluntary and community organisations, including ethnic minority and faith communities. The Government will ensure that there are true partnerships with real involvement of these groups, both at outline and at final bid stage and, if bids are successful, in their implementation (GOR, 1996: 4. My emphasis).

Thus the voluntary and community sectors have been separated out from the local businesses, and the emphasis on actual involvement is much stronger than previously. A certain awareness of the possibility of having certain groups as 'names on paper' rather than as actual partners is thus to be noticed. However the approach remains rather technical, focused on quantified outputs, competitiveness and wealth creation.

As was pointed out earlier, New Labour maintained most of the elements of the SRB designed by the previous regime. However some changes are noticeable, especially in the realm of community involvement. In the discussion paper published in 1997 *Regeneration: The Way Forward*, several important steps were made in this direction. First of all, the new emphasis on social exclusion and deprivation marked a shift in the focus for regeneration strategies. The recognition that deprivation had multiple roots led to an emphasis on outcomes as well as outputs as desirable results of regeneration. Moreover the dimension of 'capacity building' entered the rhetoric field of regeneration. Thus the notion that voluntary and community sectors can be hindered as effective partnerships because of the lack of experience was being officially taken into account.

> We recognise that all SRB schemes should be developed through a bottom-up approach with local partners and communities agreeing to tackle issues of local concern in a co-ordinated and effective fashion. Indeed the effective commitment of partnerships to community capacity building (especially at the outset) is a criterion for SRB support and Ministers would like to see a significant proportion of funding going to such projects (DETR: 1998b).

However laudable this direction, it is interesting to notice that there is little further description or explanation of what 'capacity building' consists of. The expression has become one of the

numerous seemingly self-explanatory jargonistic terms of regeneration, left open to the interpretation of the main actors. The potential for 'false' community involvement in regeneration projects was officially recognised as the Round 5 bidding guidance stated that

> It is expected that the community, including ethnic minority communities, the voluntary sector and faith communities will be part of the local partnership bidding for regeneration funds. This can be achieved through community representatives sitting on partnership boards and by creating representative structures to allow the community viewpoint to be heard. The mere existence of community representatives in partnerships is not enough, however, to ensure that the community has a significant say in decisions (GOR: 1998).

However, if the statement says what should not happen it does not identify clear means for avoiding it. As mentioned earlier, the obstacles hampering the voluntary and community groups from being fully involved were mainly related to their lack of experience in managerial situations. If 'capacity building' were not going in this direction, then 'community involvement' would not improve drastically. But without clear and compulsory incentives to make these particular steps, it is unlikely that well practised partners will accept losing months to train community members – whose interests are usually very different from their own – to enable them to participate fully in the process of bid preparation and implementation. A clear description of what is understood by capacity building is necessary for it ever to be achieved efficiently.

Thus if the rhetoric of community involvement has definitely seen a great shift in the recognition of its necessity, there are still persistent problems. It is important to bear in mind that the current regeneration programmes did not 'invent' the concept. From the 1970s there already were mentions of the benefits to be gained, especially in terms of sustainability – another important term under New Labour. Cochrane criticised this tendency in asserting that governments 'seem to use "community" as if it were an aerosol can, to be sprayed on to any social programme, giving it a more progressive and sympathetic cachet' (1986: 127). The problematic issue surrounding the rhetoric of community is thus not a novelty. Nevertheless, it seems much more difficult to formulate the modalities of the actual implementation of this 'community involvement' with clarity.

As Skelcher pointed out, the fact that 'involvement' has become an essential element of any discussion about best practice in policy or service review or development had the result that

> involvement (...) has a symbolic value over its actual practical impact. As a result, those using this new language may take for granted that the meaning and practical implications of the concept are clear and understood

> by all parties. This is unlikely, since groups and individuals will tend to read into the concept and meaning with accord with their particular interest (1993: 14).

This particular issue is mainly linked to the difficulty in delineating *who* actually constitutes the community and, in that framework, which are the actors whose involvement is legitimate. All governments' guidelines, even the most recent ones, tend to be persistently blurred in that respect. We have seen that community involvement is mainly equated with the involvement of the private sector, the community and voluntary organisations and to a certain (and very controversial) extent faith communities. It is thus assumed that voluntary and community organisations constitute a legitimate and representative sample of the local population who will make up the 'beneficiaries' of the regeneration programmes. This however does not account for the numerous situations where this does not prove a valid presumption: areas where this kind of organisation does not exist; where organisations only represent the interests of a minority; where a whole part of the population's interests remain underrepresented (if at all); where conflicts between organisations are so strong that they become an obstacle to collaboration; etc. This tendency may lead to the formation of groups claiming to represent the 'community', as scarce funds act as an impetus to group formation. But the danger remains that such groups may become too closely identified with particular programmes and their success and longevity may become dependent on those programmes. It can even create a 'community' born out of the opportunity of attracting funds. Indeed we have seen in the first chapter that New Labour (and previous regimes taking 'community' as an underpinning element of urban policies) tends to take as a premise that any locality is a community, either latent or manifest. Either the locality is already aware that it is a community or it needs to discover it. We have seen how deeply problematic this approach is.

Moreover, as was emphasised in chapter one, the concept of community tends to overlook that it most often 'shelters a multitude of varying, competing and often conflicting interests' (Burns et al, 1994: 224). Thus the assumption that an area is characterised by a population with identical problems, interests and approach to resolve these problems is a persistent and flawed one. Local partnerships are highly likely to become arenas for conflicts between partners with inter - and intra - community disputes over the distribution of resources.

Arnstein had already pointed to this stumbling block in 1969 by emphasising that the powerless and the powerful are heterogeneous blocs with 'a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests and splintered subgroups' (1969, quoted in Atkinson & Cope, 1997: 204).

Indeed it is of major importance to re-establish a fundamental dimension of community involvement: it is about sharing power. We have seen in the first chapter that community is a concept inherently saturated with power, therefore the issue of community involvement can only be a problematic one. Not only does it overlook the internal heterogeneity of 'community' but it tends to overlook also the strong power struggles that are at work both internally and as far as the relation with the outside is concerned. In the context of policymaking and implementation, involvement implies a new relationship between the local service agency and individuals or groups in the community to be regenerated.

> It involves inviting, supporting and encouraging people from outside the agency to have a say in determining which services are provided in what ways, when and to whom (Skelcher, 1993: 13).

Arnstein also clearly explained that

> ...citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future (1969, quoted in Atkinson & Cope, 1997: 216).

It is therefore not surprising that the rhetoric of community involvement has been seen to get closer and closer to that of empowerment. However it is only recently that the relation between the two notions has been formulated politically. New Labour's efforts in that direction marked the recognition of the deep implications of community involvement.

Nevertheless the leap between rhetoric and practice remains as wide as ever. As was emphasised by Atkinson and Cope 'understanding community participation requires an understanding of power relations between a state agency and "its publics"' (1997: 207). Many have discussed the different forms that involvement and empowerment can take. 'Ladders of citizen participation', recognising the different gradations of citizen participation, have been produced (Arnstein, 1967; Burns et al, 1994). Even though these ladders do simplify a complex reality, they reveal the wide-ranging scope of possibilities behind the 'community involvement' rhetoric.

CITIZENS CONTROL
12. Independent control
11. Entrusted control
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
10. Delegated control
9. Partnerships
8. Limited decentralised decision making
7. Effective advisory boards
6. Genuine consultation
5. High-quality information

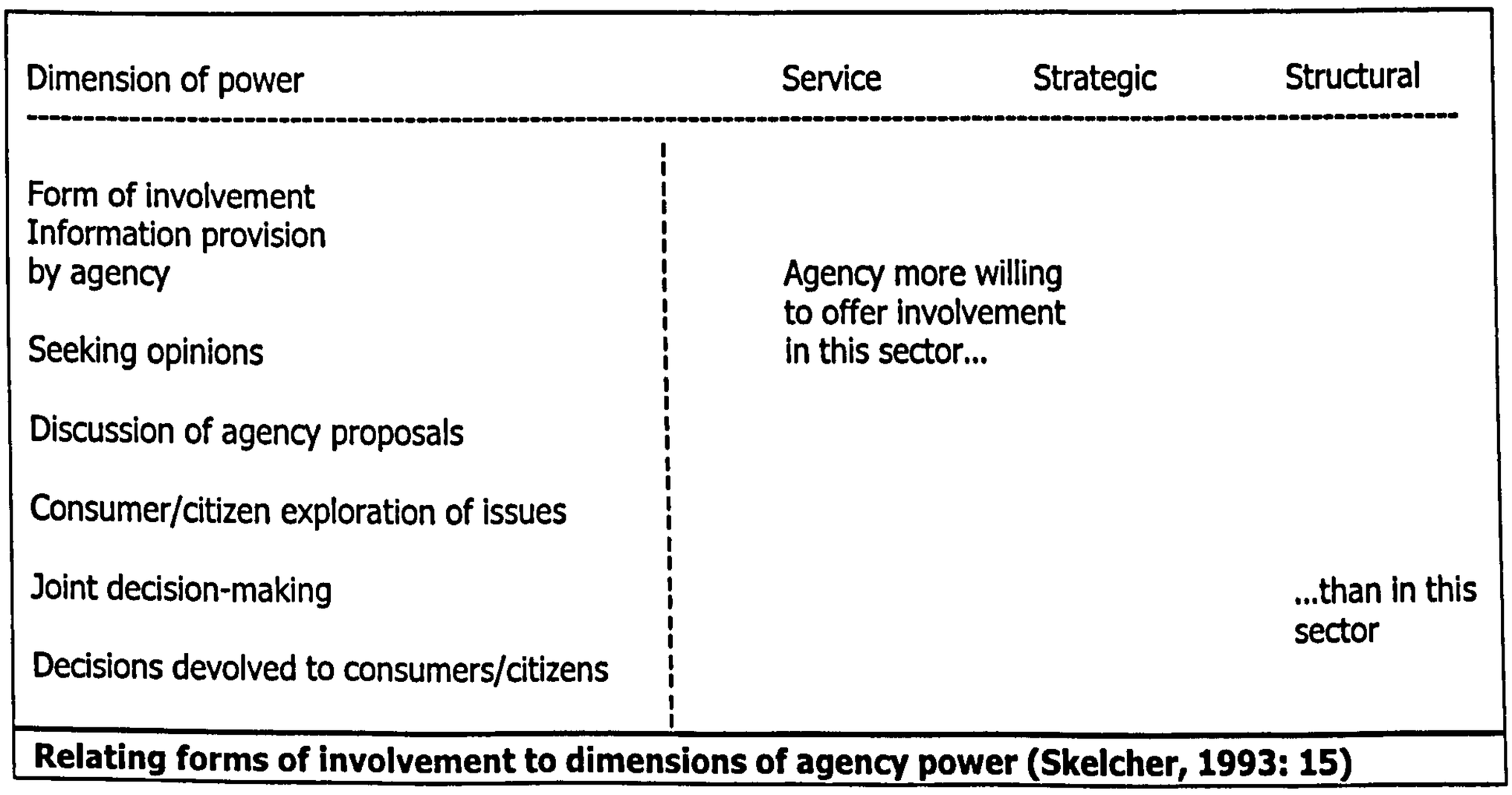
CITIZEN NON-PARTICIPATION
4. Customer care
3. Poor information
2. Cynical consultation
1. Civic hype

Burns, Hambleton and Hoggett's ladder of citizen empowerment (1994: 162)

Furthermore understanding community involvement also requires an understanding of the agency's power structure. Skelcher (1993) reminds us that the agency's power can be considered at three levels: service power (determining access to services at the point of delivery), strategic power (power to define and specify service, including policy, level of resources, degree of consumer choice etc) and structural power (power to decide which issues are important and who has access to decision-making, in what ways and with what role). Thus

> involvement becomes more complex as the nature of the relationship moves from service power issues through strategic to structural power issues since this takes the participants into a more political, value-ridden environment and increasingly confronts the underlying interests of the agency (1993: 15).

The form of involvement (as exemplified in the 'ladder of empowerment') thus needs to be combined with the dimension of power in which the public is engaged to evaluate the actual level and nature of 'community involvement'.



Relating forms of involvement to dimensions of agency power (Skelcher, 1993: 15)

As Skelcher emphasised

> since involvement is an essentially political relationship there may be a tendency for agencies to prefer types of involvement which occur to the left

> of the diagonal [in the figure above] since this reserves the key areas of decision to themselves (Skelcher, 1993: 15).

Indeed community involvement and empowerment are concerned with an agenda which is 'potentially threatening to the hierarchies, routines and negotiated order of the organisation' (Skelcher, 1993: 13). This potentially threatening dimension of community involvement explains the different gradations of the ladder seen above. The rhetoric of the necessity of involving the beneficiaries of a regeneration programme thus hits many barriers in its implementation. The 'ladder of citizen empowerment' shows some techniques used to approach the required involvement without entering the bottom right of the diagonal shown in the figure above (e.g. consultations, limited dissemination of information, advisory boards without power in decision-making). Genuine involvement also requires involvement at all stages of the policy process: problem definition, agenda-setting, goal-setting, policy appraisal, policy implementation, policy review, policy succession and policy termination (Atkinson & Cope, 1994: 8). This cannot be achieved without genuine capacity building, which further challenges the power of politicians, professionals and bureaucrats. Undoubtedly these processes are time-consuming and expensive, thereby slowing up development. But failure to integrate people's perceptions and needs into regeneration schemes will, as they have for decades, undermine the legitimacy of the projects and, in the long-term, their efficiency. However monitoring community involvement remains an extremely challenging exercise. Agencies have developed techniques to carry out community involvement 'on paper' rather than genuinely. As Boaden et al observed

> ... though there have been great moves towards public involvement (...) little has been achieved by way of a fundamental shift in power... In the end, élite perspectives have won out, and participation has served the purposes of building up a consensus for the proposals of those in power, thereby legitimating them (1982, quoted in Atkinson & Cope, 1997: 220).

The imbalance of power resources between different stakeholders needs to be redressed to overcome a symbolic community involvement to achieve genuine, effective involvement. Community involvement cannot be seen as a panacea that would resolve all problems. It does create new problems as stakeholders compete and collaborate with each other to reach their goals. There are conflicts over who constitutes and represents the 'community' and what comprises its needs. However without this dimension, the efficiency of regeneration will be forever hindered.

CONCLUSION

The historical development of urban policies has shown how urban regeneration has evolved in Britain, both in its conceptualisation and its implementation. The legacy of the ideological approach taken by the Conservative government and especially Mrs Thatcher's, focusing on property-led, and economic regeneration and the baneful effects that this doctrine has engendered, have paved the way for a more integrated approach to urban regeneration. However some elements devised under the Conservatives (e.g. competitive bidding, partnerships) remain fundamentals of current urban regeneration suggesting that the ideological leap might not be as wide as insinuated in the official discourse. Moreover the alienation of local people in some of the most prominent urban regeneration schemes developed under the Conservative brought the notion of 'community' to a central place in the rhetoric of urban regeneration. This has been exacerbated with the access to power of New Labour, under whom, as we have seen in the first chapter, the concept of community has become an underpinning element of political rhetoric. In the context of urban regeneration policies this points to issues, which can potentially affect deeply the localities in which the programmes are being implemented.

The urban regeneration policies thus provide a strong framework for local initiatives and projects to be implemented and within this framework, the concept of community plays an instrumental role. This is due to the inherent complexities of the concept, which we have examined in the first chapter, but also to the other notions, which underpin urban regeneration projects. It is indeed the combination of the numerous elements, among which that of community is fundamental, which provides the rigid structure in which local projects are being carried out. Urban regeneration currently represents a formidable pool of resources for localities, and it is therefore unavoidable that bidders adapt to the requirements imposed on them to access funds. Because of the nature of the concept of community, which is intrinsically malleable and unfixed, yet subject to power struggles, the framework offered by urban regeneration policies, at the centre of which community lies, can impact on the 'community(ies)' which the programmes are supposed to involve. The opportunities at stake being considerable, power struggles regarding who is the community, how and why representatives should be involved are likely to emerge in a will to access the resources made available.

In order to establish the required framework for the investigation, we will now attempt to carry out a similar analysis of cultural policies in Britain.

CHAPTER 3 - CULTURAL POLICY IN BRITAIN

INTRODUCTION

Cultural policy is a problematic area of the social policy realm, mainly for definitional reasons. As Williams famously showed, the term 'culture' is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language (1983: 76) and refers to a multitude of meanings. Space does not permit an extensive discussion of the history of the word, but it is worth bearing in mind that there are generally two main definitions, which tend to be in tension: culture as the product of intellectual and artistic activity, and culture as a whole way of life. The idea of cultural policy in Britain has long related primarily to the first sense. However the instability of the meaning of the word led to a situation for cultural policy where, in Bennett's words

> The parameters are never fixed, which means that cultural policy is always questioning and re-questioning its own terms of reference. A debate about cultural policy quickly becomes a debate about values (1995: 201).

This chapter will attempt to examine the purpose of state intervention in the arts domain by considering some of the role(s) attributed to arts and culture at different periods. I will particularly focus on two specific dimensions of cultural policy: the Community arts movement, which emerged in the late 1960s, and the recent convergence between arts and culture and urban regeneration. We will see how Community artists' commitment to social and political change opened new avenues in terms of the understanding of the role that arts can play in society, especially regarding the relation between artist and audience, and the traditional hierarchy between High and Popular Arts. The legacy of this movement, which withered away in the late 1980s, is still to be felt in the current era of a managerial approach to arts and culture, but major aspects of its ideology have undoubtedly disappeared. Since the 1980s a marketing reasoning has marked cultural policy and has allowed the convergence of arts and culture with urban regeneration.

This chapter will attempt to draw a historical account of this association, its justifications and limitations and aims at exploring how the evolving relations between the arts, community and regeneration in the UK come across through the cultural policy of this country since 1945. My aim is not to draw an exhaustive picture of cultural policy and arts subsidies since 1945. Rather I want to emphasise underlying currents in the rationalisation of cultural policy and

support of culture as a way of understanding better the value attributed to arts and culture in Britain as well as identifying potential trends towards the utilisation of arts and culture for instrumental purposes.

1. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

1.1 The first steps

As McGuigan reminds us, state intervention and public subsidy of culture in Britain are 'a complex mosaic of elements that have emerged and become sedimented together over the past century and a half' (1996: 54).

The British system is famous not only for its lesser scale compared to French or German equivalents but also for its characteristic intricacies (McGuigan, 1996). Significantly it was only in 1992 that the first Department of State devoted to the Arts, led by a minister of Cabinet rank responsible for the whole field, was set up.

First of all, it is important to bear in mind that the justification for subsidies of the arts and culture was based on the persistent and grounding assumption that the arts cannot exist commercially (Pick, 1988: ix). As Pick humorously adds 'moreover you can tell how decent and civilised a government is by the size of its annual grant to the arts world' (1988: ix). This assumption that the arts are not viable in a purely commercial market and that the existence of some art forms or cultural institutions depends purely on state subsidies has far reaching consequences and can also play a fundamental role in *defining* arts (Pick, 1988: ix): the resilient supposition that market and commercial success lead to an entry into the realm of 'industry', which is essentially different from the 'arts world', still fuels raging debates in the cultural field (even though we will see that recent policy developments are affecting this state of affairs).

However public subsidy for art and culture has not been solely rationalised on the ground of market failure. Pick (1988) and McGuigan (1996) demonstrate that culture subsidisation in the 19th Century truly was a matter of social control in a radically changing society. Industrialisation not only deeply altered people's ways of approaching leisure but also gave a new dimension to the arts: now it 'belonged to your elders and betters, something for the well educated and well-to-do... Art was now a judgemental term and it was a metropolitan élite which made the judgements' (Pick, 1988: 36). Subsidising institutions such as museums, galleries or libraries in the 19th Century was therefore very much fuelled by the necessity to educate the masses and keep tight social control. As a matter of fact the

Reithian vision for the British Broadcasting Corporation established in 1922 encapsulates this will to cultivate the populace.

The rationalisation of state intervention in the cultural domain evolved in the post war years. If the enculturation of the masses was still a fundamental aspect of cultural policy, national prestige had also become an essential legitimating dimension (McGuigan, 1996). This was strikingly illustrated in July 1945 when John Maynard Keynes founded the Arts Council to succeed the temporary wartime Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA). The institution developed a funding policy of national and international prestige, which served, as McGuigan puts it, 'the tastes not so much of a cultivated mass but of a metropolitan elite' (1996: 57). One of the initiatives that most clearly exemplifies this perspective was the transformation of the opera house in Covent Garden into a centre of excellence of international reputation. As Keynes himself unequivocally asserted 'It is our business to make London a great artistic metropolis, a place to visit and to wonder at' (1945, quoted in Hewison, 1995: 44). Overall the 'key themes in post war cultural policies and politics [were] Anti Americanism and the promotion of a conservative image of English identity' (Hewison, 1995: 45)

Thus, in 1959, *Leisure for living*, a policy document published by the Labour Party clearly asserted that 'the main concern of those who have public money to spend on music must be with the sort of music that is not usually regarded as popular' (quoted in Mulgan & Worpole, 1986: 28).

The late 1960s marked a substantial change in the vision behind cultural policy. Under Harold Wilson's government the Arts Council grant trebled over five years, and Regional Arts Associations were given more prominence to start a process of balancing out the gigantic disproportion of subsidies between London and the rest of the country and many arts centres and cultural institutions were built in Wales, Scotland and the English regions. The notion of 'access' had entered cultural policy. However this noble notion was not without producing controversies and dissent among both artists and funders, and even more acutely between the two. The influential Redcliffe-Maud Report, published by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1976, was the epitome of a controversial approach to state subsidy of the art. Analysing the justifications and modalities of public support to be given to the arts, it produced a model for the ideal distribution for public patronage. At the centre would be those in possession of 'genius', then in expanding concentric circles from this core would be those with 'talent', then the 'active amateurs', then finally the 'audience'. Each of these groups should be given the opportunity to 'progress' to a 'higher standard'. This flat model was then transformed into a pyramid

> with rare creative genius at the top and the base gradually becoming broader and broader year by year. Our purpose as patrons, therefore, must include the hope that individuals in the intermediate circles graduate upward as their experience widens and their discrimination grows (Redcliffe-Maud, 1976: 22).

1.2 The Community Arts movement

The rejection of this highly elitist vision of art and culture, centred on the solitary artist genius, was one of the sources of emergence of the Community arts movement, which took root in the 1960s. The epoch was marked by a growing concern for the separation of art and artists from the rest of the society and for the restrictions deemed to be inherent in traditional social codes and structures. Community arts thus questioned the legitimacy of a cultural policy based solely on a widening access to traditional arts and went on to question the existing structure of art production as a whole. Thus in a controversial book published in 1978 Su Braden summarised a widespread conviction when she asserted

> ... before any progress can be made towards making the arts *really* socially relevant in the complex society of the late 1970s, before we can even talk about 'community arts' ... it must be understood that the so-called cultural *heritage* which made Europe great - the Bachs and Beethovens, the Shakespeares and Dantes, the Constables and Titians - is no longer communicating anything to the vast majority of Europe's population; that the relevance of even artistic forms which were widely popular at the time of their creation are now only easily accessible to those already convinced that such culture is their heritage. It is not that these cultural forms are "above people's heads" but that it is a bourgeois culture and therefore only immediately meaningful to that group. The great artistic deception of the twentieth century has been to insist to *all* people that is was their culture (1978: 26. Emphasis in original).

Reflecting on the Community Arts movement in an edited volume published in 1995 by the Artist Newsletter, Malcolm Dickson reaffirmed

> The institutions of the art world are built upon and are riddled with class bigotry, a prejudice often reciprocated. This duality becomes a situation of dominance and subordination where those in power can materially validate certain art forms according to subsidy whilst devaluing others by denying it (Dickson, 1995:10).

The emergent movement in the late 1960s was fuelled by the world-wide upsurge of radical activities of that time which saw an explosion of innovative, locally-based political campaigning. With the end of social consensus as a background, the context was very much of street politics and community activism, which grew as part of the struggle for an alternative society and encompassed a wide range of issues. As a matter of fact, community activists rapidly discovered the extent to which their campaigns could be made more effective by the injection of some creative, artistic elements. An active Community Artist at the time Carol de Jongh explains

> *We were all very involved in anti Vietnam War demonstrations, feminist struggles, etc. As visual artists, we started designing banners, posters, etc and realised that there was a great potential for art to be used towards the social and political transformation we wanted to see being carried out. It started from there really. This associated with our frustration of a very rigid, elitist art world brought us to get into Community Arts*[9].

Thus Community arts seems to have been

> woven from three separate strands [:]... the passionate interest in creating new and liberating forms of expression, ... the movement by groups of fine artists out of the galleries and into the streets, ... [and] the emergence of a new kind of political activists who believed that creativity was an essential tool in any kind of radical struggle (Kelly, 1984: 47).

The movement's political claim to reach social change and affect social policies through new art practice was thus based on a critical use and development of traditional art forms encompassing a theorisation of the relation artist/audience, a reworking of the traditional distinctions between professional and amateurs and an emphasis on the importance of collaboration and communal ownership.

However Community Arts remained a persistently nebulous notion. From its beginnings in the late 1960s, it was a movement loosely based on the retrospective recognition of the similarities of aim and method in the work of its founders. There was no manifesto, no official proclamation. The definition proposed by an Arts Council Report in 1974 illustrates this imprecision

---

[9] Interview with Carol de Jongh, former Community Artist (visual arts). 25/02/98

> Community artists are not distinguishable by the techniques they use, although some are especially suited to their purposes, but by their attitude towards the place of their activities in the life of society (Arts Council, 1974: 6).

The critique developed by those artists brought them to devote their work mainly to working-class groups and deprived areas. Community artists insisted that popular culture had been denied by the élite. The re-appropriation by the working class of their own culture would be achieved by 'empowering people through participation in the creative process' (Morgan, 1995: 18) resulting in a culture 'of the people' rather than 'for the people' (GLC, 1982: 1). This political choice logically led Community Artists to collaborate with trade unions in the organisation of participative projects, in all art forms, from visual arts to performing arts and theatre[10].

Despite its lack of a unified theoretical stance, the movement had taken sufficient significance to be examined by the Arts Council with regards to funding and, in 1974, Professor Baldry was nominated Chair of a working party in charge of investigating the legitimacy of such a direction. In April 1975, the first Community Arts Committee was established for an initial two-year period as the outcome of the Baldry Report. The committee's budget for the first year was of £176,000 and was attributed to 57 projects; it came up to £350,000 the second year to be allocated to 75 projects (which represented less than 1% of the Arts Council's total budget in 1976/77). Exactly at the same time, a lobby group/trades union/practitioners network, the Association of Community Artists (ACA), was founded and became an important body for representing this highly heterogeneous movement. The ACA was entirely made of Community arts practitioners, essentially focused on grassroot work with mostly working-class groups or other sections of society seen as having been hitherto deprived of cultural expression. The integration of Community Arts and the ACA within the Arts Council represented a symbolic effort to reduce the gap between an institution dominated by 'the Great and the Good' – as the members had been nicknamed – and the collectivist and hedonist tendencies at work in society. In 1970 none of the appointees of the Arts Council were of a working class origin, only two were below the age of forty and only a quarter of them had earned their living as artists (Hewison, 1995: 140).

Despite this cultural gap, an Evaluation Working Party, established at the end of a two-year trial period set up by the Arts Council for the Community Arts Committee, pronounced the experiment a success, hence recommending its continuation on a permanent basis. The

---

[10] Interview with John Hoyland, former Community Artist (theatre) and art critic for the Guardian. 03/03/98

report stressed that 'one of the aims of Community Arts is to stimulate people to an active concern for the needs and aspirations of the community of which they form part' (1977: 6).

However many felt that there was a confusion of aims. The same – and otherwise sympathetic to the aims and methods of Community Artists - report criticised some projects on the basis that 'on occasions, we have seen a number of activities which appeared to amount to no more than admirable social activity' (Arts Council, 1977: 17). Despite the official recognition and validation produced by the attribution of funding from Arts Council, the movement undoubtedly sent a shock wave into the institutional understanding of what the role, function and status of art was to be in society. The essentially political nature of the movement was the real stumbling block for many of those who were to set out cultural policy. The then Minister for the Arts, Lord Donaldson, expressed his uneasiness with the aims and goals of the movement by redefining what he saw their true objectives should be:

> The arts are unlikely ever to be of major political status in this country... The view that the Arts Council has been 'elitist' needs careful definition. The practice of the arts is and must be 'elitist' - it is the racehorse business. But appreciation should not be elitist. In this country, it often has been and that is bad. We need both the physical opportunities and the background education. On the one hand we must always go for the best. But there is another aspect which is in a sense what I was saying about community arts, where we are not so much aiming at artistic experience as at participation, which is why community arts are important (Art Monthly, December 1976).

The methods used by Community artists were as varied as the forms and projects produced. However some principles directly resulting from the underlying values of the movement commonly guided the undertaking of the projects. Thus the essential collaborative dimension of all the projects to be undertaken relied on an active participation of the community involved. The process of consultation was also a fundamental aspect. As such it was understood that the developmental progression of the participants was more valuable than an actual product.

> [Community arts] ideology concerned the overriding importance of "process" in the practice of community arts, as against concerns for products, performances or – as some critics have cuttingly argued - pleasure (Mulgan & Worpole, 1986: 85).

In a context of art funding based mainly on the pursuit of excellence, major resistance could only be expected from this particular outlook. The aims set out by Community artists meant

that long-term investment was needed to enable the production of notable results, especially in terms of the quality of the art produced and the attainment of the desired excellence. Most of the funds were nonetheless delivered on a short or mid-term basis, which proved inadequate to the type of projects Community arts were about (Morgan, 1995). This line of criticism grew to such an extent that when invited to present a project, which fitted the criteria of Community Arts, artist Stephen Szczelkun warned 'I am unwilling to accept the label "Community Arts". This term isolates work from the arena of serious critique of aesthetic values' (in Dickson, 1995: 69), showing through this statement a widely shared concern.

Moreover some opponents saw community arts as a middle-class management and policing intervention into working-class culture. Community artists were accused of despising the very people they pretended to help by offering them a sort of

> reverse snobbery which says - that kind of thing (opera, Shakespeare, ballet, symphonic music) is not for you. Here is *your* kind of thing, a nice bit of bold, communitarian, simplified *agitprop* activity (Hoggart, 1979: 400. Emphasis in original).

It would be deceptive to focus solely on the funding policy of the Arts Council as numerous institutions participated in the subsidisation of Community Arts projects. Thus the Community Arts Evaluation Working Group demonstrated in its report that Local Authorities played a fundamental role in funding Community Arts projects. Even though general figures are difficult to obtain, especially since many local authorities provided in-aid support rather than financial and/or did fund such projects without necessarily 'labelling' them, a vast majority of local authorities did organise or supported the organisation of numerous festivals, workshops and residencies which were essentially based on Community Arts methodologies and principles. Furthermore charitable foundations such as the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust, the Peter Moores Trust all provided grant-in-aid to Community Arts projects. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation thus awarded approximately £100,000 during 1975 alone, and sustained its commitment until the late 1980s. Moreover, and this will be analysed in more detail below, the Home Office's Urban Aid Programme was involved in subsidising projects which included Community Arts.

The access to power by Mrs Thatcher's government in 1979 marked the beginning of the movement's disappearance. As I will show later the ideology held by Mrs Thatcher represented almost an antithesis to cultural policy as it had been carried out over the previous decade and especially to the principles developed and believed in by Community Artists. As most of the institutions which were sources of support for the movement (e.g.

local authorities, trade unions, etc) also came under the government attacks, it soon found itself deprived of means of survival. The process of 'eviction' of the movement began with the devolution of Community Arts matters to Regional Arts Associations in 1979, a decision that many Community Artists had fiercely opposed (as mentioned in the Community Arts Evaluation Working Group report) on the ground that most RAAs were clearly less sympathetic to the movement than the Arts Council (1977: 64). Progressively, specific 'Community Arts Committees' disappeared as the practice was allegedly being integrated into the other panels. Kelly suggests also that the persistent lack of a unified theoretical perspective was a key factor in the withering away of the movement, as it prevented an organised resistance from the attacks of institutions which were 'fundamentally opposed to the essence of Community arts as it had been set out' (Kelly, 1984: 56).

> Community artists have failed to develop a consistent set of definitions for their activities, with the result that the movement has staggered drunkenly from one direction to another. In effect, the policies of funding agencies have determined who was and who was not perceived as a community artist (Kelly, 1984: 57).

Many Community artists found themselves in a situation where their goals began to be subtly shifted within the Arts Council. Thus the emphasis on the educational benefits of their work, which had not been seen as the underpinning dimension of the projects, was greatly enhanced, whilst the political element of this essentially militant movement was diluted.

1.3 The role of the Greater London Council

In this context the Greater London Council (GLC) played a fundamental role in putting back the principles held by Community Arts temporarily at the forefront of cultural policy. Like many other large metropolitan local authorities, the GLC had come under Labour control in 1981, at a point where the central government was suffering deep unpopularity. These authorities led a straightforward political and ideological battle against the central government, in an effort to preserve control of local responsibility for the populations they represented. Even though the arts hardly featured in the Labour manifesto published by the GLC prior to the election, by the mid-1980s they 'were seen as the leading edge of a radical social and economic agenda' (Hewison, 1995: 238), with a budget reaching over £20m in 1984. The decline of the traditional working-class constituency had led Ken Livingstone and his Labour team to address new electorates: Black and Asian British, libertarian middle-class and emergent gay and lesbian pressure groups. A cultural policy directed at these groups became an alternative form of mobilisation and communication. The Arts and Recreation Committee, was set up in 1981 and carried out a cultural policy based on an explicitly socialist agenda. Tony Banks, the chairman of the Committee, unequivocally asserted in 1981

'we could, in other words, use the arts as a medium for a political message' (quoted in Hewison, 1995: 238). This was achieved by organising events such as the Peace Year in 1983 or London Against Racism in 1984, in which the arts were being given a prominent place. Subsidy of conventional institutions, such as the National Theatre or the English National Opera, was maintained and some 'radical' decisions were made regarding some of them. Thus the implementation of an 'open foyer' policy in the Royal Festival Hall caused great surprise within the arts establishment but attracted more than a million visitors in its year, and significantly increased the attendance in concert halls.

In 1982 the establishment of a Community Arts Sub-Committee – side by side with an Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee and a Sport Sub-Committee – strikingly reasserted the willingness to use the arts as a means of resistance to the central government's ideology by putting forward a socialist agenda and as way of empowering disenfranchised groups (GLC, 1982). On a practical level, it also provided a strong and steady source of financial and in-aid support for Community arts projects: throughout the five years of its existence the Sub-Committee delivered over £5.2m to more than 300 projects.

One of the significant positions taken by the Community Arts Sub-Committee was to emphasise the notion of communities *of interest*, a resolution in line with the overall cultural policy set out by the GLC. Thus it was decided that four priority social groups would see their cultural need and interests addressed in priority: the unemployed, youth subcultures (especially girls), women's groups, gay men's groups and the elderly. This prioritisation of social groups in need of funding was a radical reversal of traditional arts policies, usually more concerned with the financial needs of the art form or institution than reaching audiences (Mulgan & Worpole, 1986: 75).

The abolition by Mrs Thatcher of the GLC – and of all metropolitan councils - in 1986 symbolically marked the end of a strong source of alternative power. It also proved disastrous for hundreds of organisations because of the major contribution they had made to the increase in local authority arts spending. The Arts Council itself evaluated the total expenditure of these authorities at forty-six million pounds a year. It also marked the end of Community Arts, even though many groups outlived the 'revolution'. However it is difficult to trace back precisely the development (or rather the withering away) of Community Arts since 'no detailed consideration of arts in the community has been undertaken since community arts were devolved from the Arts Council to Regional Arts Association [in 1979]' (CDF, 1992: ix).

Despite the undeniable weight that Community Arts secured within the arts world over the decade and a half during which it was at its strongest, it failed to profoundly transform traditional visions and understanding of such core topics as the definition of what constitutes arts and what its role should be and, consequently, the rationalisation of arts subsidies. Thus in 1985 in a report published by the GLC, it was remarkable that the terms of these debates had remained unchanged: the tensions between elitist and popular culture, between professionalism and amateurism in the arts world, between the problematic notion of excellence and that of empowerment were all discussed along the same lines as they had been during the previous twenty years (GLC: 1985). However it would be gratuitous to state that the twenty years long movement disappeared unnoticed, as the analysis of its influence in terms of practice will demonstrate later in this chapter. A number of Community Arts organisations and projects are still active in the UK, even though the term has commonly been replaced by 'Arts in the Community'. This expression marks the withering away of the militant Community Arts movement and refers to a wider encompassing set of projects including outreach missions by museums, galleries, theatre companies; the contribution of artists to health and social services, to working with youth, the elderly and those with disabilities, etc. The in-depth enquiry carried out by the Community Development Foundation in 1992 provided an interesting, if extensive, definition of this long-rooted movement:

> Arts in the Community are concerned with the social impact and role of the arts as well as with creation and appreciation. They are arts plus social concern, combining professional artistic standards with additional criteria of social excellence (CDF, 1992: 1).

The investigation powerfully demonstrated the extent to which Arts in the Community had become a widespread set of activities, reaching millions every year throughout the country via a variety of projects (CDF, 1992). The contemporary situation of arts and the community will be returned to later.

1.4 Mrs Thatcher and the advent of a new ideological regime

The powerful ideological stance taken by Mrs Thatcher's government based on market reasoning and monetarism went beyond the mere neutralization of political sources of resistance and influenced greatly cultural policies in the 1980s. Indeed Mrs Thatcher had set out to introduce no less than cultural change, moving away from 'dependency culture' towards 'enterprise culture'. As the political historian David Marquand analysed

> Thatcherism was born of the sense of despair, almost a panic, which a generation of apparent national decline had provoked in a certain section of the political class. Its central purpose was to make Britain

> great again; since the heyday of market liberalism had coincided with the heyday of the British Empire, it assumed that market liberalism was the key to greatness (quoted in Hewison, 1995: 211).

At the heart of the 'New beginning' for Britain (as Mrs Thatcher herself had promised on her election) were the notions of individualism – rooted in the freedom of the market - and a strong state. The combination of these two powerful, if paradoxical, concepts made any centre of opposition enemies of the new regime. This encompassed local democracy, as the metropolitan county councils would soon understand, or any institutions derived from the collectivist years, especially trade unions.

Moreover the emphasis on entrepreneurialism and economic individualism, the attacks on the 'permissive society', associated with the newly acclaimed values of law and order, traditional family and patriotism swept aside the 1960s and 1970s notions of community, collectivity and hedonism. This was famously encapsulated in Mrs Thatcher's now famous statement 'There is no such a thing as society. There are only individual men and women and there are families'. This new ideology did not only reject collectivism, it also denied the cultural diversity and the philosophy of hedonism that the 1970s social movements had forcefully expressed and defended. In this new political context where the market was to be the genuine source not only of economic recovery, but also of a re-found British identity, cultural policy could only take a radically new direction, marked by the authoritarian interventionism of the government, the enlargement of the private sector's role and the diminution of that of the public sector.

Mrs Thatcher, whose personal influence was undeniable in the running of the country, was not inclined to large subsidies of the arts. She clearly expressed her position in her memoirs

> I was not convinced that the state should play Maecenas. Artistic talent – let alone artistic genius – is unplanned, unpredictable, eccentrically individual. Regimented, subsidised, owned and determined by the state it withers. Moreover the "state" in these cases comes to mean the vested interests in the arts lobby. I wanted to see the private sector raising more money and bringing business acumen and efficiency to bear on the administration of cultural administrations (1993: 632).

The prospect of the arts lobby's influence must have been very worrying indeed for the new government, and its neutralisation thought necessary, as it soon started a series of accommodating appointments in the Arts Council. Thus in 1981, the Conservative Party's

Treasurer, Alistair McAlpine, became an appointee, whilst the same year Richard Hoggart's membership was significantly not renewed. In 1982 the attribution of Chairmanship to William Rees-Mogg illustrated even more clearly the politicisation of the institution. Under his direction, the privatisation of arts subsidies, especially through arts sponsorship, would be promulgated and a new direction be given to arts grants, which would become consumer rather than producer subsidy (Hewison, 1995: 249). The arm's-length principle, pride of the Arts Council, was even more weakened when the government decided in 1983 to earmark grants to major companies, which were suffering a great deal under the hardship of the recession.

In 1985, the strategy set out for the next decade in the *Glory of the Garden* report provoked an outburst of protests from the arts world. Accusations that the Arts Council had become the arm of government came from all directions. The arts correspondent of *The Times* summarised the situation by stating that 'the sense of anger, disillusionment and even betrayal now being expressed over the direction of the government's arts policy is virtually universal' (18 February 1985).

However, as Hewison writes, 'the arts were caught in an irresistible tidal change: the shift towards... "the culture of wealth creation"' (1995: 256). 'Value for money' had become statutory policy enforced by the 1983 National Audit Act which empowered the Auditor General to review the value for money given by any public body in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, which was measured by 'performance indicators'. The ideological pervasiveness was such that the Arts Council internalised this managerial language: the Annual Report 40 thus proudly announced in 1986 that the arts were 'this small but successful part of Great Britain Inc.' (quoted in Pick, 1988: 89). Several consequences emanated from this new direction in cultural policy. First of all, an increasing emphasis was put on the economic performances achieved by the arts in an attempt to justify subsidies according to the new governmental requirements. In 1985 the Arts Council report *A Great British Success Story*, subtitled 'An invitation to the Nation to Invest in the Arts' thus presented its case, by way of a glossy brochure, to a fictional investor wanting to do a good return on capital and concluded that 'the government could do no better than put our money into the arts' (1985: 11). The same year, Rees-Mogg, chair of the Arts Council, published a lecture, *The political economy of the arts*, in which he produced a detailed analysis of the economic benefits to be gained from the arts and asserted that 'the Arts Council gives the best value for money in job creation of any part of the state system' (1985: 3), thus demonstrating how public arts patronage was a necessary form of economic investment.

In a logical development, the prominence given to the language and practices of the private sector led to a predictable new method for attracting funds for the arts, especially since the budget allocated to public patronage had been left almost at a standstill - the grant-in-aid grew in real terms by a mere 0.6 percent per year between 1979 and 1985 (Bianchini, 1990: 218). Marketing and a closer collaboration with private sector businesses were deemed to be the new answer, thus breaking the oldest assumption underpinning public arts patronage according to which public subsidies were compensating for the market non-viability of the arts. These were forced to find other sources of funding than from the government and had little other choice but to seek business sponsorship, which in 1979 stood at four million pounds a year. A Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme was set up in 1984, by which it had been agreed that if sponsorship was secured, government might add monies as well. By 1994, the government had contributed twenty one million pounds, in response to forty three million in sponsorship (Hewison, 1995: 257).

The advent of sponsorship in the arts proved more than a mere redirection of funding. Thus Diggle was one of those daring to state the previously unthinkable

> The arts are, from one point of view, no different from other vital but non-profit making concerns such as education, libraries, the National Health service and so on. They differ from such comparable activities because most arts bodies are in the business of selling something and thus, from a marketing viewpoint, have more in common with, say, a transport system (1984: 22).

Long gone seemed the values of civilisation, education or social change to be gained from the arts. As a matter of fact the language changed and in A *Great British Success Story*, the Arts Council started to refer to 'products' instead of productions, to 'customers' instead of audiences and to 'investment' instead of 'subsidy'. This new direction had a profound impact on the principles underpinning public art patronage. Indeed, even though the Arts Council had long and fiercely been criticised for their elitism and however utopian the idea of 'access' was if unrelated to issues of social and cultural capital, the tenet of universal provision was at the heart of the art subsidies. The new emphasis put on marketing meant that this was no longer the case. In *Guide to Arts Marketing*, Diggle distinguished between 'attenders', 'intenders' and 'non-attenders' as the three categories of which the general public was made. The targets of marketing strategies would only be constituted by the first two categories, as, in his opinion, there was little point in addressing 'non-attenders', understood as they were as probably hostile to the arts. It would be deceptive to imply that the whole of cultural policy and funding procedures were entirely transformed according to this new economistic ideology. Indeed there is no doubt that Mrs Thatcher's understanding of the Arts was still

very traditional and rooted in the 'High/Low Arts' dichotomy. As Lewis (1990) argued, the arts were still funded according to a particular aesthetic judgement, not on the mere basis of economic benefits. Yet the influence remained perceptible on many levels.

As the marketing of the arts was enhanced to facilitate the importance of business sponsorships and grew as a core source of finance support for the arts, it soon became obvious that the arts themselves could be used as a source of marketing and improved image. For businesses, sponsorship of the arts was an efficient way to foster a benevolent image as well as an attractive method to entertain clients or to avoid restrictions for the promotion of certain products (e.g. tobacco). But the economic benefits and image enhancement to be gained from the arts soon found another, related, domain in which to flourish: urban regeneration.

2. CONVERGENCE OF CULTURAL POLICY AND URBAN REGENERATION

2.1 Origins

The 1980s were struck by the dire consequences of the economic restructuring. The crisis of the fordist regime of accumulation, marked by the relocation of most unskilled and semi-skilled parts of production into newly industrialised countries (notably in South East Asia and Latin America) and the polarisation of urban labour markets between the highly paid managerial and professional field and the low-paid employees (Sassen, 1991) hit most severely traditional manufacturing employment, which had prospered in the 19th Century. The 'inner cities', these urban pockets of extreme poverty, tense race relations and physical decay, which had started to appear in the 1960s, were the front-line victims of this economic restructuring. Urban regeneration strategies, which had begun in the 1960s, aimed at tackling the specific problems of these areas. As I showed in chapter two, the schemes were also used by Mrs Thatcher's government to serve other, more political, purposes: the cultural change from 'welfare dependency' to 'enterprise culture', the diminishing of local authorities' power and, logical consequence of the latter, the centralisation of state power. Most of the urban regeneration schemes were administered by quangos such as the UDCs and the strategy was clearly economically based and property-led. The understanding of the government was that urban deprivation originated in a lack of investment from the private sector, which had been discouraged by local authorities (see chapter 2).

The growing emphasis on marketing through the arts, which had developed since the late 1970s, induced cities and agencies in charge of urban regeneration to include cultural strategies in their urban schemes (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993). The context in which urban

regeneration was carried out led to a very specific understanding of the ways in which arts and culture would improve urban dereliction. Hitherto the belief that the arts constituted an efficient vehicle for social integration, especially thanks to their civilizing, ennobling capacity had enjoyed a state of consensus since the mid nineteenth century (Bianchini, 1990). This faith in the cohesive power of the arts was concretely illustrated by the support attributed to Community Arts, whose credo was undoubtedly grounded in the idea of social inclusion.

Yet the 1980s made a new consensus emerge. The pervasive economic outlook, which had been applied to all political and social areas, meant that arts were now to be comprised as part of the 'cultural industries', by which was meant an innovative, rapidly growing, highly profitable sector of the economy, including traditional arts as well as publishing, broadcasting, cinema, music production, digital arts, etc. Interestingly the market reasoning of the central government had converged with newfound market realism in social-democratic politics. Indeed the criticism of the elitism of public patronage of the arts had begun to be based on the realisation that 'popular culture' was increasingly synonymous with commercially based art forms. This was most noticeable in the GLC's decisively innovative cultural policy. As was demonstrated earlier, the GLC had developed a strategy which had not only taken a much wider definition of 'arts' than that to be found in the Arts Council, but also had re-thought the notion of social access by highlighting the need to consider the specific cultural needs of deprived groups, thus stressing the importance of the audience. This logically led to questions about the economics of cultural production and distribution. Indeed it appeared that the mere production of alternative cultural forms was insufficient if there was no facilitating procedure to distribute them widely to the intended audience. This focus on distribution and the apprehension that London's economy was mostly based on cultural commodities represented a shift which, according to McGuigan

> can be described as moving away from an idealist arts patronage model, which was qualified to some extent by community arts, towards a materialistic model of cultural exchange, signified by the terminology of "industry" and "markets" (1996: 83).

This new focus led to the rejection of a traditional grant-allocating policy based on annual deficit funding, which was still applied by the Arts and Recreation Committee mentioned above. Thus a 'cultural industries strategy' was drawn up by Professor Garnham for the Industry and Employment Committee in 1984, which stressed the necessity to consider the cultural field as an integrated whole since public cultural policies hitherto carried out had tended to have a relatively marginal impact on consumption of cultural commodities and services. The report thus demonstrated the economic importance of the sector by showing that in 1983 it employed about 250,000 people and recommended working 'through and not

against the market' (quoted in Bianchini, 1990: 220). The implementation of this strategy was the responsibility of the Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB). The belief underpinning this strategy was that with investment and loan programmes, the GLEB would help socially useful production, and allow the subordinate cultures – identified as 'communities of interest' – to become self-financing and commercially viable in activities such as publishing or community radio. The GLC's scheme towards cultural industries originated thus not in a conversion to capitalism but in the concern that

> While the state concentrates on a fairly limited opera-repertoire and a Shakespearian heritage for the tourists, the corporate planners and strategy executives of the multinationals are only too keen to write the real cultural policies themselves.
> The worst result would be a two tier culture: on the one hand a world of subsidised or sponsored arts and public broadcasting for the elite, and on the other commercial, mass produced, largely imported culture for the rest (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986: 10).

Because it only started in 1984 and represented £600,000 in total expenditure, the cultural industries strategy was, in Bianchini's words 'more important for its conceptual innovations than for its practical achievements' (1990: 220). Ironically, this strategy which initially stood hostile to the industrialisation of culture, also allowed rhetorical coalescence that paved the way for arts-led consumerist strategies. Indeed the arts were largely analysed in terms of the beneficial gains they could secure in terms of fostering positive image, generating employment, promoting tourism and attracting private investment in deprived urban neighbourhoods.

> The 1970s emphasis on personal and community development, participation, egalitarianism, the democratisation of urban space and the revitalisation of public social life was replaced by a language highlighting cultural policy's potential contribution to urban economic and physical regeneration (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993: 13).

As I showed in chapter two, the mid-1980s marked a greater concern from the central government for urban regeneration policies. In this context the integration of the arts within urban regeneration schemes mostly hinged on the construction of urban images able to attract tourists, skilled workers and investors as well as benefiting the local economy. In order to achieve such goals, prominence was given to prestigious flagship cultural projects projecting a positive urban image, managed by the private sector or the newly established quangos, such as the UDCs.

In 1988, the same year as the government had restructured its urban programmes and launched *Action for Cities*, an all-encompassing scheme, aimed at tackling the inner cities through the creation of enterprise zones, the Arts Council presented its new pamphlet *An Urban Renaissance. The Role of the Arts in Urban Regeneration*, claiming that

> [T]he arts create a climate of optimism – the "can do" attitude essential to developing the "enterprise culture" this government hopes to bring to deprived areas (1988: 2).

Cultural policy was increasingly seen by local urban decision makers as a potential to modernise and rediversify the local economic base of cities (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993). Thus in his influential report *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* Myerscough demonstrated – as the Arts Council *A Great British Success Story* had attempted previously but with more back-up data – the extent to which the arts were commercially and economically viable. Not only did they represent two and a half percent of total spending on goods and services but they also represented three percent of Britain's total export earnings, most of it being as invisible earnings, making them the fourth invisible earner (1988: 47). These invisible earnings were mainly gained from cultural tourism, the arts being accountable for almost a third of total overseas tourist expenditure (1988: 83). The effects on employment were also noticeable as the sector was said to represent about two per cent of the working population; to which had to be added a 'multiplier effect' which meant that indirect employment was also generated in ancillary industries (1988: 50). As a matter of fact, his understanding of the sector was so wide that twenty five per cent of the estimated overall ten billion pounds was attributed to arts-related expenditure such as food, drink, hotels etc – which might well have happened anyway. His research firmly connected the role of the arts to the growing importance of the service industries and of the new technologies, based on information and media. For him the success of cities in the post-industrial area would depend on their 'ability to build on the provision of services for regional, national and international markets' (1988: 2). This pointed to the consumerist, cultural tourism-based schemes that were to be a large part of urban regeneration strategies.

It was widely agreed that, in order to achieve economic revival the strategy lay in the cities' capacity to reinvent themselves - or consolidate their position - as a leading location for advanced services, Research & Development or design-intensive industries (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993). The combined images of innovative industries and 'quality of life' would thus provide the ideal context for a confident private sector and improved inward investments, elements seen as the key to urban revitalization (Myerscough, 1988: 128-129).

These schemes generally found their models in North American cities, in which such culture-led regeneration had been developed since the 1970s, aiming at recreating an appeal to the suburban economic elite towards the downtown facilities and away from the out-of-town shopping developments (Bianchini, 1990: 222). Several British cities attempted to conduct such strategies. Some of the largest and most noticeable programmes were carried out by Glasgow and Birmingham, cities which had been terribly hit by the economic restructuring of the 1980s and had grim reputations of unemployment, violence and general deprivation. Birmingham focused on 'high culture' by building a hundred million pounds conference centre, hosting a concert hall for the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and by encouraging London-based arts companies, such as the Sadler's Well company of the Royal Ballet, to relocate to the city. Significantly the City Council merged in 1989 the cultural functions of four of its committees (Finance and Management; Leisure; Economic Development and Education) into one new cross-departmental Arts, Culture and Economy (ACE) Sub-Committee, thus strikingly illustrating the trend for corporate cultural policies. Glasgow, whose name was hitherto associated with gang violence and harrowing poverty, managed to radically transform its image through a gradual cultural upgrading strategy. This hinged on the public relations campaign 'Glasgow's Miles Better', relying on previous initiatives such as the opening of the prestigious Burrell Collection in 1983 or the organisation of numerous cultural festivals, and found its pinnacle in 1990 in Glasgow's nomination as 'European City of Culture'. The programme of the 1990 celebrations cost fifty-three and a half million pounds in addition to prestige projects such as the twenty-four million pounds concert hall, most of which came from the District and Regional Councils and was undoubtedly a marketing success, especially in tourism terms: the value of tickets sales increased by 364% over the year, the attendance to major venues increased greatly and the overall profit was estimated at between ten and fourteen million pounds.

Yet whether in Birmingham or in Glasgow (or indeed in the Docklands of the East End of London) despite the undeniable success in cultural tourism and marketing terms, the impact of these flagship cultural programmes on local employment and wealth creation remained disputable. Birmingham City Council was thus accused of having underspent its education budget and in 1994 the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the city's most prestigious arts organisation, had a deficit of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds (Hewison, 1995).
In Glasgow the improvement of the city's image was striking, yet there was little evidence to support the argument that the cultural strategy and especially the 1990 Year of Culture had made a clear contribution to local economic development beyond the immediate benefits brought by the celebrations. Thus in 1993, unemployment still stood at fifteen percent, there was a high number of empty offices and certain areas of the city were still among the most deprived in Europe. Moreover the 1990 programme itself was criticised for its interpretation

of the city's radical traditions and history. One of the supporters of the protesting group, which called itself 'The Workers' City' in an insolent gesture towards the famous neighbourhood 'Merchant City', claimed

> The culture of the city's working class is now being repackaged as some kind of anodyne and quaint survival instead of the result of the two centuries' struggle (Damer, 1990: 211).

It thus clearly emerges that the competition between cities which locate themselves on a large distribution network of the same standardized cultural goods or 'aesthetic' products has been greatly heightened by these strategies. This is all the more intensified since these strategies address a mobile public, who can easily go elsewhere (Zukin, 1998).

2.2 Controversial developments

Moreover the previously mentioned critical feeling of 'lack of ownership' of the regeneration process by the locals and the consequent sense of being by-passed by a development that should primarily benefit them, has become a pervasive accusation of urban renewal programmes, especially those economically led. As Booth & Boyle pointed out 'there is a danger of attaching too much importance to marketing the city. Culture, like long-term economic strength, needs to be rooted in the community' (1993: 46). Indeed what clearly came out through these prestigious flagship projects was that their rooting in cultural tourism made them remote from the cultural traditions, expectations and needs of the local population.

> The coalitions that built up around the prestige initiatives of the '80s art-led regeneration were often out of touch with those who used the city most, concerned as they were with its profile amongst some (mythical) "business community" (O'Connor, 1993: 17).

Generally by the end of the early 1990s these strategies, which privileged economics over aesthetics and social consideration, were not only increasingly seen as inadequate for the working-class, the unemployed, the marginalized but also ironically showed dubious results in their own terms.

Thus even though regeneration schemes were supposed to concentrate on deprived areas, most of them actually focused on city centres or on picturesque run-down commercial areas – quaysides, docklands or warehousing - in the belief that the trickle-down effects would soon enough benefit poorer areas of cities. As has been well documented, the rippled impact did not, or hardly, happen; instead processes of gentrification replaced poorer sections of the population with a new, wealthy, middle class. As Zukin demonstrated in *Loft Living* her

seminal study of the transformation of a basic real estate commodity – loft space – in Manhattan, artists can become the unwilling – and losing - instruments of an urban development, which converted low-rent, working-class neighbourhoods into expensive and fashionable areas (1988). *Loft Living* powerfully deconstructs a process, which intertwines culture, symbolic capital and market forces to produce deep urban change. As artists moved into lofts, which were previously used by light manufacturers, they created a new cultural image of the neighbourhood and thus, unwillingly triggered the gentrification of the area, before themselves being 'rented-out' (1988). This process was obviously fuelled by numerous factors such as the change in middle-class consumption patterns, a post-industrial nostalgia for factories, new concerns with conservation, new perceptions of the artists and of themselves by the bourgeoisie, important changes in the status of the arts, etc. Yet the main reasons behind the economic attractiveness of the presence of art in an area which emerge from Zukin's study, relate to the symbolic dimension of the cultural character provided by arts as well as the crucial role that arts production plays in deindustrialisation (1988: 111). This effectively reflects Myerscough's emphasis on the role that arts play in the new service economy and thus serve a world city of a new type: the capital of banking, finance, and arts markets (1988: 112). It is important to highlight that *Loft Living* is not a survey of a culture-led urban regeneration strategy *per se*. Indeed the development described by Zukin in Manhattan was unexpected and unplanned, and her study is focused on the transformation of loft space. Yet the role played by the arts in the process of gentrification and of replacement of the traditional base of declining industries with wealth derived from the service sector is to be noticed in most major cities of the capitalist world. She actually sees two major elements in the struggle over cultural terrain

> On the one hand, cultural appropriation supports spatial claims put forward by both the expansionist segments of the middle-class – gentrifiers, tourists, property developers and financiers – and the indigenous population, who because of social segregation in the inner cities tend to share working-class or minority ethnic cultures. On the other hand, the dominant, market-driven cultural appropriation that uproots the poor(er) and legitimises their replacement by players in culture and financial markets, uses cultural producers in a dramatically new way (1988: 204).

Thus if artists were appreciated and used to improve the image of an area and trigger a process of gentrification (which was – and still is - seen by some as successful regeneration), their demands for support were not listened to with so much approval. The consensus around the value of arts hits a stumbling block especially when demands for low cost artists' housing compete with the pressures for gentrification, demands for theatres and rehearsal space

compete with pressure for office development. Therefore 'in general the synergy between art, finance, and politics benefits high culture institutions and the tourist industry while creating only sporadic gains for independent cultural producers' (Zukin, 1995: 111).

David Harvey pushed the criticism further and claimed that most urban regeneration schemes represented in fact 'an appalling social and political diversion' (1989: 21). The gentrification processes mentioned earlier, the persistence of social problems and decay in most inner cities, the increasing urban segregation, the lack of genuine benefits gained by local population in which projects were implemented led David Harvey to argue that

> if a project generates employment it is almost certainly not for those already there, if it brings in money it almost certainly flows straight out again, and if it brightens the urban scene it does so in the vein of a carnival mask that diverts and entertains, leaving the social problems that lie behind the mask unseen and uncared for (1989: 21).

Harvey did not reject outright the culture led urban regeneration model, which was being promoted and implemented throughout the 1980s both in the USA and UK. However he argued that even though there possibly were some potential benefits to be gained from this kind of policy, the excessive focus on cultural industries in order to create wealth and generate urban renewal was inappropriate (1993). For him, these strategies were too remote from the fact that industrial development remains the necessary way to create wealth, without which urban renewal is deemed impossible. Cultural strategies, based on the argument that we have now entered a new post-industrial era, can therefore not constitute the answer to the 'disintegrating cities' (1993).

Moreover these economic-led cultural policies carried out on the urban scene led to the commodification of public space and culture. The simultaneous increase in the consumption of culture and in the culture of consumption fuelled this development as urban lifestyle became associated in consumption practices of commodities which had cultural values attached to them (e.g. food, fashion, etc). Cities are no longer seen as landscapes of production but as landscapes of consumption. By extension, the logic of cultural strategies in many cases became industrial rather than cultural (McGuigan, 1996) and the emphasis on consumerist policies based on cultural industries and tourism rapidly associated their development with corporate economy and retail shopping, catering industries, etc. Pursuing her critique of cultural industries, Zukin developed it in a powerful analysis of its impact on public culture and argued that 'common forms of visual re-presentation in all cities connect cultural activities and populist images in festivals, sports stadiums and shopping centres' (1995: 19). The subsequent growing importance of the 'symbolic economy' has led culture to

be central in urban lifestyle; and as a consequence, also a 'powerful means of controlling cities... [it] symbolises "who belongs" in specific places' (1995: 1). Because consumption, and especially cultural consumption, has become an essential dimension in the pursuit of cultural capital - itself forming the basis of class distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984) and social group identity – the synergy between corporate capital and culture has increased dramatically. On the urban scene, Zukin tells us, this has been particularly embodied by the rising prominence of major brands, whose appropriation of space might mean the take over our public culture.

> Those who create images stamp a collective identity. Whether they are media corporations like the Disney Company, art museums or politicians, they are developing new spaces for public cultures... By accepting these spaces without questioning their representations of urban life, we risk succumbing to a visually seductive, privatised public culture (1995: 3).

Consequently the risk generated by the economic-led cultural policies or culture-led urban regeneration initiatives was in the mid-term the neutralisation of arts as a critical force (Bianchini, 1990). One of the traditional functions of arts is indeed the challenge of the status quo. The integration of the arts and culture in economic strategies could reduce the necessary freedom to perform this essential critical role (Bianchini, 1990).

> The hegemonic status of the belief that "what's good for business is good for the city" could seriously weaken the ability of the arts to point at alternative of "the good" for both the individual and the community (Bianchini, 1990: 240).

Counter arguments to these undemocratic tendencies fuelled by cultural policies were proposed in the mid-1990s, such as the 'creative city' model (Landry & Bianchini, 1995), which suggested that the full economic potential of culture is not solely to be found in its marketable products. Although these are important, Landry and Bianchini suggested that the creativity embodied in cultural activity produces a living reservoir of skills, knowledge, talent and ideas. It is this pool of human resources, which potentially offers new ways of working and living fresh attitudes to economic problems and the mobilisation of rich multicultural urban diversity. New economic activities, including the 'discovery' of products and services, emerge from tapping this reservoir and multicultural diversity. The economic potential of the 'creative city' is, therefore, process led rather than output driven (Landry & Bianchini, 1995; Landry et al, 1996). This dimension was associated with an increased attention given to social regeneration and the social dimension of cultural activity; an aspect that I will return to later.

The change of Prime Minister in 1992 did not signify a major break. Yet there was more emphasis on the quality of life than with Major's predecessor. This was illustrated with two major initiatives: the creation of the first Department of State devoted to the Arts, which was called the Department of National Heritage (DNH), led by a minister of Cabinet rank and the National Lottery Act. The DNH pulled together the responsibilities of 6 different departments, thus showing a strong potential for a broad remit for culture. Moreover through the National Lottery Act passed in 1993, a new source of impressive funds for good causes was provided, including the arts, heritage, sports and charities as well as a Millennium Fund (each fund could expect an annual income potentially greater than that of the American Ford Foundation). The amount of the Arts Council grant-in-aid increased by twenty per cent over the first three years of Major's government. Beyond these - significant – steps, the policy requiring the arts to earn their keep through contributions to the tourist industry, sponsorships and other private sector sources was maintained. Also the strict separation between the High and Low Arts persisted as a central tenet of national cultural policy.

2.3 New Labour

This is certainly the domain where the most noticeable change occurred with the access to power by New Labour in 1997. Even though the renaming of the Department of National Heritage as the Department of Culture, Media and Sport was above all an exercise of 're-branding' (Pratt, 1999), some significant changes have occurred under the New Labour administration regarding cultural policies, especially the broadening of the definition of 'culture', a direct consequence of an increased emphasis on the 'creative industries' (Pratt, 1999). In 1998, DCMS produced the *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, the result of an audit conducted by the Cultural Industries Task Force, a cross-departmental group, whose members were themselves prominent figures of the industries in question. Creative industries were defined as

> Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property (2001: 5).

They included advertising, architecture, art and antique markets, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio. The most important function of this report was to legitimate the new approach by pointing to the contribution of these industries to employment and balance of trade (Pratt, 1999). The economic dimension of the arts was thus brought to the forefront of cultural policy, in a fashion which marked a break from the

Conservative era, as this time the dichotomy High/Low Arts was definitely on its way to be overcome and replaced by an instrumental approach. However the economic weight of the cultural industries is not the only benefit that the government sees it can gain from the arts: these are expected to serve a social purpose (the panacea to social exclusion will be explored later) as well as to play an educational or a marketing role. Indeed in April 2000, as part as the whole strategy recommended by the think-tank Demos, the Arts Council of England (ACE) launched the Re-Branding Britain Panel, whose main tasks were to produce a strategy for projecting a positive and modern image of Britain abroad; to monitor and project Britain's strengths to enhance the attractiveness of business and tourism to people abroad and to engage Government Departments and other bodies in promoting the same messages in their overseas activities. As Mark Leonard, from Demos, explained: 'the cultural industries are an area that the Panel are very keen to promote because they are seen to embody the image of a vibrant country "bursting with ideas and enthusiasm"' (2000, www.artscouncil.org.uk). The presentation of the Panel by the Arts Council also indicated that this scheme built on 'the much publicised "*Cool Britannia*" phenomenon', a phrase supposedly coined to characterise 'forward looking British culture', and 'the new Government's political alignment with the creative sector' (2000, www.artscouncil.org.uk). This new multi facetted direction was reflected in the ACE's 2000 Annual Review, which asserted that

> Working as an independent, non-political body, at arm's length from Government, we champion the arts - promoting the importance of artistic endeavour to the economic, physical, social and, not least, the spiritual well being of the country (2000, www.artscouncil.org.uk).

Simultaneously, and if not contradictorily, at least in a clear demonstration of the confused and scattered objectives of the institutions, it was explained that the

> funding programmes seek to support the highest artistic achievements, and to make these available to as many people as possible; to encourage new work and new audiences; to bring challenging art to all sections of the community; and to celebrate the diversity of cultures that contribute so much to the richness of England's artistic life (2000,www.artscouncil.org.uk).

A very noticeable dimension of the new cultural policy carried out by New Labour (and one of particular interest to us) is its relation to urban regeneration. The already mentioned *Mapping Document 1998* clearly positioned the cultural industries as an economic force as well as a way to deliver regeneration and education and fight social exclusion; an approach which was re-asserted in the follow up *Creative Industries Mapping Document 2001*. As Pratt pointed

out, the stress on urban regeneration and its closely related theme, social exclusion, uncovered the complexities of the policy (1999). The multi-sided strategy aiming at addressing a large number of problems necessarily include key elements which are the remit of different departments, with different important powers. As a matter of fact, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is a small and relatively weak department with limited powers, whilst the Department for Transport, Local government and the Regions (DTLR)[11], which is in charge of the massive regeneration budgets especially through Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and New Deal for Communities (NDC) is a very powerful one. Likewise the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has a major role with regards to small businesses, trade, telecommunications, software and computing (i.e. some of the most dynamic 'creative industries). Finally the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) is also a powerful department being, as its title indicates, in charge of education and training (i.e. a dimension deemed fundamental to the creative industries).

The contradiction generated by this distribution of responsibilities is strikingly illustrated if one looks closely at the role of the DTLR, which yearly manages millions of pounds via SRB and NDC. Indeed most of the projects carried out under these schemes include a 'cultural component' (often in the form of cultural facilities) as traditionally about one percent were devoted to the cultural domain. Yet as the general growth of regeneration budgets has been exponential over the last few years, the sums available to culture from regeneration turn out to be much greater than those coming from 'genuine' cultural institutions, such as DCMS or the Arts Council, which was by-passed on many grounds (Pratt, 1999). Moreover a large proportion of these funds are coming from European sources (such as the ERDF or the ESF). As Pratt remarks

> The involvement of these "new agencies" in the cultural sphere has brought new money and a broader remit, but at the cost of opening up serious tensions in terms of governance of culture. (...) [T]he fact that resources are being redirected by "non-cultural" agendas does make decision-making problematic (1999).

He demonstrates the gaps that exist between the different levels of governance of culture: a clear lack of coherence and consistency between national, regional and local levels hinders comprehensive cultural policy being carried out (1999). Moreover the current setting up of a regional level of governance is undoubtedly going to reveal profound changes, but these are yet still difficult to evaluate. On the local level, the introduction of the bidding systems for SRB and NDC funding has exacerbated the already important competition between localities which try to attract mobile publics, investments and employment. Meanwhile local authorities

---

[11] Formerly named DETR, and currently ODPM. See previous chapter.

were getting committed to a new set of guidelines with regards to culture, Local Cultural Strategies (LCS), which, according to Pratt, 'seem to bear little relationship to DCMS agenda and more to DTLR's model for local government' (1999). With him we can thus conclude that

> [T]he cultural agenda is fundamentally disconnected at the local level. Economic agendas are separate from social and cultural; and economic ones are split between regeneration focused ones and specific cultural projects. Precious little space exists for the traditional "arts" agenda (1999).

We would argue that the criticism pointing at the lack of comprehensiveness of cultural policy is also legitimate at the national level, even though some efforts seem to be emerging. Thus, as was mentioned earlier, the DCMS's new policy strongly hinges on the creative industries and their potential economic driving force (1998; 2001).

Simultaneously the government's insistent focus (at least rhetorically) on the theme of social exclusion reached the cultural realm and led the Social Exclusion Unit to commission a report from DCMS Policy Action Team (PAT) 10, with the goal 'to draw up an action plan which aims to maximise the impact of arts, sport and leisure policies in contributing to neighbourhoods regeneration and increasing local participation' (DCMS, 1999: 5). This report, published in 1999, put forward that

> Arts and sport are inclusive... [A]rea regeneration schemes should explicitly incorporate arts and sport in neighbourhood renewal. Art and sport are not just and "add-on" to regeneration work. They are fundamental to community involvement and ownership of any regeneration initiative (1999: 5-6).

The report was not a policy-setting document, but rather a list of recommendations and guidelines identifying barriers to be overcome and 'principles which help to exploit the potential of arts/sport in regenerating communities' (1999: 8). It also re-asserted that arts and sport were 'associated with rapidly growing industries' (1999: 8), yet without seeming to locate itself within the DCMS 'creative industries' general strategy. Indeed the PAT 10's definition of arts as 'all forms of dramatic, musical or visual arts activity, in whichever high- or low-tech medium and in whatever style – whether "high" or "low"' (1999: 21) is narrower than DCMS definition of creative industries. Yet it was qualified by the fact that

> [a]ll these activities are things that people can "consume"... There are important benefits for both individuals and communities in

> "consuming" such "products": personal inspiration and insight; community identity and pride (1999: 21)[12].

In fact, the report showed that more than 'personal inspiration and insight; community identity and pride' was expected from the arts. It was thus claimed that participation in the arts and sport would 'help address neighbourhood renewal by improving communities' "performance" on the four key indicators of: health; crime; employment; and education' (1999: 22). It is indeed important to notice that the admitted focus of the report was on the 'benefits of participation' (1999: 21).

However even though this could sound like a reminiscence of a Community Arts' tenet, the recommended approach was fundamentally different. Furthermore the notion of 'social impact of the arts' had been abandoned for fifteen years before being picked up again by New Labour. Thus Comedia, a consultancy agency, has consistently been writing on the topic since the late 1980s, insisting on the beneficial effects to be gained from participation in the arts, especially in terms of building self-confidence, reducing offending behaviour, enhancing social cohesion, etc (Landry et al, 1996) in other words all themes praised by New Labour. In that sense it is remarkable that nowhere in the report was there a mention of these studies or of 'Art in the Community', a recognised set of practices characterised by 'art plus social concern' (CDF, 1992: 9). The aforementioned study conducted by the Community Development Foundation thus concluded that 'a distinguishing mark of arts in the community is the operation of five principles: social concern; the development of individual or group creativity; partnership; participation; and consultation' (1992: 87). It is likely that this absence of reference in the report was due to the fact that 'Arts in the community' remains very much influenced by the Community Arts movement, which undoubtedly recalls leftist policies and the GLC experience... and thus probably something that the Government would rather leave unmentioned.

The PAT 10 report has been followed up in February 2001 by another report, *Building on PAT 10. Progress report on social exclusion*, which outlines the sectoral social inclusion strategy to come in the following months. This strategy shows the sketch of a more integrated cultural strategy, highlighting the necessary collaboration between the Arts Council, the National Lottery, the Regional Arts Boards, the voluntary sector and local authorities and the business sector to see real effects on urban renewal; it drafts ways of increased collaboration with other departments and of involving industry and businesses (2001). As far as the latter is concerned a two pronged approach is recommended by PAT 10, in order to encourage industry sponsorship to 'seek to promote disadvantaged areas and individuals' (2001: 48): on

---

[12] It is interesting to notice how this paragraph encapsulates and articulates New Labour's front values: a persistent confidence in the market and the (paradoxical?) combination of strong individuality and community ideals.

the one hand the creative industries are expected to 'broaden their audiences and extend training and employment opportunities to those areas and groups at risk of exclusion' (2001: 48), and on the other hand emphasis is put on tourism, which, as a fast-growing industry, is also seen as an efficient contributor to urban regeneration and social inclusion (2001). The Arts Council is also involved in the social inclusion strategy, making it one of its five strategic objectives, and declares that 'the Council must embed work with excluded communities within all its policies and practices, including its existing funding programmes' (2001: 17; www.artscouncil.org.uk). One of the most difficult areas with regards to social exclusion in relation to arts and culture remains the specific state of deprivation of ethnic minorities. The *Building on PAT 10* devoted only two pages to this topic which consisted of confirming the fact that ethnic minorities tend to constitute the most deprived part of the British population. As far as precise policies vis-à-vis arts and ethnic minorities are concerned, it was admitted that

> Much work ... is being done across the DCMS fields of interest to address the needs and aspirations of ethnic minority communities. It has not as yet, however, been drawn together and co-ordinated (2001: 64).

Thus even though a more comprehensive cultural strategy integrating economic and social dimensions generally seems to be taking shape, at present it seems that, as Pratt argued,

> [T]he question of implementation is yet to be resolved, let alone the issue of strategic development and co-ordination. There seems to be a profusion of bodies that are seeking to create and establish creative industries policies; yet there seems to be little space to broker and mediate between diverse aspirations and resources. The tension between social, physical, economic and aesthetic agendas is intense (1999).

Moreover the increasing emphasis on the instrumental functions of the arts is regarded with growing concern in the arts world. John Tusa, head of the Barbican Centre, shared his frustration in The Independent: 'The arts are now seen as a sub-branch of social welfare, what do you do for regeneration, what do you do for education. Not, how do you create a wonderful museum' (26 May 2001).

This remarks points to one potential problematic area of the kind of cultural policies that are being currently carried out. In the light of studies conducted by Zukin, Harvey, etc, focusing on creative industries and tourism to simultaneously generate economic regeneration and

fight social exclusion seems to ignore that the instrumental dimensions of arts tend to be mutually contradictory.

CONCLUSION

The development of cultural policy in Britain has gone from an elitist model towards a consumerist one. The Community Arts movement, which made an attempt to reconcile these two extremes, has diluted to the point of almost disintegration, and it is now, bar some exceptions, part of a wider trend that instrumentalises arts and culture for social purposes. In that sense the influence of the 1980s ideology is still prevalent, especially in the ever-greater emphasis put on the cultural industries as a sector to be encouraged and supported through cultural policy.

The general tendency is thus going towards increasing instrumentalisation of the arts, which are seen as useful social and economic vectors. For that reason the integration of cultural policy and urban regeneration is greater than ever before. However there are many issues at stake behind this instrumentalisation. The experiences under Mrs Thatcher's government or in the USA have shown the potential gentrifying effects of so-called 'culture-led' urban regeneration. Moreover the consumerist ideology underlying most of these schemes commanded a model where culture-based redevelopment hinged on High Arts and consumption of commodities (e.g. food, fashion, etc), criticised by some commentators as promoting not much else than a 'cappuccino culture' and paving the way for a commodification of space and culture.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY

1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first three chapters have attempted to delineate the theoretical framework in which this research has been conducted. The most prominent issues at stake in each field that constitutes this framework (i.e. the concept of community, urban regeneration policies and cultural policy) as well as in their intersection have been analysed so as to introduce the potential phenomenon arising from the merging of these three spheres. I will now present how the empirical dimension of this study has been carried out.

The object of this study is thus the use of the concept of community within the organisation of cultural projects within regeneration schemes.
These projects were not randomly chosen, but considering my primary interest in the notion of community, I chose those which claimed working with a community focus. It is important to emphasise that my investigation of the notion of community is based on the principle of flexibility: if a project uses the notion of community in its presentation, it becomes relevant to my research. As I mentioned earlier, I chose to work within the institutional framework of urban regeneration, as it seemed to develop a very strong interest in the concept of community. Within this framework, my focus was on cultural projects as described above. Moreover I want to emphasise that I am not conducting a 'community study', in the sociological or anthropological sense; my research explores the meanings attributed to the notion by different actors and how these meanings potentially affect the practices of the actors in the chosen framework and consequently the localities in which the urban regeneration scheme is carried out.

The questions which therefore 'drive' my research are the following:

- What is the discursive status of 'community', especially in the institutional context of urban regeneration?
- Within this framework, how is the notion of community manifested in the implementation of urban regeneration schemes (e.g. community participation, involvement, consultation), especially through cultural projects?
- What does the term 'community' represent to different actors?
- Does the notion have a strategic potential? If so, is this potential different for different actors?

- In this specific context, what role do cultural projects play?

The relevant data thus are:

- Who is the 'community'?
- Which actors are involved as 'the community'? In other words what is community consultation, participation, involvement?
- How do different actors understand 'community'?
- What is remit of cultural projects in the relation to both community and urban regeneration?

The strategy I chose in order to conduct my research was case studies based. I will now move on to explain this strategy in further detail.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Why case studies?

2.1.1 General definition

As Robson defines it a case study is 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence' (1993: 52). This approach is therefore particularly useful when one deals with a phenomenon in context, especially - as Yin specifies - 'when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (1994: 13). In a situation where the contextual conditions need to be covered because they are seen as being 'highly pertinent to [the] phenomenon of study' (Yin, 1994: 13), the case study is a recommended method. Moreover the case study usually proves a useful stance 'when the investigator has little control over the events' (Yin, 1994: 1).

A much used social science research strategy, the case study tends to be also a controversial one. Traditional prejudices include the non-scientific nature of the method. This debate obviously hinges on a wide question - i.e. 'what is a scientific method?' - question itself finding its ground in the even more mind-blowing interrogation 'what is science?'. Chalmers (1982) devoted nearly two hundred pages on the subject, where he presented a commonly held view of science

> Scientific knowledge is proven knowledge. Scientific theories are derived in some rigorous way from the facts of experience acquired by observation and experiment. [...] Personal opinion or preferences and

> speculative imaginings have no place in science. Science is objective. Scientific knowledge is reliable knowledge because it is objectively proven knowledge (quoted in Robson, 1993: 58).

Chalmers actually demolishes this 'naïve inductivist' view of science, showing, among other things, that objectivity cannot be guaranteed and that there is no fully proven knowledge. This is hardly the place to go deeply into a critique of naïve inductivism and a definition of science. This would need a full exploration of, among many others, Popper's falsificationism, Kuhn's approach of theories or Feyerabend's dismissal of scientific method (Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970; Kuhn, 1970; Feyerabend, 1975).

The general conclusion is that there is no universal conception of science and scientific method. How therefore avoid a relativist approach justifying that 'anything goes' as scientific? Chalmers suggests that the four following questions need to be asked if one is to make decisions about any subject: what are the aims of the enquiry? What are the methods used to achieve these aims? To what extent do the methods enable the aims to be achieved? What interests does it serve? (quoted in Robson, 1993: 59). Carr and Kemmis (1986) present a similar approach to scientific knowledge

> What distinguishes scientific knowledge is not so much its logical status, as the fact that it is the outcome of a process of enquiry, which is governed by critical norms, and standards of rationality (quoted in Robson, 1993: 59).

Case study therefore does not present any particular difficulty with this approach.

The main concern regarding case study remains that it often makes generalisation difficult. This problematic dimension of the case study however cannot be a justifiable reason to dismiss case study as a legitimate strategy to conduct research. As Yin argues

> case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions, and not to populations or universes. (...) The investigator's goal is to expand and generalise theories (analytical generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation) (1994: 10).

It seems therefore that case study methodology should not be rejected a priori. The attention should be focused on *why* it was chosen as an appropriate methodology and *how* it has been conducted so as to evaluate the legitimacy and the justifiability of this strategy for a given piece of research.

My theoretical proposition is that the notion of community is a value-laden one and that a large set of exclusively positive connotations makes it a potentially strategic tool in a given framework. The framework chosen in this study is that of cultural projects organised in urban regeneration schemes. Indeed urban regeneration policies have increasingly mobilised the notion of community as a crucial element to guarantee the success of the schemes. In parallel the arts and culture have increasingly been seen as positive vector for successful urban regeneration. It thus seemed interesting to examine what happened at the conjunction of these three dimensions.

Going back to Yin's point about the relation between phenomenon and context as an important dimension for case studies, I would like to emphasise that my research consists of exploring the intersection of two contexts (cultural projects in urban regeneration and the semantic particularity of the notion of community as seen in chapter one). It is basically at the intersection of these two contexts that the phenomenon – the strategic dimension of the use of the notion of community - is produced. As I demonstrated in chapter two and three, the contextual conditions are believed to be 'highly pertinent to the phenomenon' since urban regeneration policies do explicitly mobilise the notions of community and culture as crucial to achieve their set aims and goals. In my research, the boundaries of what constitutes *the* context and *the* phenomenon are difficult to determine in a simple manner. Yin's definition of case study is grounded on a simple pattern where a single phenomenon is to be analysed in a single context. My case studies are located in a more complex framework, where two contexts are embedded in one another: cultural projects organised in regeneration form a context composed of the two dimensions. The phenomenon – the strategic dimension of the use of the notion of community – is therefore produced in this double-layered context.

Moreover the case study methodology is highly recommended when the main purpose of the research is *exploratory* (as opposed to explanatory or confirmatory). The notion of exploratory study should be seen as one that investigates a novel situation where there is little guidance or baseline on which to rely. In this instance the potentially strategic dimension of the notion of 'community' in the chosen context (i.e. cultural projects in urban regeneration) has, to my knowledge, never been explored. As I have mentioned earlier, the term community in urban regeneration seems to 'trigger' some specific practices (participation, consultation, etc). Studies of urban regeneration schemes have explored some of these aspects (see Hoggett, 1997). However these studies were never concerned with issues at stake regarding cultural projects. I aim to investigate the specific issues which might be brought up by these projects.

The case study should not be understood as a research design feature alone. It is not a data collection technique, but rather a 'comprehensive research strategy' (Yin, 1994: 13). As such, it differs from survey, experiment, archival analysis or history. As with any research strategy, the main concern lies within the definition of the procedures of inquiry rather than the choice of the strategy itself. Thus the focus should be on the quality of design of the case study(ies). In order to evaluate this fundamental element of the research strategy, the following criteria should be carefully taken account: construct validity, external validity and reliability (Yin, 1994: 33).

Testing construct validity deals with the chosen set of operational procedures. In other words 'does it measure what [one] thinks it measures?' (Robson, 1993: 68). In my case the term 'measure' might not be entirely relevant, I would rather chose 'evaluate' or 'assess'. A common tactic to increase construct validity is to take a multi-method approach (Yin, 1994; Robson, 1993). I personally used archive analysis, interviews and participant observation (see section 2.3 below).

The second criterion, external validity, deals with the issue of generalisability. As we mentioned earlier, it is important to bear in mind that case studies do not rely on statistical generalisation but on analytical generalisation. A specific replication logic is necessary to case study. This issue will be tackled in section 2.1.2 on multiple case studies design.

Finally the reliability criterion ensures that should the same case study be studied following the exact same procedures, the findings would be similar. It is commonly asserted in social science that, as Robson simply puts it 'unless a measure is reliable, it cannot be valid' (1993: 67). There are some causes for unreliability which are particularly difficult for the investigator to control, such as subject bias (when the subject of inquiry behaves in a certain way *because* of the inquiry). In such case the repetition of the procedure as well as a multi-method approach usually helps decreasing the risk. Observer bias has also been seen as another threat to reliability. This dimension goes beyond a simple understanding of the observer consciously or unconsciously imposing judgement on his/her findings. It is far beyond my scope to enter a discussion about what constitutes the notion of objectivity in research. If one takes the simplest definition of objectivity, as 'existing independently of perception or an individual's conceptions' (Collins, 1993: 781), it is easy to see how important a notion it is in research. It is also easy to realise how difficult it is to integrate fully, especially in social sciences and even more so when one deals with qualitative research. It is not so much about discussing whether a reality exists independently of social constructions (i.e. perceptions, interpretations, and presentations) as to ask how far the researcher's

specific constructions are empirically grounded in those of the members. Hammersley (1992) outlines this position as 'subtle realism'. His position starts from three premises:

(a) The validity of knowledge cannot be assessed with certainty. Assumptions can only be judged for their plausibility and credibility.

(b) Phenomena also exist independently of our claims concerning them. Our assumptions about them can only more or less approximate these phenomena.

(c) Reality becomes accessible across the (different) perspectives on phenomena. Research aims at presenting reality not reproducing it (in Flick, 1998: 225).

As Altheide and Johnson point out

> Subjects of ethnographic studies are invariably temporally and spatially bounded. The range of activities under investigation occurs in time and space (which becomes a 'place' when given a meaning) provides one anchorage, among many others, for penetrating the hermeneutic circle. A key feature of this knowledge, of course, is its incompleteness, its implicit and tacit dimension. Our subjects always know more than they can tell us, usually even more than they allow us to see; likewise we often know more than we can articulate (1994: 491).

The notion of *positioning* in qualitative research is thus of primary importance in order not to be lured into the idea that objectivity and absolute valid facts can be reached. As Greene defines it

> Positioning means occupying a certain location with a given [research] context and both seeing and understanding that context from that particular location. [...] One's position *reflects* personal history and developed value stances. One's position *will affect* actual knowing about and understanding of a given [research] context (1996: 285. Emphasis in original).

The awareness of this positioning is obviously not *the* answer to the problem of observer bias. However reflexivity from the researcher can help a great deal in avoiding pretentious and excessive claims. Thus my position as a young white female investigator was certainly a dimension I was aware of, especially when conducting research mostly among middle aged Bengali men. It is always difficult to determine what effect this positioning had on the overall data gathering (what were the elements hidden from me because of this position and what was, on the contrary, revealed to me because of the same reasons?). For the interviews involving middle aged Bengali men, I decided to 'use' this factor by pretending that I was rather naïve and un-knowledgeable about the subject matter I was investigating. It was

mainly based on the acknowledgement that the Bengali culture and the structure of the community was partially unknown to me. I had the impression that this allowed most of them to satisfy their potential desire to be in power position by 'teaching' me about their situation, their vision of the community and of the projects I was interested in. I am aware that this could seem a patronising attitude from my part. However I felt that presenting myself as an 'expert' in 'their' culture and 'their' community would have threatened my credibility. As all my informants spoke very good English, language was not a major issue. However it happened on a few occasions during the meetings of the Baishakhi Mela Steering Committee that bouts of conversations would be conducted in Bengali. However as another two non-Bengali speakers also regularly attended the meetings, this would soon be interrupted by the Chair and meetings would resume in English.

Overall my research was greatly facilitated by a number of key individuals (e.g. the Co-ordinator of the Bangladesh Festival Community Events programme, the Chair of the Baishakhi Mela Steering Committee) who were very welcoming and accommodating with me. They agreed on my observation of meetings, accepted a number of interviews and never tried to make this into a (even implicit) 'contract' (where it would be understood that I should play down potential criticisms in exchange for this 'open door'). I did not get the impression that my presence was 'imposed' by them on other organisers. On the contrary, the majority of those involved in the organisation of the festivals (with the exception of the Artistic Director of Arts Worldwide) welcomed the interest and attention paid to their event.

2.1.2 Types of case studies

Case study research can be conducted through single case study or multiple case studies. Moreover case studies might be holistic or embedded (Yin, 1993: 38). The difference between single and multiple case studies is self-explanatory. Single case study is usually used when it represents a critical case (when the case meets all the conditions to confirm, challenge or extend the theory), an extreme or unique case (when the case is so rare that any case is worth investigating), or a revelatory case (when a case is for the first time accessible to scientific investigation) (Yin, 1993: 39-40).

The rationale for multiple case studies lies often in the replication logic.

> Each case must be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results (a *literal replication*) or (b) produces contrasting results but for predictable results (a *theoretical replication*) (Yin, 1993: 46. Emphasis in original).

In this situation the importance of the theoretical framework is obvious: it needs to state the conditions under which literal or theoretical replication are likely to be found.

The difference between holistic and embedded case studies lies in the number of units of analysis. When case studies (whether single or multiple case studies) include several units or subunits of analysis, they come under the heading of embedded case study design. An embedded design can be a useful device to focus the study and avoid an excessively abstract level in the conduct of the study, thus lacking clear measure or data. The risk inherent to the embedded case study design lies in the phenomenon of interest becoming the context because excessive focus will have been put on the sub-unit without returning to the larger unit (Yin, 1993). I will show how I tried to avoid this risk in section 2.2.

2.2 Which case studies?

As I demonstrated in chapter 2, urban regeneration has recently developed with a strong link to a discourse articulated around the concept of 'community'. This has motivated my choice to 'pick' a regeneration programme as a context, and investigate how this notion was conceptualised, used and implemented on a specific scheme. For reasons that I will develop below, I chose Cityside Regeneration Ltd, an urban regeneration agency located in the heart of the country's largest Bengali area, in the East End of London. The two Bengali festivals were chosen for the importance they devoted to the notion of community (in different ways).

2.2.1 The context

- The area

My choice for two case studies within the same geographical area and relating to the same ethnic minority is not coincidental. The neighbourhood and community on which I decided to focus proved to provide one of the richest and most fascinating cases anyone could wish for. As I will quickly outline below, and further in the next chapters, the area seems to be a laboratory of urban processes going on at once in a global city: a diasporic community establishing itself in an inner city according to specific modes, urban regeneration, gentrification... Moreover these simultaneous developments take place in a unique geographical area, as this extremely deprived neighbourhood is located at a stone's throw from London's financial square mile, the City.

Reliable statistics about the Bangladeshis are difficult to find: the last official figures are from the 1991 National Census (whose results were probably partly flawed by the Poll tax criteria[13]). The Bangladeshi population in Britain is estimated at around 300,000, of which

[13] The Poll tax criteria were effectively based on the number of inhabitants per household, which led many families not to declare all inhabitants in their household so as to avoid high levels of taxation.

around 86,000 are in London. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) has the largest Bangladeshi community in Europe with around 50,000 people (i.e. around 28% of TH). In 1991, 37% of the Bangladeshi population was UK born. In 1993 Bangladeshis represented 50.7% of the schoolchildren in LBTH[14] and more than half of the Bangladeshi population in the Borough was under 25. Tower Hamlets has the fastest rising youth population in Europe. Moreover the Bangladeshi population remains the most deprived in the country (Modood et al, 1998). More than 4 out of 5 Bangladeshi household incomes are below half the national average and less than 10% of Bangladeshi women are economically active. The levels of unemployment are very high: in 1996 unemployment in the area stood at 27.9%, with Bangladeshi unemployment at 47.3% and youth unemployment at 22.7%[15].

The settlement history and subsequent political organisation of the Bengali community is an important dimension of the study I will be conducting. Indeed the integration of the Bengali community to the social space of Tower Hamlets is especially remarkable from a political point of view. If at the beginning it was mainly reliant on the Bangladeshi Welfare Association, which helped the newcomers to settle down (e.g. administrative issues and job search), the increase in numbers of Bengali arrivals in the 1970s led to the multiplication of associations aiming at assisting the settlers regarding training, education, health, etc (Garbin, 1998). These multiple organisations have produced numerous 'community leaders' and local power relationships. I will return to these aspects in detail in the following chapter.

It is important to precise here that given my theoretical investigation into the discourse(s) around community, it would have biased my research to define 'the Bengali community'. Indeed what is of interest to me are the different perceptions of, meanings attributed to 'community'. All along my research I have taken as a stand that the community was whatever my informants would tell me it is. For this reason I am reluctant to refer to the 'Bengali community' as if it were an objective entity equivalent to 'ethnic minority'. Given my framework, resorting to this common sense understanding of the word would therefore have been methodologically wrong and would have almost defeated the purpose of this work!

- Cityside Regeneration Ltd

Cityside Regeneration Ltd is a partnership led by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, funded by the Single Regeneration Budget, which clearly aimed to continue the regeneration initiative led by the Bethnal Green City Challenge between 1992 and 1997.

It started in April 1997 after having secured a £11m grant from the SRB Round 3. Its remit, planned over five years, was 'to ensure [that] the physical, cultural and human assets of the

---

[14] London Borough of Tower Hamlets education figure
[15] Cityside figures

area are fully developed to create a vibrant and magnetic partnership which attracts inward investment, generates jobs for local people and creates new business opportunities' (Cityside Regeneration Ltd, 1996: 2). The commitment to 'community consultation' and 'community involvement' was expressed as being integral to the forward strategy.

It proposed to deliver its objectives through a programme organised along three themes: 'breaking stereotypes' (including two projects: ethnic minority graduates project and supply net, to prepare local SMEs to cater for the requirements of the City), 'development and diversification of the local economy' (including three projects: quality managed workspace, strengthening the specialist sectors and development of new enterprise) and 'releasing the visitor economy' (including four projects: key attractions, gateways, streetscapes and raising the profile). The project of most interest to us is 'Raising the profile', 'a new trail based arts and events project designed to develop and promote an integrated strategy for increasing public perception not only of the arts, but also of the Cityside environment in general' (Cityside Regeneration Ltd, 1997b: 2). This £2.5m (planned budget) project was outsourced to Alternative Arts, a local arts organisation established in 1971 and specialised in community arts. The aim of the Raising the Profile project was to 'develop and support festivals which showcased the diversity of culture, history and products in the area', 'utilise the cultural industries as a catalyst for the regeneration of the commercial and community environment', 'develop an area marketing strategy covering PR, information, distribution and events' (Cityside Regeneration Ltd, 1997c: 2-4).

In 1999, Cityside Regeneration Ltd made a successful bid to SRB 5 and secured a £21 million pounds grant to administer the "Connecting Communities" programme. Key projects include 'improving community premises; tackling drug use amongst young people; developing innovative micro credit and access to finance initiatives; development of strategic visitor attractions' (Cityside Regeneration Ltd, 1999: 4). As the case studies both are being funded by SRB3, I will not develop the features of this SRB5 programme further.

2.2.2 The two case studies

For my research I decided to investigate two case studies. This decision was motivated by several reasons. Given the large extent to which my questions relied on the interpretation of community from the actors involved, it seemed insufficient to limit myself to a single case study, as it might have reduced the typicality of the phenomenon observed. However, as a single researcher on this project, I felt that, for logistical reasons, I could not engage in more than two case studies. Moreover the coherence of the hermeneutic interpretation implies either a single researcher or a very closely controlled qualitative interpretation framework.

The two case studies were not chosen simultaneously but in a chronological order: the investigation of the first case led me to decide on the second one. Indeed a set of issues regarding the understanding of community had emerged from the first case study (see below) and made me think that these issues might be idiosyncratic to this particular case (I will return to these potentially idiosyncratic features in the next chapter). I therefore consciously chose a second case, which presented different features in order to test theoretical replication.

- The Bangladesh Festival

The Arts Worldwide (AWW) Bangladesh Festival was presented as 'Europe's largest ever festival celebrating Bangladesh'. The body in charge of its organisation, AWW, is a limited company with charity status, set up in 1982, whose aims are 'to promote, maintain, improve and advance education particularly by the encouragement of the Arts with special reference to the Arts from all parts of the world which belong to or relate to, or stem from, artistic traditions other than the Western classical tradition' (Arts Worldwide, 1982: 9). It has organised eight international festivals (e.g. Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Armenia, Kurdistan, South India, and the Horn of Africa), which usually consist of displaying arts exhibition, dance performance, concerts, poetry and literature as well as some educational events (e.g. workshops introducing the public to the traditional cultural activity of the country in focus). Its main target market is composed of ABC1 adult audience who read the quality press, as well as additional target markets including the community of the country in focus living in the UK.

In 1999, for the first time, a major community arts project was incorporated into the usual programme. This is the part of the festival I will concentrate my attention on. Organised as an independent series of events from the general Bangladesh Festival, the Community Events Programme received, among other sources of funding, important support from Cityside Regeneration Ltd, which allocated a grant of £20,000 towards its organisation (Raising the Profile budget). It included a variety of activities, which all aimed to involve Bangladeshi youngsters of the Spitalfields area, as well as a training scheme in which four Bangladeshi people, aged 16 to 21, would be recruited and provided with a job so as to gain a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 4. The whole Community Events Programme targeted under-30 year olds and hinged on three main notions: 'capacity building', 'empowerment' and 'community profile raising'[16]. Moreover a feasibility study had been presented, in June 1998, to Cityside Regeneration, for a launch day of the festival, consisting of various events and activities in the Spitalfields area.

[16] See archive analysis in chapter 5.

The Bangladesh Festival Community Events Programme represented therefore a case typical of the phenomenon I had set myself to observe: clearly within the realm of an urban regeneration scheme, i.e. that led by Cityside Regeneration Ltd, and hinging on the notion of community. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, the notion of community as featured in urban regeneration is typified by its link to other notions (e.g. participation, involvement, etc). The notions of 'capacity building', 'empowerment' and 'community profile raising', which characterise the Arts Worldwide Community Events Programme, are some of these concepts.

Even though the Festival was generally seen as a great success in terms of public attendance and coverage, it did cause aggravation and protests from a number of local Bangladeshi people. I will investigate the nature of these claims and protests in the next chapter, but it is important to highlight this dimension of the Bangladesh Festival, as this is the very reason which subsequently led me to chose the Baishaki Mela as a second case study. Indeed most of the objections to the Bangladesh Festival hinged on the fact that some prominent local Bangladeshi people judged that there was a clear lack of involvement of the Bangladeshi community. As the dispute had a substantial impact on the organisation of the Festival, I came to the decision that it would provide me with interesting insight if I investigated an event organised mostly by local Bangladeshi people in order to find out evaluate the difference that 'community involvement' makes.

The methodology I chose to collect the data was the following: archive analysis of the Community Events Programme, participant observation and interviews, which I will return to in 2.3.

- The Baishaki Mela

The Baishaki Mela is a yearly event organised on Brick Lane and its surroundings. It celebrates the Bengali New Year, which usually takes place around the beginning of the monsoon season. The first edition of this festival was in 1998 and proved successful since around 20,000 people thronged into the area. The organisers in Tower Hamlets try to replicate the joyful, crowded and artistic atmosphere which they saw as the authentic mark of the *Mela* in Bangladesh. Brick Lane is turned into a pedestrian zone, allowing the restaurants and cafes to set out tables and chairs *al fresco*, whilst a vast array of stalls sold home-made food and small handicrafts. The focal point of the Mela's cultural activities are stage sets where different artistic events are performed – *baul* (traditional folk music), classical (music, dance, poetry and drama) and pop/DJs.

The main dimension of this festival is that it is strongly presented as a 'community-led' festival. The organising committee is mainly composed of Bengali members of the local neighbourhood, as well as a few advisers from the local regeneration agencies (namely

Cityside and the Environment Trust). The event is subsidised mostly by Cityside, from the Raising the Profile budget, (around £20,000, i.e. half of the Festival's total budget) and other regeneration agencies as well as some local private sources of funding. It represents one of the highlights of a cultural strategy devised by Cityside Regeneration Ltd in order to achieve the regeneration aims set out for the agency (see section 2.1.2).

The methods I chose to collect the data were the following: archive analysis, participant observation and interviews, which I will return to in 2.3.

2.3 Data collection

2.3.1 Archive analysis

An archive is simply a set of records. An important feature of an archive is that it has been 'produced for some other purpose than for [the] use of a researcher' (Robson, 1993: 282). Archive analysis is part of a major group of methods known as *unobtrusive methods* (Robson, 1993: 267). The advantages of such method are that it is non-reactive, in other words, the document is not affected by the fact that it is used for a research purpose, and enquirer does not have direct contact with the person(s) who have produced the documents and therefore there is no risk of a behaviour being altered by the presence of the enquirer. Moreover it usually is more than an individual's opinion: administrative records for instance are written and used as an organisation's statement, which can be useful when one is interested in general trends within a particular sector, for instance.
However it is important not to rely excessively on such documents, with the assumption that the data are 'objective'. There is always a highly probability than even with regards to administrative records, an agenda is at play which tends to give direction to the kind of data registered or the type of language used. It is important to bear this dimension in mind when analysing the archive data.

The festivals' archive, which I analysed, constituted of funding applications, reports to funders, minutes of meetings. Indeed funding applications and reports are by their very nature the formulation of the identity of the institutions being dealt with as well as their aims and objectives, thus including their understanding of their 'target'. All the documents I included in my archive contained the term 'community'.
The archive analysis aimed at giving me information mostly on

- what was the actors' and agencies' understanding of 'community'?
- what was the respective role of the regeneration agency and the organisation itself in the organisation of the cultural projects?

- what were the stated aims and goals of the agencies and actors?

2.3.2 Interviews[17]

The interview is a kind of conversation 'initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him/her on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation' (Robson, 1993: 228). The interview can be *fully structured,* actually a questionnaire; *semi-structured,* where a set of questions is loosely set but modifiable with the context of the 'conversation'; or *unstructured,* where the interviewer has a general area of interest and concerns but lets the conversation develop within this frame. Thus semi-structured and unstructured interviews are far less directive and give the interviewee more the role of an informant than a respondent. The great advantage of interviews as a data-gathering technique is the richness of the material that it provides... which can in turn be a drawback when the amount of data is so important and detailed that it becomes difficult to disentangle. Once again, the answer to such risk is the rigour of the framework in which the investigator is working.

My interest was very much about *perceptions* of what 'community' means, as well as the perceptions of the forms this took when implemented in specific projects. Therefore structured interviews would have been prescriptive, a risk I wanted to avoid categorically. My aim was not to 'check' whether I had a relevant definition of community but really to try to establish the subtleties, which the term might encompass.

On the other hand, I needed precise elements about the implementation of 'community' arts projects in regeneration (e.g. interviewees' perceptions of community involvement, participation, empowerment, etc). Therefore an unstructured interview would have likely been too wide a framework to access these precisions.

Of course the lack of standardization that semi-structured interviews imply might raise the disadvantage of diminished reliability (Robson, 1993: 230). This can be avoided by showing rigour and avoiding the temptation of getting 'carried away' with the informant's possible digression. A strict understanding of the kind of data one is after is essential and the interviewer must give him/herself a strong framework in the form of a set of questions previously worked out and adaptable only to a minimal extent.

As far as the Bangladesh Festival is concerned I conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the staff in charge of the organisation of the Community Events Programme, the artists employed to conduct the workshops cited above, and some members of the Bangladeshi community in Spitalfields. Even though the interviews of the latter were not initially planned in my design I felt compelled to conduct them as some important issues regarding the interpretation of 'community' had emerged in the duration of the organisation of the festival.

As for the Baishaki Mela, I conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the members of the organisation committee, the Cityside staff involved with the project and some artists who took part in the Festival.

Interviews were always arranged in advance, directly by myself. I would never try to 'catch' an informant for an unwanted interview. I never hid my 'status' as a PhD student nor the fact that the interviews were for my doctoral research. However I did not explain in detail what it was I wanted to know – i.e. detailed perceptions of the notion of 'community' - and usually presented it as investigating the festival itself, rather the notion of 'community'. I felt that if I was too explicit about the aim of my research, my interviewees might start trying giving very elaborate and 'thought through' answers, whilst I was after sincere opinions, as well as more 'elusive' elements (such as half-assumptions, taken for granted beliefs, etc) . I was also worried that it might trigger suspicion about a possible 'hidden agenda' of mine, as it proved a very sensitive topic. I therefore brought questions about community as a notion into some questions about the festivals.

I was lucky not to face the problem of reluctant informants, as the vast majority of those I asked to interview happily accepted. This was mainly due to the fact that in both situations, there was a great deal of controversy about which most people seemed keen to express themselves. However, even though I tape recorded most of the interviews with the staff of the Bangladesh Festival, the majority of the interviews with Bangladeshi people were impossible to tape record. Both festivals were seen as relating to very sensitive topics (especially local power relationships) and most interviewees felt uncomfortable at having their conversations kept on record. However I was allowed to take notes, provided that I would keep some information 'off the record'.
In order to avoid the lack of reliability mentioned above, a similar set of open questions was asked to all informants.

---

[17] Please note that in the following chapters, italics will indicate citations from interviews or from participant observation. They will mark the difference between *spoken* and 'written' words.

The interviews aimed at giving me information mostly on

- how did the actors understand 'community'?
- how did the actors understand the concepts of community involvement, community consultation?
- why were the actors interested in the cultural projects?

2.3.3 Participant observation[18]

Participant observation as an ethnographic fieldwork technique is 'the hallmark of cultural anthropology' (Spradley, 1980: 3). This particular view on participant observation is a widely shared one. The main aim of this method is 'to record, then describe, analyse and interpret the actions and behaviours of people in their own setting' (Spradley, 1980: 3). As such it does not necessitate being restricted to anthropological enquiry. The main advantage of this technique is its directness. People are being asked about their views, feelings or attitudes; they are being watched and listened whilst they do (whatever it is they are doing) and talk (Robson, 1993). 'The direct observation in the field permits a lack of artificiality which is all too rare with other techniques' (Robson, 1993: 191). 'Ethnography offers one of the best ways to understand complex features of modern life. It can show the range of cultural differences and how people with diverse perspectives interact' (Spradley, 1980: 16). However this does not eradicate the question of how to know what the behaviour of the people observed would have been, had they not been observed? This can be slightly minimised by conducting the participant observation over a long period of time, so that the informants get so used to the presence of the researcher that the risks of adapting their behaviour is lessened.

There are several types of participation (Spradley, 1980: 58-59; Robson, 1993: 197), which contrast in their degree of involvement by the observer and those s/he observes. Ironically, it can range from non-participation (or observer) where the investigator has no involvement with the people or activities studied to complete participation, where the enquirer is fully involved in the life and activities of those s/he observes. Passive observation (or participant-as-observer) is also a possibility, when the observer is 'present at the scene of action but does not participate or interact with other to great extent' (Spradley, 1980: 59). There can also be several levels of moderate participations, which mainly depend on the research being conducted.

I decided to use this methodological tool in order to explore the actual implementation of the events, which composed my case studies. This was carried out by attending meetings,

[18] See previous footnote.

workshops, etc. Indeed I believe that observing the organisation directly gives a margin of increased reliability over exclusive reliance on actors' views. Being able to follow discussions among actors about the festival, its aims and purpose, helped in my task of delineating perceptions on the notion of community and its potential strategic dimension as well as understand better the relationships between actors, which proved an important dimension of the issues at stake.

As far as the Bangladesh Festival was concerned, my focus was on the various events which would constitute the Community Events Programme. Most of them followed a 'workshop' pattern, a large number of which I attended and participated in. My role was closer to participant-as-observer than complete participant. Since the aim of the Community Events Programme was clearly defined as involving Bangladeshi youngsters, I felt it would be inappropriate to engage myself in complete participation. I also spent a fair amount of time with the Modern Apprentices, who were in charge of the organisation of the Community Events Programme. I had hoped to be able to take part in meetings between the Community Events Programme team and the AWW general management staff. Unfortunately some resistance from members of the latter prevented me from doing so. I believe that these meetings would have been a precious source of information, especially in terms of finding out what the understanding of 'community' was. There was indeed a great fear of discord between the organisers of the Community Events Programme and some members of the Bengali community as the latter claimed that they were very angry with the lack of involvement of local Bengali people as well as other aspects of the festival management. The impossibility to get first hand information by attending the general management meetings was only partially compensated by the information given to me by the Coordinator of the Community Events Programme, Razia Newaz-Shariff. I did have a great deal of trust in her impartiality in the way she reported on these meetings. She consistently attempted to give me the point of view of each party, showed a great awareness of what was at stake in each claim or decision made and did not get herself involved in the dispute. She was not the target of the attacks from the Bengali people, as there was an overall consensus on the fact that she only implemented decisions made by her employers. This gave her a certain objectivity in the turbulence. However this situation was not completely satisfactory. Indeed it certainly is problematic to rely excessively on a single informant. However I tried to compensate this drawback by a close archive analysis.

Regarding the Baishaki Mela, I took part, once again as a participant-as-observer, in the meetings held by the organisation committee. These were the only situations where I could really take part as a participant-as-observer. Indeed even though the meetings were only decision-making situations, those in charge of the actual organisation of the festival worked

very much individually. As such, my presence would no longer qualify as participant observation, but would become an interview.

Finally, even though in this case, there was no compelling reason for me not to engage as a complete participant, I felt it was necessary to maintain a consistency in the techniques used for both case studies. I did attend about 70% of the meetings, always for the whole time they lasted.

The participant observation aimed at giving me information on

- which actors were involved as 'the community'?
- what was their understanding of 'community'?
- how were the concepts of community involvement, community consultation, community participation understood?
- why were the actors interested in taking part in such a cultural project?

2.3.4 Triangulation

Originally it was taken as a metaphor 'from navigation and military strategy that use multiple reference points to locate an object's exact position' (Smith, quoted in Flick, 1992: 176). Triangulation is 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon' (Denzin, 1978: 291). It is therefore a strategy to increase scope, depth and consistency in methodological proceedings, in other words to 'increase reliability by a *reduction of inappropriate uncertainty'* (Robson, 1993: 290. Emphasis in original).

As a methodical principle in social science this idea was developed in the discussion about non reactive measurements to find out 'if a hypothesis can survive the confrontation with a series of complementary methods of testing' (Campbell & Fiske, quoted in Flick, 1992: 176).

Denzin (1978) distinguishes different types of triangulation: first of all data triangulation is a combination of different data sources that are examined at different times, places and persons. A second type is investigator triangulation which refers to the employment of different investigators to control the subjective bias from the individual. Theory triangulation is an approach that uses multiple perspectives and hypotheses. A variety of theoretical points of view are placed side-by-side in order to assess their utility and power. Finally the methodological triangulation involves a 'complex process of playing different methods off against each other so as to maximise the validity of fields efforts' (Denzin, 1978: 304).

Triangulation will be most fruitful if the selection of triangulated perspectives and methods is substantiated: 'What is important is to choose at least one method which is specifically suited to exploring structural aspects of the problem and at least on which can capture the essential elements of its meaning to those involved' (Fielding & Fielding, 1986: 34). Thus triangulation

'takes seriously into account that research is dealing with different "versions of the world"' (Flick, 1992: 194).

My methodological approach was relying on both theoretical and methodological triangulation. The combination of theories of community, urban regeneration and the social role of arts aimed at illuminating each other's complementarity and utility. As far as the methodological triangulation is concerned, the archive analysis did give me a good understanding of the structural aspect of the problem I was dealing with, with participant observation and interviews gave me invaluable data on the meaning of the problem to those involved. The effort to triangulate data was not only in order to increase reliability but also to deepen my understanding of the issues at stake. The methods were reinforcing each other as they were designed to work complementarily.

In conclusion, I believe that this approach was appropriate to the case studies I chose in order to investigate the research topic. As will emerge in the next two chapters that present the data, each method has had its own value. Thus if the most 'tangible' data emerged from the archive analysis and the interviews, the participant observation was crucial in order to make sense of underlying social and cultural processes, of relationships between actors and of more subtle understandings that different actors might have of the central notions. I will now turn to the analysis of the data gathered during fieldwork.

CHAPTER 5 – COMMUNITY: THIS OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE?

INTRODUCTION

As was explained in the previous chapter, the fieldwork for this research partly aimed to explore the diverse meanings attributed to the notion of community as well as to evaluate the ways the notion was used by actors, in the context of cultural projects within an urban regeneration scheme. The issues and stakes presented in the first part of this thesis will thus be scrutinised from the perspective of the empirical data gathered through the fieldwork.

This chapter will thus investigate the multiple understandings given to the notion of community by the local urban regeneration agency in Spitalfields, I.e. Cityside Regeneration Ltd, as well as by the two cultural organisations in charge of the festivals that constitute the case studies: the Arts Worldwide Bangladesh Festival and the Baishakhi Mela. We will then analyse how the 'community strategies' of these organisations has been effectively implemented. Finally an analysis of the fragmentation(s) of the community in focus will allow putting the general framework in perspective.

1. MULTI-REFERENTIALITY OF 'COMMUNITY'

As has been demonstrated in the first chapter, one of the most salient features of the term 'community' – and, by extension, of the concept itself – is the multiple categories (social, local or other), ideas, and notions that it refers to. We have seen that this dimension, combined with the exclusively positive connotations attached to the term, has made this concept a powerful rhetorical tool, especially within the framework of urban regeneration policies. We will now focus on the different uses and understandings of this much referred to phrase so as to map out its potential strategic dimension. We will investigate the multireferentiality of the term in three different discursive contexts: Cityside Regeneration Ltd, the Arts Worldwide (AWW) Bangladesh Festival and the Baishakhi Mela.

1.1 Cityside Regeneration Ltd

The uses and understanding of 'community' by Cityside Regeneration Ltd is instrumental to the investigation of the projects that will constitute the case studies. As a Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) delivery agency, Cityside Regeneration Ltd has criteria for funding which are – at least partly - determined by concerns with 'community' (see chapter 2). As the most important local funder, these criteria are in turn determinant in the granting of financial support of local projects.

The documents on which the analysis of the uses and understanding of 'community' by Cityside Regeneration Ltd will be based, are the bidding application documents to SRB3 and SRB5, as well as the yearly delivery plans for these two programmes. The choice of this range of archive is motivated by the fact that these documents constitute the framework for the programme management, therefore set the criteria for funding and supporting local projects.

Even though both case studies were funded from SRB3 budget, the SRB5 programme is run, managed and administered by the same team of people at Cityside Regeneration Ltd. The potential evolution between the discourse displayed in each project can therefore be informative: it will allow us to highlight the impact of the general SRB bidding guidance criteria in the implementation of projects, and the impact that more recent programmes (I.e. SRB5) can have on older ones (I.e. SRB3).

First of all, the titles of each programme are themselves indicative of a noticeable tendency with regards to the growing importance of the concept of community in the presentation and implementation of the regeneration programmes: the SRB3 programme is soberly entitled *Cityside* (renamed from a first proposal as *Eastside*) whilst the SRB5 programme has been called *Connecting Communities*. In the same vein, the *Cityside* bidding document mentions the term community twenty-four times, whilst the *Connecting Communities* bidding application contains more than one hundred and fifty mentions of the word. Even though such quantified information is only marginally informative with regards to the understanding of the much-used term by the regeneration agency, it does indicate an undeniable tendency towards an increasing significance of the notion. It is important to recall that SRB3 was devised under the last Conservative government, whereas SRB5 was a Round defined and allocated under New Labour (the differences between the two administrations' conceptualisation of urban regeneration have been examined in chapter 2).

This sharp increase in the number of mentions of the term is mirrored by an enhanced significance of the term in *Connecting Communities* compared with *Cityside*. Thus in the submission document for the *Cityside* programme, the relatively rare mentions of the term community are most often in the main text, with the exception of three sub-sub-titles, and used mostly as references to the local population ('resident communities'; 'local communities'), the main local ethnic minority ('Bangladeshi community'), the professional sector ('business community') and the positive connotation of the notion ('community spirit'; 'community support'). The resort to typical urban regeneration terminology such as 'community capacity building' or 'community involvement' is to be noticed only twice in the whole document. A few hazier uses of the terms are also to be detected in the document (e.g. '[t]he Cultural Heritage Centre... will foster a sense of pride amongst the community'; 'a key objective of the partners is to generate sustainable employment and wealth generation for the community')[19].

On the other hand, the *Connected Communities* bidding document not only mentions the term on many more occasions, but it does so in much more prominent places: more than thirty percent of the titles and subtitles of the document feature 'community'. Moreover these numerous mentions are qualified by a multiplicity of 'community phrases' (e.g. 'community safety'; 'community governance'; 'community planning'; 'community resources'; 'community premises'; 'community festivals'; 'community provision'; 'community organisations'; 'community problems'; 'community led projects'; 'community participation'; 'community involvement'; 'community use'; 'community arts'; 'community development'; 'community interests'; 'community café'; 'local community'; 'ethnic minorities communities'; 'community ownership'). Furthermore this exponential reference to community is accompanied by a more frequent unqualified use of the term (e.g. 'learn in the community'; 'recruiting and training volunteer workers from within the community'; 'sports in the community'; 'services best located in the community'. Here the site of reference is not clarified: is it the local residents? The ethnic minority?).

As the above demonstrates, the sites of references for 'community' are so diverse and numerous that it is impossible to determine precisely 'who' or 'what' constitutes the community that Cityside Regeneration Ltd is addressing and targeting its work to. The nature of the SRB programme is such that geographical boundaries are drawn so that each programme targets a specific local area. References to 'local community(ies)' are thus to be understood as within the boundaries arbitrarily set by the programme managers. But this is

---

[19] This last comment does not suppose that the expression 'ethnic minorities' or 'local community' are necessarily well defined entities, however it seems that such phrases as the last examples imply a great deal of unexplained assumptions.

only one of the many references made to 'community': as has been demonstrated above, the term refers at once to the professional sector, ethnic minorities, residents, etc.

A general conclusion from the close reading of these documents would suggest that the term refers simultaneously to a variety of tangible - if unclear - social groups (residents, ethnic minorities, professional groups, etc), and to an even more unclearly defined concept suggested in 'community phrases' such as those listed above. All these expressions are left undefined, suggesting that their meanings are self-explanatory, at least to those addressed by the documents in question (i.e. government bureaucrats judging the quality of the bid to decide the attribution of funds).

This analysis would allow the suggestion that the government's greater emphasis on 'community' - presented in the first two chapters of this thesis – has affected the discourse of urban regeneration delivery agencies. This is even more noticeable as the yearly Delivery Plans of each programme are subjected to a close reading. Thus the Delivery Plan for year 1 (1997/1998) of the *Cityside* programme hardly mentions the term 'community': significantly the notion is not referred to in the presentation of the objectives of the programme (1997: 2). However in the introduction of the Delivery Plan for year 4 (2000/2001) of the same programme, some extra sections have been added so as to assert that the programme's vision is '[f]or communities in the West of Tower Hamlets to be economically prosperous' (2000: 2). Likewise the 'mission' of Cityside Regeneration Ltd (which had not been explicated in the first year's document) puts forward that 'economic regeneration [will be driven] in the western part of Tower Hamlets through the development of opportunities by public, private and community partnerships' (2000: 2). Moreover, as we have seen in the first two chapters of the thesis, the reference to community in urban regeneration is also made in terms of implementation practice. Thus 'community involvement', 'capacity building', etc have become essential elements of urban regeneration. SRB3 did not put a great deal of emphasis on this dimension whereas the bidding guidance for SRB5 is highlighting these community elements as necessary for successful regeneration. Yet the year 4 Delivery Plan for SRB3 presents some of the objectives of the programme as 'ensuring local community participation in regeneration' and 'developing local community capacity for sustainable economic regeneration' (2000: 2). This is all the more interesting since the only mention of 'community involvement' in the year 1 Delivery Plan was in the description of the number of places to be attributed to different partners on the Partnership board. Thus under the heading 'community' showing three places available to community members, the following explanation can be read: 'nominations to be made through the new west of Borough community forum – intended to ensure the involvement of the community in all of the regeneration programmes

serving the area' (1997: 3). On the other hand, the bidding application for *Cityside* (SRB3) devoted two short paragraphs to 'community involvement' and 'community consultation'.

> **Community consultation** and input: In preparing the bid, our partnership was able to build upon extensive consultation carried out over a six months period by BGCC [Bethnal Green City Challenge] as part of their forward strategy. BGCC consulted various sections of the community (e.g. education and training providers, local businesses, youth, health, cultural and women's organisations) (...)
>
> **Community involvement** in the programme's implementation: Individual projects have been developed from the above consultation. For example, Aldgate subways project is a direct result of a survey of users party which involves users, London Underground, Sedwicks, the local authority and BGCC to secure its delivery (1996: 12. Emphasis in original) .

This short extract from the bidding document submitted by City Regeneration Ltd is significant of the vague understanding of 'community' and 'community involvement'. According to this paragraph, 'community' includes as many institutions as the local authority, a big City insurance firm, London Underground or the previous urban regeneration agency. Moreover the notions 'community consultation' and 'community involvement' do not seem to be clearly differentiated, as the 'community involvement' paragraph only mentions consultation as illustration of this particular process.

On the other hand, the bidding document for SRB5 is slightly more precise with regards to 'community involvement' since the document promises a 'community led regeneration process' (1999: 2) through a 'process of community planning and decision making through Local Areas Boards' (1999: 2). Yet the slippages between 'community involvement' and 'community consultation' are still present.

There is a thus a clear tendency for community to take an increasing significance in Cityside Regeneration Ltd discourse, over the years. This growing importance is to be paralleled with the evolution of official discourse on urban regeneration (see chapter 2). We will now examine how this might be reflected in the discourse of projects organised with funding from Cityside Regeneration Ltd.

1.2 Baishakhi Mela

The Baishakhi Mela is a small-scale project, with a budget of £40,000, occurring over only one day and organised on a voluntary basis by a team of local actors (except for the

regeneration officers who work as advisors on the festival as part of their duties). It is organised by a Steering Committee made up of Bengali local actors as well as some regeneration officers from Cityside Regeneration Ltd and it constitutes an important event on Cityside calendar. As we will see in a later section (2.2), the role of the regeneration agency is fundamental in the conception and organisation of the festival. The above presentation of the uses and understandings of the notion of community by the agency is therefore fundamental to understand the backdrop for the Baishakhi Mela as it provided the frame of reference in which the organisers needed to fit. Thus most of the funding applications were made in collaboration with Cityside Regeneration Ltd officers. As a result most documentation related to the festival was written or at least formulated by individuals who work within an understanding of 'community' as provided by Cityside Regeneration Ltd. Yet interestingly most of the corpus of documents related to the Baishakhi Mela did not refer much to the notion. However for the reasons just mentioned there is little archive on which to base the analysis. Moreover we will uncover a large part of the uses and understandings of 'community' in the context of the Baishakhi Mela in the next section (2.2) about community involvement.

Yet there is still an important point to be made regarding the understandings of community in the context of the Baishakhi Mela, which came across mostly during interviews and meetings: the shifting meanings of the term between 'community as "us"' and 'community as "them"'. It is an important dimension to emphasise since it is applicable only for the Baishakhi Mela. We have pointed out earlier that the Steering Committee includes both Bangladeshi local actors and regeneration officers. The latter never use the term 'community' to refer to a notion that would include themselves, a characteristic that is also pertinent for the organisers of the Arts World Wide Bangladesh Festival: community equals 'them', an external entity that needs to empowered, involved, etc but to which one does not belong. On the other hand, the discursive situation is very different as far as the Bangladeshi members are concerned. Indeed 'community' refers to 'them' or 'us' depending on situations – even though it is fair to stress that the overwhelming majority of references to community tend to include the protagonist (i.e. usually Bangladeshi members refer to 'community' as 'us'). Yet most Bangladeshi members tend to locate themselves on a liminal position that at once includes them but remains an external entity that is <u>represented</u> by them. Thus in every interview conducted with Bangladeshi members of the Steering Committee, in every organisation meeting that I attended, the word 'we' never referred to the 'Bangladeshi community at large'; it referred merely to the 'us members of the Steering Committee'. References to the Bangladeshi community at large was made by using the word... 'community'.

We will see that it is very different with regards to AWW's approach to the notion.

1.3 Arts Worldwide (AWW)

As mentioned before, this organisation, specialising in 'non-European arts', organised for the first time a 'Community Events Programme' as part of its Bangladesh Festival in 1998. As presented in the Report on the Community Events Programme, its principal aims were

> to help young people to develop life skills; to provide capacity building opportunities for local organisations; to actively involve the local Bangladeshi community in the Festival; to produce a high quality public event in and around Brick Lane; to support and facilitate regeneration activities in the Spitalfields area (1999b: 2).

Given the framework in which AWW organised the Community Events Programme, i.e. a Bangladesh Festival, it is unsurprising that the majority of references to community made in its various documents are in the expression 'Bangladeshi community'. The analyses of reports written by the conceiver of the original Programme, Warren Lakin, and of interviews with the Community Events Programme Co-ordinator, Razia Newaz Shariff, give a good pointer to the way 'community' is understood for in the context of this project.

First of all, the community exists, both physically and as a shared identity. Reports and interview give extensive descriptions of its location as well as its economic and demographic features. Thus Razia explained that

> *Historically Brick Lane was very much divided into three areas, and the Bengali community concentrated in the middle area (from the Sonali Bank to Hanbury St)*[20].

As mentioned above, there is a consistent use of 'community' as synonymous to 'Bengali people'. But in Razia's speech the 'local community' also equates 'Bengali people'.

> *The Bengali community concentrated in the middle area (from the Sonali Bank to Hanbury St) and after that it is the Truman brewery and in the 70s and 80s you had the boundary estates and the Bengali community had difficulties in going into this area. The Truman's has been taken over by companies now like the Vibe promotion, and they haven't really been able to develop really strong links with local community because their target group again is 'on the edge artists', young, vibrant, etc... So we are trying to develop links with them, trying to introduce a youth scene, trying to use their venues and work with them. But again it is hard work because you have to select*

[20] Interview. 14 October 1998.

> *according to their priorities which are very different from the local community priorities*[21].

However it is interesting to notice that in certain circumstances, the 'local community' refers to a more inclusive group than one constituted only by Bengali people. Thus in a funding application to the Spitalfields Market Community Trust, it was emphasised that 'AWW had undertaken three main consultations: the local community and business in Tower Hamlets and beyond. The first was ... carried out by a community arts practitioner and a member of the local community' (1998: 3). Since the community arts practitioner in question, Warren Lakin, is a White English man, this sentence points to the shifting boundaries of the 'local community'.

Moreover the community is homogeneous. Even though the Progress Report to the Programme of Community Arts development written by the local Community artist Warren Lakin only referred to 'Bangladeshi communities' (1997), all other documents consistently refer to the 'community' – in the singular - implying the cultural homogeneity of the group in question.

Finally the community is bounded and marginal. Razia defines the Bangladeshi community in opposition to the 'mainstream community'. She thus suggests

> *If you want to access the mainstream community, you have to achieve a certain kind of professionalism... A community can actually develop and grow from this mainstream, high profile arts organisation. They can improve themselves and develop so that they can access more of the community and most of the new regeneration projects that are going on at the moment*[22].

However even though most references to community relate to the Bangladeshis, a large number of 'community phrases' are also to be found in AWW's discourse. Thus in Lakin's report a number of terms such as 'community based performers'; 'community venues'; 'community workshops'; 'cultural events in community'; 'community festival events'; 'community context'; etc are being used in the same seemingly self-explanatory manner as seen in Cityside Regeneration Ltd's documents.

Moreover in a number of instances, the use of the term seems outside the site of referentiality linked to Bangladeshi people, but without it being any clearer. Thus in the Art 4

---

[21] Interview. 14 October 1998.
[22] Interview. 14 October 1998.

Everyone bidding Application form, AWW suggests that 'deliberations... have paved the way for a number of potentially rewarding partnerships to benefit the community' (1998: 14). There is here no detail regarding which community would precisely benefit from these partnerships. This haziness is even more noticeable in a proposal document for potential sponsorship by a local company, Vibe Promotions. The following long quote gives good insight into this vague understanding

> Given the large Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets a Community Events Project Office has been established to train and liaise with the local community, with particular reference to young people. To date consultation and the recruitment of members from the local community has developed and strengthened the support from the Bangladeshi community for the AWW Bangladesh Festival.
> The Festival events will engage the whole community, attracting the participation of a wide range of ages as opposed to a small age range from factions within the community. Since the community is very much involved and supportive of the Festival we do not anticipate a repetition of previous experiences (1998: 2).

This paragraph illustrates the variety of meanings ascribed to the term, without ever specify what this particular meaning is. Thus the phrase reading 'the Festival events will engage the whole community' obviously implies a different group than the 'local community'. But who is 'the whole community'? Likewise who is this 'very much involved community'? The term carries a great deal of unspecified assumptions and internal slippages.

We have seen in the previous section (1.1) that in urban regeneration discourse the use of the term 'community' has been increasingly coupled with the notions of community involvement, capacity building, etc. We will analyse in the next part how these notions have been dealt with by AWW and the Baishakhi Mela organisers. My suggestion was indeed that the hazy referentiality of 'community' led the term to be a rhetorical tool for projects where it can be adapted to a variety of contexts, aims and objectives. The following analysis of the passage from rhetoric to practice aims at investigating this initial hypothesis.

2. COMMUNITY STRATEGY: FROM RHETORIC TO PRACTICE

2.1 Arts World Wide: community involvement as 'easier said than done'?

Conceptualisation and presentation

In February 1997, Warren Lakin, a community arts and theatre practitioner, was employed as Head of Project Development, by Anne Hunt, the AWW artistic director, to assess the feasibility of the Community Arts Development programme.

The consultation process lasted five months, was implemented in two parts and consisted of interviewing more than one hundred individuals from a variety of backgrounds: young people, music, drama and design technology teachers, head teachers, youth leaders, youth arts workers, arts trainers, professional and community based performers and artists, cultural activists, delegates of women's and girls' groups, councillors, funding and job creation agencies. The majority of the interviewees were based in Tower Hamlets and around 30% of them were either Bangladeshi or UK born from Bangladeshi parentage. The aim of the first part of the consultation was to introduce AWW and the project, as well as testing the possibilities for collaboration between existing and well-established artistic and cultural organisations and individual artists. From the conceptualisation phase, a high degree of co-operation between the two parties was seen vital so as to ensure the long-term development and efficiency of the programme.

The second part of the consultation aimed at assessing 'the potential for young people's involvement' through a set of objectives: locate interest among Bangladeshi Youths in TH, canvas the opinion of Bengali artists on the project, assess the desire to put forward a hybrid culture, investigate the music and drama provisions in local schools, advise on strategy to involve young women. Over seven weeks, more than thirty people were interviewed by a young Bangladeshi woman, Fahmida Bakht, herself an artist (she is a theatre designer) living in Tower Hamlets.

As a result of this large-scale consultation, eleven recommendations were put forward so as to 'ensure a successful and exciting production' and 'guarantee full and constructive involvement of young people' (Lakin, 1997: 32). First of all, some recommendations were made in terms of organisation: such a project should be conducted with a good link to the existing youth service, fulfil the National Curriculum criteria (for work in schools), and train youth workers in the arts so as to ensure future development of the project. Furthermore to ensure participants' commitment, it was recommended that such measures as ensuring good

outreach to parents, teachers, youth workers and other adults should be taken as well as ensuring that young people have a strong sense of ownership (through initiation, co-ordination and organisation of the programme by them), providing certification proving their involvement and a production contract agreed by all, and providing positive role models. Finally the recognition of the specific needs of Bengali people was fundamental and implied encouraging bilingual work, providing transport for the young people and ensuring the involvement of Bangladeshi women by recognising the specific barriers to their involvement. The report pointed to a general enthusiasm for the project, but it also highlighted that it would require measures to be taken in order to serve the specific needs of young Bengali people and keep in line with the philosophy of Community Arts.

The conceptualisation of the Community Events Programme by Warren Lakin formed the basis for all funding applications. The initial project, which attracted about £300,000 funding, was conceived as a mammoth two parts Musical: one school-based production, involving in different degrees every school in Tower Hamlets and devised during school time; and one, involving up to four hundred youngsters between 16 and 30, in week end and evening sessions in local venues. Contributions from other boroughs, such as Newham, Camden and Hackney, which have significant Bangladeshi populations, would be invited. The School Musical would reflect the traditional culture of Bangladesh whilst the post school production would focus on the experience of being born and brought up in the UK with a Bengali background. I will concentrate on the artistic and cultural content of the Community Events in the next chapter.

The capacity building dimension of the Community Project lay mainly in two elements. Firstly, the musicals were seen as a collaboration between a team of artists employed by AWW (director, choreographer, musicians, designer) and school teachers (for the Musical part 1) and youth workers (part 2) during workshops devised specially. This collaboration was expected to become an opportunity for teachers and youth club workers to get arts related training.

Moreover an innovative employment scheme was to be carried out through the recruitment of Modern Apprentices (MA). Four Bangladeshi people aged 16 to 21, would be recruited and provided with a first job so as to gain a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 4 in arts administration. This scheme was conceived as part of the 'exit strategy' of the programme, allowing for 'long-term benefits in the community' (Lakin, 1997: 18) as they were expected to become 'role models and an inspiration for their peers' (Lakin, 1997: 18).

Several strategies were devised to give participants a sense of ownership of the project. First of all, they would be completely in charge of the Musicals, from the composition and design

to the performance. In addition, a series of smaller-scale cultural events were to take place every other month during the eighteen months preceding the Musicals, as a way of providing a 'real life' opportunity for the MA in 'promoting cultural/arts events with an emphasis on relating them to their own community' (Lakin, 1997: 6). Also 'events [would] ensure fair coverage and representation of content and styles which [would] attract and please all elements of the Bangladeshi communities' (Lakin, 1997: 6). Lakin believed that this would allow gradually involving the local people.

> *I was always concerned that this Festival should not be seen as another 'one-off' event. Such a series of small events would have prepared everybody locally to the big thing to come, and make them feel part of it*[23].

Finally emphasis was put on monitoring and evaluation of the programme. In order to 'guarantee the involvement of young people in all aspects of the creative process' it was projected that an 'advisory working group' would be set up (Lakin, 1997: 16).

> This group will meet regularly to discuss aspects of the arts programme affecting and involving the community... It will be an "open forum" which members of the professional team can attend, and on appropriate occasions, local authority officers and business sectors advisers [would] be invited to contribute to (Lakin, 1997: 16).

As a long-standing Community artist, who firmly believed in the principles defended by the movement, Lakin thus conceptualised and presented a programme that strove to be an inclusive process developing on a long-term basis. This certainly partly explains the noticeable consistency in his use of the notion of community.

However Lakin was not to take part in the implementation of the programme as he left AWW early in 1998. We will see in the next part that this would prove to have a substantial impact on the programme and its relation to local Bengali people. His absence can also be felt in the community-related rhetoric used after his departure: the notions of 'community' and 'community participation' tend, from then on, to be used in a loose and inconsistent fashion. Thus in a document published by AWW in the Autumn 1998, Proposals for the Arts Worldwide Bangladesh Festival, one of the aims of the festival is described as such:

> To provide the Bangladeshi community in the UK with training and educational opportunities for access to the best of Bangladeshi arts, as well as involvement and participation in the Festival (1998b: 5).

---

[23] Interview. 20 June 1999.

In the 'summary of project' featuring the same document, under the heading 'Community Participation', the following account is provided

> A highlight of the Festival will be a large-scale Schools Musical on a Bangladeshi theme, involving local artists, some four hundred school children and the communities of East London (1998b: 3).

These two paragraphs point to the tendency to make the notions of community and community participation sound more inclusive than the project was initially conceived for. The first one implies that the programme could involve the whole UK based Bangladeshi community in the project, whilst the second quote refers to 'communities of East London', thus suggesting the involvement of other groups than the Bengalis, without any mentions of age. This is undoubtedly a serious leap from Lakin's project, which aimed only to implicate young people and showed awareness that the priority target was made up of Bengali people.

Moreover Lakin's expression used for the formulation of objectives of the Community Events Programme – i.e. 'to create a new model for community participation through the arts' (1999: 2) was retained after his departure. Yet in a brief presentation of the programme the following bullet points were to be read under the heading 'Community Participation': 'focus groups; meetings; workshops; seminars; master classes; one to one consultation; production sessions' (1999: 3). Such a vague list seems distant from the carefully designed activities aiming at ensuring a successful community involvement.

Before we move on to the analysis of the actual implementation of the Community Events Programme, it is important to stress that another feasibility study had been conducted in June 1998, as a proposal to Cityside Regeneration Ltd, with the specific focus on a launch day for the festival in the Spitalfields area. This study was also based on a large-scale consultation: seventy-two people were interviewed including mostly local businesses, 'community leaders' and local authority members. It showed the widespread feeling of frustration for the usual lack of community consent and participation in the decision-making process in regeneration schemes. Subsequently, an overwhelming demand for involvement in the organisation of the launch day was one of the main elements of the report. Moreover some similar issues as those mentioned in the first reports emerged: addressing local issues (e.g. housing, employment, drugs, etc); catering for women's special needs, ensuring long-term development, avoiding 'one-off' to prevent the feeling of 'being used' among Bengali people (AWW: 1998c).

The actual programme

First of all, one proposal was never put into practice: the post-school Musical. This part of the project was understood from the beginning as the most difficult to carry out and after Lakin's leaving, the remaining staff did not feel able to face such a massive and complex scheme[24]. It was therefore replaced with two smaller scale projects, still involving teenagers outside the framework of school: a music and DJ competition and a multimedia installation. The former consisted of a competition of young local DJs, selected by members of the so-called Asian underground musical scene (e.g. Asian Dub Foundation, State of Bengal, Joi) and leading to the performance of the winners in a well-known local club. The Multimedia Installation was mostly a photographic project involving teenagers to express issues around the theme of identity. A video project was later added, working on the same principle.

However a major problem emerged when the outreach to the young people proved disastrous: some seventy youngsters were expected to come to a taster day and enrol in the project, but only seven did.
In April 1999, an emergency solution was resorted to: five (instead of only one) photographers and a film-maker, experienced in this kind of project, were contacted and asked to get in touch with groups they had previously worked with; contacts were also made with several Youth Centres. This created discontent and frustration among the artists employed as workshop leaders, who, as experienced Community artists, shared the feeling that the young people involved were not those that the project was supposed to reach. Indeed not only did the delay caused by the difficulties in recruiting participants lead to enrolling youngsters who had already benefited from this kind of activity, therefore limiting the extent of outreach and capacity building, but also - and more importantly with regards to the quality of the final outcome - those so hastily involved were not all highly committed.

> *Community involvement, especially when you deal with youngsters, is difficult and you need proper procedures. That's another organisation who put that in their applications to get the funds, and had no idea how to do it. It takes time, you need to know what you are doing... which they obviously don't. I had warned them, told them how to do months ago. But they thought they knew better. Well here you are.* (Anthony Lam)[25].

> *It drives me mad that AWW will write reports to their funders talking about capacity building, empowerment, community involvement.*

---

[24] Interview with Razia Newaz Shariff. October 1998.
[25] Interview. 2 June 1999.

Because I know they will. I know how it works... The usual bullshit. We haven't done any that in this project. It is a disgrace really when you consider how much money they pulled (Phil Maxwell)[26].

I was about to give up on this project. I have hardly ever seen something as badly organised. They just have no idea how you involve young people. As if it was enough to ask those you bump into "Oh do you want to take pictures?" You need to make sure that they understand what it is about, that they really are into it. Otherwise you waste your time, you waste theirs, you haven't achieved anything (Annie Bungeroth)[27].

As for the series of on-going cultural events to be organised on a regular basis between mid 1998 and the actual festival in July 1999, they did not take place. Lack of funds and time were invoked but Newaz Shariff admitted that her team felt incapable of taking on such a heavy programme. The idea of an Open Forum was also abandoned. As a result most of the measures devised so as to ensure a true sense of ownership of the programme and a successful exit strategy were given up.

Finally, the School Musical was organised on a more reduced scale than that planned. A total of twelve schools were actually involved; difficulties within the schools (e.g. adapting the timetable, lack of facilities and/or interest, parents' reluctance, etc) as well as logistical difficulties in implementing such a gigantic scheme were the main obstacles. However it was organised according to the framework thought up by Lakin. The artistic team consisted of a number of experienced artists, who led workshops in schools: Stephen Langridge (director) a highly experienced White British Community artist who had previously carried out work in several schools, a prison, etc; Howard Broody, Jan Hendrickse, Michael Osborn, Marcina Arnold, White British musicians all very experienced in working on similar school-based projects; Gauri Sharma Tripathi, an Indian dancer and choreographer, with similar experience; Keith Khan, an British-Indian (from Trinidad) designer; a Bangladeshi storyteller, Joyoti Grech.

With regards to community involvement, Lakin declared that he was highly disappointed with the project that had been put in place and especially with the activities that replaced the post-school Musical

---

[26] Interview. 18 May 1999.
[27] Interview. 17 May 1999.

The School Musical made a big impression, but it is actually quite easy when you work with schools and professional Community Artists. But the most difficult challenge, the project that aimed at teenagers and under 30s has just not been met. It is not what money had been raised for, it is not community involvement it is not capacity building. I wanted the project to leave a mark on the young people involved. This is only another small scale, one off project. It is façade ornament[28].

Community dissent

Besides these issues regarding the actual Festival programme, AWW had to cope with more acute problems regarding community involvement. A severe controversy stemmed from the principal Bengali newspaper outside Bangladesh, *Jonomoth*. Its editor, Nobab Uddin, wrote in April 1999 a very negative three-page article against AWW - to such an extent that the AWW's Arts director threatened him with a libel case, before backing down. He denounced the fact that most of the research had been conducted in Tower Hamlets, which is not, in his opinion, a representative area[29]. Furthermore the major sponsor, Beximco, was considered a 'non-ethical choice' as its director had been condemned by the High Court of Bangladesh and is a major producer of chemicals. But most importantly, the lack of involvement of the 'local community leaders' and businessmen was interpreted as a sign of contempt. *My paper was an unavoidable interlocutor. We are the most visible façade of this community*[30]. He also denied the empowering dimension of the project as

> *Most of the money raised for the festival will not go back directly to the community. Major jobs have been offered to White people, without being advertised in local papers. Jobs like printing have not been ordered to local businesses. There is a total lack of involvement of the community. Aren't we good enough for them, when they raise almost £1m in our names?* [31]

His conclusion was that the festival would give a distorted representation of both Bangladesh and the local Bangladeshi community, and that the empowerment aim had not been achieved.

---

[28] Interview. 20 July 1999.

[29] The Sylheti majority can be looked down on by other, more urban, settlers: Uddin is from the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka.

[30] Interview with Mr N. Uddin, editor of Jonomoth, 29 May 1999.

[31] Interview with Mr N. Uddin, editor of Jonomoth, 29 May 1999.

It cannot be ignored that personal feelings are involved in this polemic: Uddin admitted being offended for not having been consulted at any point, as he claims to be *a prominent figure in the community*[32]. This particular question is certainly one that emerged most often during interviews and meetings regarding the dispute: the consultation had not been conducted with 'the right people', with 'community leaders'.

The quarrel took such proportions that four 'community liaison meetings' had to be organised in order to find ways of solving the conflict. These meetings were attended by numerous local Bengali representatives, unanimously critical of the way the Festival 'lacked community involvement' whilst generally showing positive reactions regarding its potential profile raising dimension (which was reiterated during interviews). Several representatives repeatedly emphasised their concern over the fact that an early consultation process was of little use if there was no further consultation, nor involvement once the organisation of the festival had actually started[33]. The reiterated stumbling block was a widespread feeling that money had been *raised in the name of the community*[34] and combined with a subsequent impression of being powerless with regards to what was being put in place. Demands for being involved in the decision making process were thus put forward as *a normal retribution for having had our name used to get all this money*[35].

Moreover AWW was questioned and challenged regarding their transparency over the budget. This dimension also created a great deal of tension, especially when the demands for a Finance Advisory Group did not appear in the minutes of meeting. Tensions needed to be appeased as they, in Newaz Shariff's own account, *started to threaten the success of the Community Events Programme, something which was not conceivable as there were so many funders watching*[36]. Hence four Advisory Groups (I.e. Restaurants, Community Involvement, Artists, Business) were set up, gathering local Bengali representatives in order to comment and make recommendations on the development of the Festival. However if these Advisory Groups did release some of the pressure, it was certainly not seen as a completely satisfying conflict resolution by all Bengali representatives. Thus five members of these groups resigned in late June, arguing that their recommendations were not taken into account. This aspect of the relation between Bengali representatives of 'the community' interestingly illuminates some of the claims made by AWW, especially when seeking local sponsorship. Thus in November 1998 AWW ensured Vibe Promotions that

---

[32] Interview with Mr N. Uddin, editor of Jonomoth, 29 May 1999.
[33] Observation of meeting. 12 April 1999.
[34] Observation of meeting. 12 April 1999
[35] Observation of meeting. 12 April 1999.
[36] Interview. 8 June 1999.

> To date consultation and the recruitment of members from the local community has developed and strengthened the support of the Bengali community for the Arts Worldwide Bangladesh Festival (1998).

The frictions with Bengali local people were such that AWW had to acknowledge the controversy in its final report, after having written three press releases to local Bengali newspapers. Each document emphasised that these difficulties stemmed from misunderstandings among Bengali people. The final report as well as the last press release thus attempted to disprove the claims regarding the lack of community involvement.

> In terms of achieving direct involvement of community members, the project was successful with the numbers summarised as follows:
> - 2 jobs created and taken by members of the Bangladeshi community
> - 4 young Bangladeshis given a 15-month NVQ training in arts management
> - 1 placement offering work experience for a Baishakhi Mela employee
> - 500 school children developed life skills and creativity through the Schools Musical project
> - 50 young people developed life skills and creativity through Off the Streets multi-media project
> - 100 young people developed musical skills through the Festival Club Competition (25 in press release)
> - 86 local Bengali artists performed in the Festival
> - 26 individuals from the community became Advisory Group members
> - members of the Bangladeshi community were employed as interpreters and artists' managers
> - members of the Bangladeshi community acted as volunteers for the Festival
> - a large number of Bangladeshi business and restaurants benefited directly from the Festival
> - of the 50,000 people attending the Opening Celebrations on 11th July, a large percentage were from the Bangladeshi community (AWW, 1999: 11. Emphasis mine).

This list demonstrates a specific understanding of community involvement that includes a variety of different processes. Thus it seems that for AWW community involvement can be

equated with 'consultation' or even being part of the audience or being taken on as volunteers. This is certainly very far from any Community arts principles (see chapter 3) or even definitions set by DETR for Community involvement in regeneration partnerships (see chapter 2).

On the other hand, Newaz Shariff identified reluctance from local Bengalis to accept another model of funding than the one that they are used to as a source of misunderstanding and disagreement.

> *They only know the "Cityside" model, which is based on steering groups. So this huge event financed through ways they don't know, that raised amounts of money they would not even dream of... They felt by-passed. Also their usual events do not amount to more than a few thousands pounds, gather families, are free and provide food. Here the whole organisation amounts to about £1m, most of the events are paying, there is a completely different approach. It was bound to trigger misunderstanding. And Anne [Hunt, AWW's artistic director] refused to communicate because honestly she is not interested in the community: she clearly refused the demand from them to form a steering group; she was really reluctant to compromise in any way. What she is concerned with is a high quality art organisation. They could not understand each other*[37].

In this light it is important to emphasise that the Community Events Programme secured funding for a total of £403,260, of which more than 70% originated from agencies stressing the need for 'community involvement' as an essential aspect of the project.

The difficulties met by AWW point to the complexities, which any process of 'community involvement' essentially encompasses. More than a formula, it raises expectations among people who feel addressed by this rhetoric. These expectations need to be assessed, evaluated and understood so as to avoid conflicts and controversies emerging from misunderstandings. Moreover the ways this particular project has been experienced shows that such rhetoric is open to interpretations which find root in the local social and cultural fabric. Thus in this case, AWW considered the participation of young people in the festival as 'community involvement', whereas the diverse reactions among local Bengalis show that for them the only involvement that would be acceptable was that of 'community leaders'. This was certainly enhanced by the misleading expressions used by AWW in much of their documentation and publicity material.

---

[37] Interview. 10 November 1999.

In its final report, AWW acknowledged the problems encountered with 'the community'.

> Despite the organisation's willingness to involve the community through groups and to respond to many demands (some of which the company found unreasonable), AWW did not consider that it had succeeded in overcoming the underlying hostility felt by a number of individuals who remained critical of the Festival throughout (1999: 10).

We will now turn towards the Baishakhi Mela so as to make a comparison with an organisation with a very different structure.

2.2 Whose involvement in the Baishakhi Mela?

As we have mentioned before, the Baishakhi Mela is a considerably smaller scale event than the AWW Bangladesh Festival, it is therefore impossible to conduct a comparable detailed examination of the potential discrepancies between the 'promises' made to funders and the actual implemented programme. This stems from several factors: first of all, the financial needs for the Baishakhi Mela were lesser, hence not only less funding applications were made but also they were not as stringent in terms of procedural requirements. Moreover as we have seen earlier, the link between the Baishakhi Mela Steering Committee and Cityside Regeneration Ltd was structurally very close. Even though the idea stemmed from local Bengali people[38], the Baishakhi Mela was created from collaboration between a group of Bengali representatives and the local regeneration agency in 1998. This close relation between the Steering Committee and Cityside Regeneration Ltd also made the requirement for reports less tight.

Cityside Regeneration Ltd is not only the main funder of the Festival but is also actively involved in its organisation. Indeed several of its officers are part of the Steering Committee as advisers (this is conducted also through the involvement of officers from Spitalfields Town Management, a closely related regeneration agency, largely funded by Cityside Regeneration Ltd). The Baishakhi Mela thus features as an important 'Cityside event', a key element of the 'Raising the profile project'[39]. Thus the Bengali organisers of the event admitted that they had to adapt to regeneration language in order to achieve their aim. Mahmoud Rouf, chair of the first two editions of the Baishakhi Mela argued that through his sitting as member of the

---

[38] A significant number of people (e.g. M. Rouf; G. Mostapha; S. Ali; Rashid; S. Hoque) claim that the Baishakhi Mela was their own initiative (and allegedly 'stolen' by the first chair, M. Rouf). It is therefore difficult to determine who originally came up with the project. However there is consensus among Bengali people and local regeneration agencies officers that the project originated among Bengali representatives, not from a regeneration agency. It became an important event on Cityside's calendar through the participation of the regeneration agency in funding and advice.

[39] itself part of the third fundamental Cityside theme: 'Releasing the visitor economy' (Delivery Plan year 2, 1998/99).

Partnership Board, he was able to realise that the Cityside had an important programme of support of local tourism.

> *I convinced [Cityside Regeneration Ltd] to support us by talking about "bringing people into the area and profit the local economy". Basically it was a bit of manoeuvring and arm twisting, but I said "we are providing you with the event you need to fulfil your regeneration programme, so you'd better help us"*[40].

Likewise the treasurer of the Steering Committee for the Baishakhi Mela 2000, explained

> *The initial goal, from the first time, was to have recognition in this country through the celebration of the New Year... We needed funders to do this. So the slogan became "to improve the business of this area", "to regenerate the area". This was the main point to attract the funding, and at the same time to get the recognition*[41].

The particular arrangement between the Baishakhi Mela organisers and Cityside Regeneration Ltd has thus led to a situation where the requirements for 'Community involvement', 'capacity building', etc did not need to be as formally presented as for an 'external' organisation such as AWW. Moreover the Baishakhi Mela was funded under the SRB3 programme, which, as we have seen, did not put as much emphasis on these elements as SRB5. More importantly the very fact that the project originated among Bengali people automatically made it a 'community event'. Consequently none of the consultative procedures carried out by AWW were implemented for the Baishakhi Mela.

However the common issues of community involvement and capacity building were not left unmentioned. The presence of representatives of diverse local organisations was invoked so as to ensure 'community involvement'. Thus a general press release stated that the Baishakhi Mela would 'actively involve the local Bengali community, artists and performers in the event' (Baishakhi Mela – Bengali New year Festival 1999). Funding applications also referred to the necessary notion

> The event is unique in that it is planned and organised by the local people and includes representatives from all sectors within the community (Funding application letter to Spitalfields Market Community Trust, 24/02/1999).

---

[40] Interview. 22 February 2000.
[41] Interview with Ruhun Choudhoury and Sunawhar Ali. 7 April 2000.

It is even more interesting to notice the exponential reference to this notion. Most documents published in 1998 (i.e. for the first edition) simply mentioned the presence of representatives of local organisations. Yet progressively the references have become more and more precise and increasingly use the expression 'community involvement'. As the consultation reports published by AWW with regards to the Bangladesh festival were used by the Steering Committee in order to justify the legitimacy of the Baishakhi Mela, one can wonder whether this helped towards a realisation of the efficacy of using the right terminology. Thus from 1999 onwards, documents presenting the Baishakhi Mela and all application forms started to invoke the provision of 'capacity building opportunities for local organisations'; and the fact that the Baishakhi Mela would 'help develop skills for young people with a focus on developing support positions for the Arts' (Baishakhi Mela – Bengali New year Festival 1999, 1999: 1).

During the preparation of the third edition of the Baishakhi Mela, a consultation exercise was planned, so as to ensure that all groups – including white middle-class residents, Jewish traders, etc as well as Bengali population – would 'have their say' in the organisation of the festival. This was certainly also a legitimisation exercise necessitated by the acute controversy that shook the Baishakhi Mela Steering Committee in 2000. This particular event will be looked at closely in the next section (3.2).

Implementing the programme

As we have seen earlier, both local Bengali representatives and Cityside Regeneration officers sit in the Baishakhi Mela Steering Committee. This formal involvement of local Bengali representatives represents 'text book community involvement'. Most of the Bengali people representing 'the community' in this Steering Committee were local political players, most of them representing local associations[42], and a number of them have been involved in local public life for years.

The roles taken on by the regeneration officers in the Steering Committee were strategic and beyond that of mere 'advisers'. Indeed even though the majority of the Committee members were local Bengali people, some key posts were held by regeneration officers. Thus for the first two editions of the Baishakhi Mela, the position of treasurer (one of the three minimum necessary positions) was held by a Cityside Regeneration Ltd officer[43]. Moreover two officers from the Spitalfields Town Management (a local regeneration agency, funded by Cityside Regeneration and working as its satellite) were actively involved in the organisation of the

[42] A precise and definite list of these associations members of the Steering Committee was never put together. The variations in membership depended mainly on internal politics, which we will explore in the next section.

Festival, dealing with all administrative issues such as licensing agreements, road closure applications, etc. This was to such an extent that in its summary of year 3 activities, Cityside Regeneration Ltd stated that 'Spitalfields Town Management co-ordinated the Baishakhi Mela' (Delivery plan year 4, 2000: 6). This 'confusion' only added to numerous suggestions that the Baishakhi Mela was a Cityside Regeneration Ltd event; a situation that infuriated the chair of the Steering Committee Mahmoud Rouf, who voiced his disagreement to Sylvie Pierce, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

> Recently I found out that, in various publications from council's department publishing that Baishakhi Mela is a Cityside Regeneration's project. I am surprised about council's ignorance. Because, everyone knows, BAISHAKHI MELA is the project of the Bengali community (mainly) of the west of the Borough.
> This is a project of the community, by the community, thought by the community, managed and organised by the community... Cityside is one of the main funders only (sic - letter to Sylvie Pierce, 16/06/1999).

In 2000, as an attempt to show a 'stepping down' of the involvement of Cityside Regeneration Ltd, the regeneration officer no longer had an official position, but was presented strictly as advisers. Yet Janet Poorman, a Cityside Regeneration Ltd officer, remained in charge of such a strategic role as handling the budget.

This lack of clarity in the roles attributed to members of the Steering Committee and especially in the clear allocation of responsibilities between local Bengali members and regeneration officers caused great tensions between members. The presence of regeneration officers in the Steering Committee was justified by the need to 'build capacity' and monitor spending and operations[44]. Yet on many occasions this was interpreted by certain Bengali members of the Committee as an imposition of power[45]. It is beyond doubt that the distribution of power between members of the Committee was unclear but that ultimately Cityside Regeneration Ltd was generally seen as the holder of final decisions. Thus when some members of Committee proposed to organise the Baishakhi Mela over two days rather than only one in order to celebrate the 'real' New Year's day (in 2000, the Bengali New Year's was not on a Sunday, the Baishakhi Mela therefore took place on a different day) and to emphasise the Millennium, Janet Poorman insisted that Andrew Bramidge would be consulted before putting an application with the local council. It was eventually refused.

On another occasion, it was 'discovered' that Nicki Burgess[46] had filled in a funding application form even though the treasurer of the Steering Committee, Ruhun Choudhoury,

---

[43] Jonas Quorcoompome in 1998 and Di Barham in 1999.
[44] Interview with Andrew Bramidge, director of Cityside Regeneration Ltd. 14 December 1999.
[45] Observation of Steering Committee meetings from January 2000 to May 2000.
[46] Regeneration officer from Spitalfields Town Management (STM)

had already done so. Ms Burgess was asked – amid acute discontent - to withdraw her application on the ground that this was not her remit.

Similar incidents were numerous during the whole preparation of the Baishakhi Mela 2000, all based on responsibilities taken by regeneration officers, which were seen by Bengali members as their own. These seemingly trivial anecdotes were interpreted very negatively by some members of the Committee, who saw them as a demonstration of excessive control from Cityside Regeneration Ltd[47]. The debriefing of the Baishakhi Mela 2000[48] was thus the occasion for abundant frustrations to be voiced. The handling of the budget by Cityside Regeneration Ltd Officer Janet Poorman was thus interpreted as *a controlling move to by-pass of the Committee's treasurer* – who claimed she *had not been given the chance to exercise her role*[49].

This particular aspect was accentuated as the budget presented that day by Janet Poorman displayed numerous mistakes and confusion, given way to raising accusations of incompetence and un-professionalism. The budget was seen as an extremely contentious dimension of the relationship between officers from Cityside Regeneration Ltd, crystallising for many the patronising attitudes of incompetent officers. Indeed the previous year's large overspend[50] had been the reason for sharp criticisms of the Steering Committee by Andrew Bramidge, which had been seen by many as unfair, since the treasurer was a Cityside Regeneration Ltd officer. It is therefore unsurprising that an apparently un-professional budget caused such exasperation among the Committee members. Moreover there is no doubt that financial matters are symbolically of major importance as they represent the 'real' power.

These difficult relations between Cityside Regeneration Ltd and Bengali members of the Steering Committee thus seem rooted in a fear of being 'controlled' but also of seeing their credit usurped in an area where social control and gossip are fundamental dimensions of everyday life. This is strikingly illustrated by the following comments of two members of the Steering Committee[51]

> *Cityside is controlling everything and all the appreciation is going to go to them, when the Committee produces the good.*

> *Janet is here only for five years, but we, the locals, will have to be here long after.*

---

[47] Comment by M. A. Rashid heard during observation of Steering Committee meetings from January to May 2000.
[48] Observation of Mela 2000 debriefing meeting. 22 June 2000.
[49] Observation of Steering Committee meetings from January 2000 to May 2000.
[50] The 1999 budget was £9,600 overspent. Andrew Bramidge had sent a severe letter to members of the Steering Committee on 16 August 1999, declaring that Cityside would meet the costs for this year (as it had done in 1998) but on the condition that a proper authorisation system was put in place for 2000.
[51] Observation of Mela 2000 debriefing meeting. 22 June 2000.

These comments, as well as Rouf's letter to the Chief Executive of Tower Hamlets (see above) point to an important dimension of community involvement, which seems easily overlooked by regeneration officers: those involved take pride in the project they have worked towards. It is therefore essential that roles are defined clearly so that neither locals nor regeneration officers[52] feel that credit is illegitimately claimed. These particular tensions also point to the difficulties in conducting 'capacity building' whilst avoiding the targeted community to feeling patronised. In the case of the Baishakhi Mela, the training elements were insufficiently clear for the members to feel that capacity building was effective. As a result, the general feeling was that *Cityside gives money against a lot of questions*[53]. Moreover the regeneration officers delegated to advise on the organisation of the Baishakhi Mela did not have more – in some cases actually less – experience in arts management than the Bengali members themselves. It was thus not on these grounds that the capacity building was seen as important, but in managerial terms (e.g. budget management, strict applications of regulations, etc). Yet the regeneration officers' knowledge and efficiency in these domains were not sufficient for the Bengali members to feel they were being trained in any way. As a result the relationship between Cityside Regeneration Ltd and Bengali members of the Steering Committee was only perceived as hierarchical and power-ridden:

> *We have to deal with Cityside [Regeneration Ltd] because they have the money, so we can't avoid have them there [in the Steering Committee]. But they don't know anything more than us. It's like we always have to ask permission for everything. They say it is capacity building. Well I can't see what capacity Nicki [Burgess, STM regeneration officer] or Janet [Poorman, Cityside regeneration officer] have that we could build on*[54].

Moreover we will see in the next section that intense power struggles among Bengali representatives jeopardised the existence of the Baishakhi Mela, which was interpreted by Cityside Regeneration Ltd as a clear sign that the local Bengali members were not ready to take over the organisation of the event without supervision[55].

Finally we have seen that some of the difficulties encountered by AWW with local Bengalis stemmed from criticisms of the profile of those consulted and involved, who were seen as

---

[52] The observation of the organisation of the Baishakhi Mela 2000 highlighted that regeneration officers also had a sense of ownership of the event they had participated in organising, leading to competing claims.
[53] Interview with a member of the Steering Committee wishing to remain anonymous. 2 May 2000.
[54] Interview with a member of the Steering Committee wishing to remain anonymous. 2 May 2000.
[55] Interview with Andrew Bramidge, director of Cityside Regeneration Ltd. 14 December 1999.

unrepresentative. The issue at stake here – and this had been pointed to in chapter 2 as well – is thus of who is involved?

In the case of the Baishakhi Mela, I have already indicated that the members were all local Bengali actors; a number of them involved in local politics at some level or another. The chair of the Steering Committee changed in 2000 after a crisis that we will closely look at in the next section but the most 'visible' team did not change to a great extent (however we will see that for Bengali people themselves the change was significant). Most members, except for one local primary school teacher, were involved in local businesses (e.g. restaurants, accountancy) or local organisations (e.g. community centre, youth centre). This is partly a consequence of the local socio-political fabric, which we will also examine in the next section, but also of Cityside Regeneration Ltd's policy, which consists of accepting only representatives of local organisations in Steering Committees of closely monitored projects such as the Baishakhi Mela. This has led to criticisms, as at least one member of the Steering Committee of the Baishakhi Mela 2000 was a highly controversial figure, allegedly member of a 'ghost' organisation[56]. This downside was acknowledged by Bramidge who recognised that such a policy tended to cause the 'mushrooming' of local organisations, without them necessarily being very representative, hence pointing to the limitations of the assumption that organisations cannot self-claim themselves representative, whereas individuals can. Moreover we will see in the next chapter that the Baishakhi Mela was organised primarily with the aim of promoting the marketing concept of Banglatown. This suggests that 'boosting the local businesses' was not only a discursive strategy to convince funders but also a real motivation by local actors with vested interests in seeing the visitor economy grow. Furthermore none of the members are elected; they are nominated by other members (elections are held among non elected members for the three positions of chair, secretary and treasurer). Such a scheme has led to a situation where those involved are also local political players, who have been on the scene for years. Thus Sunawhar Ali, chair of the Steering Committee in 2000 and member of the Committee since 1998, used to be a local councillor for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, a former member of the board for BGCC, a former member of the board for Cityside Regeneration Ltd. Likewise most members of the Committee had been involved in local politics at some level or other for a long time. This particular dimension will be examined in detail in the next section, but it is important as even Bramidge acknowledged the limitations of the community involvement strategy of the Baishakhi Mela

> *I would admit that the Steering Committee is a core group of local people with vested interests and limited representativity. This is why I would like to see a wider array of community members and community groups involved, especially more youth groups. But the Baishakhi Mela*

[56] This member of the Committee was director of an estate agency that suspiciously had no business. Moreover this person was suspected to be a drug dealer in the area and was a well-known local 'bully'.

> *is not a static organisation; this will be worked on over the next years*[57].

Moreover some of the procedures that were aimed at guaranteeing Community consultation planned in 2000 were never organised. Thus the major open forum that was supposed to take place a few months before the Baishakhi Mela so as to make sure that all locals had a strong feeling of ownership of the event never took place.

These elements seem particularly important to highlight the complexity of 'community involvement' and the fact that the mere presence of locals in the organisational structure of an event is hardly sufficient to fulfil the aims of such strategy.

3. FRAGMENTED COMMUNITY

Before we go onto examining the case studies, a brief presentation of the specific Bengali political landscape in Britain is necessary as it will provide the backdrop against which most the events related below have occurred.

Indeed the political space of Bangladeshis is particularly fragmented. As Garbin has proposed

> [t]he (secular) political landscape of the Bangladeshi diaspora can be divided into four spheres, the boundaries of which are permeable. This permeability is due to two factors: firstly the factional organisation (*dal*) characteristic of Bangladeshi political culture and secondly the complementarity of these spheres regarding transnational ideologies or the modes of legitimisations of power strategies (2001: 14, my translation).

The first political space that Garbin has identified - and which will be of most interest to us - is that constituted of actors involved in local organisations and institutions and whose political project is essentially located in British society. They are mostly local council employees, former or current local Labour councillors or representatives of Bangladeshi community organisations in Tower Hamlets. Many of them come from the Bangladeshi Youth Movement (BYM), which in the late 1970s had challenged the management of Bangladeshi issues by the Bangladeshi Welfare Association (BWA), itself made up of primo-migrants whose original mission was to liaise between British institutions and Bangladeshi people regarding immigration issues. Perceived as inadequate to the real needs of the Bangladeshis in Tower

[57] Interview. 28 February 1999.

Hamlets, the role of the BWA was no longer seen as sufficiently efficient regarding the fight against racism, or inequalities in education or employment. The large amounts of regeneration monies poured into the area have given rise to a multitude of organisations such as the BYM, providing advice on issues such as housing, health, employment or the fight against drugs (a prevalent problem in the East End). These groups usually gather Bangladeshis who have come to Britain in the mid-1970s and some born in Britain. During their political career they have built links and alliances with White community actors and members of the leftist wing of the local Labour party (Eade, 1989). Their main role is to offer to the young British Bangladeshis a cultural model able to include them in the British society whilst maintaining a secular Bangladeshi heritage. This first group is heterogeneous but is located in a political frame which is decisively British. The mobilisation of collective memory of the nation is used so as to transmit values seen as 'progressive': solidarity, justice, secularism, democracy. It also allows defining an alternative to the ideologies that make Islam a priority vector for identity.

The second political field reflects the projection in Britain of power stakes directly linked to the Bangladeshi political society. It firstly gathers the Bangladeshi Higher Commission, which represent the current government's interests and the BWA (the first Bangladeshi institution in London and closely linked to the embassy). The actors who compose these organisations represent the first generation of Bangladeshi migrants to Britain, who were very actively involved in the 'liberation war' against Pakistan. The fragmentation of this field has followed the subsequent political development in Bangladesh: it is made of the main Bangladeshi political parties[58]. There are very strong links between these parties in London and in Bangladesh (Bangladeshi political leaders regularly visit Britain in order to seek support from the diaspora during elections in Bangladesh). Thus

> In the global migratory space, a strategy of transnational reciprocity is sought after: the relations with Bangladeshi institutions allow building a political status in London, which in turn can facilitate a re-inscription of the actors in the political landscape in Bangladesh, if necessary (Garbin, 2001: 16, my translation).

The last two spheres of the Bangladeshi political landscape in London are constituted by, firstly, the multitude of regional and village-based Sylheti associations and lastly, the most difficult one to pinpoint, the sphere encompassing a number of dynamic processes making up

---

[58] Awami League, BNP (Bangladesh National Party), the Jatyo Party (National Party), the JSD (Jatyo Samajtantrik Dal, National Socialist Party). The last major party Jamaat-e-Islami, is of course not included in this sphere (in 1971, it opposed the breakaway from the union with West Pakistan and had actively worked to prevent it. Its ideology is very far from the secular nationalism defended by the other parties).

the informal economy of the Bangladeshis in London. I will not develop these last two spheres as they do not have as much relevance as the first ones for my particular framework.

What strikingly emerges from this description of the political landscape of the Bangladeshis in London is its intricate and fragmented nature. This dimension is essential as we have seen that most actors involved as 'the community' are mainly from the first sphere, which is itself defined by opposition to the second sphere. We will now turn to the different situations that emerged in each case study in order to examine the impact of such political structuration on our investigation. We will also examine the significance of the secular nationalism ideology in the shaping of the Bangladeshi political landscape and its impact on the relationship between the two spheres referred to and some Muslim religious leaders in the area.

3.1 Influence on the AWW Bangladesh Festival

The dividing line between the first sphere and the second sphere was clearly reflected in the reactions of members of the various Advisory Committees during the Community Events Programme. Indeed, as we have seen earlier, these Committees did appease the turmoil caused by the perceived lack of community involvement (i.e. the involvement of 'community leaders') only to a certain extent. Differential degrees of satisfaction regarding the handling of this controversy could be observed between members of the BWA and other community leaders, whose political project is more directed towards Britain. Thus whilst some members had resigned from their Advisory Committee because they thought they were not properly listened to, Shofique Choudhoury, the chairman of the BWA and member of the Community Involvement Advisory Committee declared, when asked about his perception of community involvement for the Bangladesh Festival

> *There have been misunderstandings between the community and AWW. Now it is resolved... What we have to focus on now is to make the Festival a great success because the Prime Minister of Bangladesh is coming*[59].

This declaration illustrates the importance of the link with the major political parties in Bangladesh and the tendency to always seek compromise (which is often interpreted as submissive behaviour by those belonging to the 'first sphere').

The fragmented and highly complex nature of the landscape constituted by these unavoidable 'community leaders' was also emphasised by the co-ordinator of the Community Events Programme, Razia Newaz Shariff. As the daughter of a prominent and highly respected 'freedom fighter' (i.e. a person extremely committed to the independence of Bangladesh from

Pakistan), she has secured a specific place in the social landscape of the Bangladeshi community in London. She knows the intricacies presented above better than most and has an acute knowledge of all the factions that feature in the political organisation of the area.

This knowledge of the community had led her to fear the involvement of community leaders in the Bangladesh Festival. She was aware that although the large-scale consultation process undertaken by Lakin had involved a substantial number of interviews conducted with local businessmen and members of local organisations, some of these people were not considered as 'community leaders'. She thus knew that the crisis was predictable

> *We consciously left the community leaders outside the organisation of the festival until a late point, because politics is in the fabric of absolutely all activities [for Bangladeshis]. So it would have made things really difficult. You know politics is so multifold in the Bengali community, there are so many layers, so many clans, so many do's and don'ts, it would have been far too complex and dangerous for AWW to get into this before we had had any work done*[60].

Razia pointed to some of the difficulties that she thought would emerge from involving local community leaders, strikingly illustrating how *politics is in the fabric of absolutely all activities.* As she explained:

> *Well you have the links to the main political parties in Bangladesh. Like when I went to visit the restaurants to ask for sponsorship and support, I had to have a representative of the BNP and one from Awami League: depending on which restaurant we were in, they would in turn keep a low profile or do all the talking. But there is also the internal politics, the particular agenda of members of the community, which clan they are in at some point in time, who is whose pawn, etc. And you also have to deal with people's particular approach to organising cultural events*[61].

For her, politics and factions as a characteristic of the Bengali community can have a great deal of impact on the life of its members. Thus in her opinion, no local organisation would have been able to achieve a project on the scale of that undertaken by AWW, not only

because of a lack of expertise in fund raising or a lack of professionalism in organising such a large programme, but mainly because of the local clans.

---

[59] Interview. 20 June 1999.
[60] Interview. 8 June 1999.

That is the problem here. They can only unify against a common enemy. But they don't seem to be able to do anything together if it is not against someone else. A massive programme like the Bangladesh Festival could have never come from the community. There are too many clans. They would get a label and be rejected by the adversaries. It is probably also why that they are frustrated at AWW. They know they could not do it themselves. Because of their own politics[62].

We will see that this dimension of the Bengali 'community leaders' strikingly emerged during the organisation of the Baishakhi Mela.

3.2 An illustration of the fragmented community: the Baishakhi Mela

The Baishakhi Mela offers an interesting illustration of the fragmentation of the local Bengali political landscape as well as the fracture of this space from another group that encapsulates certain Muslim religious leaders.

We have seen earlier that a substantial number of local Bengali people have claimed to be the initiators of the Baishakhi Mela. These competing allegations are in fact pointers to deeper fault lines between factions within the secular nationalist group (the first and second spheres identified by Garbin). As Garbin emphasised, factions are an essential dimension of the Bangladeshi political culture, which is marked by 'client-patron relationships' that is ingrained in all relationships in the community (Garbin, 2001). One of the features of these factions is that their boundaries are unfixed and permeable: even though there are some strong lines that define belonging to one or the other faction, changes in allegiances are frequent. Indeed relationships and actions tend to be apprehended as strategic in terms of power struggles; this gives to seemingly trivial interactions or actions an important symbolic significance, mostly interpreted in terms of power relations. As a result a highly sophisticated, constantly moving map of power distribution among 'community leaders' is the strategic chessboard on which the local actors are evolving.

The organisation of the Baishakhi Mela has given rise to a high level of such tensions and factionalised struggles among local community leaders. Between 1999 and 2000, it even reached a level that jeopardised the very existence of the festival. The first team that organised the Baishakhi Mela was led by a local accountant Mahmoud Rouf, who was a

---

[61] Interview. 8 June 1999.

significant local actor, not least because of his closeness to another important 'community leader', Rajan Uddin Jalal, a former Tower Hamlets councillor. As a former member of the Cityside Regeneration Ltd board of directors and with connections with important 'community leaders', Rouf was a legitimate chairman for the Baishakhi Mela. The unexpected success of the first edition – an estimated 25,000 people thronged Brick Lane and its surroundings - made the festival a high stake event and caused a great deal of power struggles and strategic moves to focus on it. The Steering Committee thus became a highly coveted structure to be integrated into. In October 1999, a highly controversial AGM was organised during which Sunawhar Ali, a former Labour Party local councillor and member of the cultural organisation Nirmul Committee, was elected new chair of the Steering Committee. However because Rouf was not present at the meeting, fierce accusations of a 'coup' being organised against him were made. There were also allegations made against the validity of the procedure followed for the elections. Thus Mr Mazid wrote to the new Chairman

> I feel I must write to you in reference to the so-called AGM of the Banglatown Arts and Cultural Trust[63] Management Committee, held on Monday 18 October 1999.
>
> I was appalled at the way my own representation given from the Spitalfields Town Management was not recognised although a resolution had been passed at the previous meeting. Subsequently my voting right was withheld and I was informed by a member that my representation would be accepted after the AGM.
>
> What made the matter more surprising was that almost immediately another member handed in the equivalent information as I did, was instantly accepted, given the right to vote and even given a formal position in the committee.
>
> I therefore believe I must protest and call this AGM, "Invalid" (letter to the Chairman, Banglatown Arts and Cultural Trust Management Committee, 22 October 1999).

Yet the AGM was not invalidated and Rouf resorted to a radical strategy to stop the new Management Committee from operating. Thus on 2 November 1999, a public notice was widely distributed to funders, members of the Steering Committee of the Banglatown Arts and Cultural Trust and other 'community leaders'

> This is to notify that, BAISHAKHI MELA is a company Limited by guarantee.
>
> Any unauthorised people use this name will be liable for prosecution.

---

[62] Interview. 8 June 1999.

> As this event has become a sort of institution, the Board of Baishakhi Mela is planning a three days event in the year 2000. Very soon a meeting of community leaders, representatives of Radio, TV, newspapers local authorities, artists and the local councillors will decide about the programme.
> Your so-operation will be much appreciated (2 November 1999).

In a situation of clear conflict, with no party willing to back down, funders felt that the festival was in jeopardy. Andrew Bramidge, director of Cityside Regeneration Ltd, organised a meeting between the principal protagonists of the situation, Ali and Rouf, to force them into a resolution. They were informed that both Cityside Regeneration Ltd and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets would not to provide any funding at all towards the event if the dispute was not resolved.

> *It is a very important event for the community, so we were really keen to see it happening again. Also it is a big landmark for Banglatown and the visitor economy. We got to an agreement that the 'old team' would not disturb the 'new one' in the organisation of the Mela; we made them shake hands over it*[64].

This dispute was the most visible and striking illustration of the extent to which factions and internal fights can affect local life. However each Steering Committee meeting gave rise to intense quarrels due to underlying motives (e.g. political campaigning for Bangladeshi parties – the Steering Committee included mostly Awami League members, but also two BNP members).

However the fragmentation of the community does not only stem from this complex political factionalised landscape. A more radical fracture divides the 'community': that between some religious leaders and secular nationalists.

Fracture between East London Mosque leaders and Baishakhi Mela organisers

From its outset the festival organisers have had difficult relations with local religious institutions. However, they were eager to distinguish between what they see as the

---

[63] The Banglatown Arts and Cultural Trust was constituted in order to prepare for the complete take over of the organisation of the Baishakhi Mela by the 'community'. This will be examined in the next chapter.
[64] Interview. 28 February 2000.

'community-based' London Great Mosque (*Jamme Masjid*), the former Huguenot chapel/Jewish synagogue on Brick Lane, and the 'fundamentalist' (sic) East London Mosque on Whitechapel Road.

The two mosques represent different symbolic dimensions in the area, as they embody contrasting, even competing styles as much in terms of the teachings they follow, as in their political affiliations or strategies towards community organizations. Thus, for its establishment, the Brick Lane Mosque was closely associated with Bangladesh government and the Bangladeshi High Commission in London. Moreover the Bangladesh Welfare Association (BWA), which played a central part in the establishment and management of the mosque presence, actively established ties with Bangladeshi community groups and non-Muslims outsiders, leaving the Brick Lane Mosque without having to perform this role. On the other hand, the purpose-built East London Mosque, with its more 'scriptural' style, was more closely aligned with Arab states in the Middle East and with Pakistan. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia contributed more than half of the £2m total cost of building the new centre, while ambassadors from Saudi Arabia and Egypt were members of the mosque's management committee. This affiliation meant that those at the East London Mosque lacked the local 'allies' enjoyed by the Brick Lane Mosque. It therefore encouraged Muslim youth groups, such as the Youth Muslim Organisation (YMO), itself linked to the Bangladesh and Pakistan based missionary organization Da'wat ul Islam.

After the first celebration of Baishakhi Mela the leaders of the London Great Mosque expressed concern about some of the organisational aspects. The loud music interfered with the communal prayers and the crowds obstructed the entrance to the mosque. As Sunawhar Ali explained, *we now consult with the leaders of the mosque and make an effort to plan things sensitively.* A half-hour break in proceedings was introduced to respect the call to prayer and stalls were cleared in the vicinity of the mosque entrance. Cohabitation was achieved between the two parties.

The objections of the East London Mosque's leaders were not so easily resolved, however. These were implacably opposed to a festival, which was associated with the kinds of social problems against which the East London Mosque was struggling.

> *Drugs, alcohol and the gang-fighting and all other wrong things... unemployment and unhealthy housing situation and the cultural gap between the older generation and the younger generation. Families are suffering, marriages are breaking*[65].

[65] Interview. 31 March 2000.

Thus whilst the discourse of the leaders of the East End Mosque is organised along the rather direct line of moral values and 'proper Islamic' behaviour, that of the Baishakhi Mela organisers is more complex. For the latter, 'progressiveness' is defined in terms of a national secularism. The chair of the Steering Committee, Sunawhar Ali, significantly reminds of the importance of political affiliations and of 'true' local belonging:

> *The people who are running the Brick Lane Mosque are coming from the Bangladesh politics, a range of political parties - Awami League, BNP, others, 'left' political parties, except Jamaat. At the Whitechapel Mosque there is only one political party affiliation: Jamaat. Also their funding comes from the Middle East...[whereas] the [Brick Lane] Mosque was built by the community. There was not a single penny from outside the country or outside the area*[66].

The recognition and respect of important global links is thus submitted to a set of norms, where the division between secular nationalism and universalistic pan-Islamism seems impossible to overcome. A sharp and rigid distinction is made between 'good' connections with a secular Bangladesh and 'bad' associations with the Middle East. The 'local community' is defined in terms of a history of struggle for Bengali language and culture and a continuing political and ideological struggle between secularists and Islamists which transcends local boundaries between Bangladeshis in Britain and Bangladesh.

This emphasises once again the ever-shifting nature of the boundaries of 'community' and the importance of culture and history in the construction of its meanings.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has aimed to emphasise the crucial importance of the context in the definition and mobilisation of the concept. The political framework in which actors are evolving, whether it is in terms of bidding for public money or in terms of local power struggles is thus determinant in the way the notion is mobilised. The next chapter will aim to show that the notion of culture is also an object of active manoeuvres determined by political contexts.

---

[66] Interview. 7 April 2000.

CHAPTER 6 – CONTENTIOUS CULTURE(S)

INTRODUCTION

The examination of the notion of community in the last chapter has to some extent introduced the importance of the closely related notion of culture in the rhetoric of actors. This chapter will investigate this complex and multi-facetted dimension of the research. We will see how and why issues of culture and representation are highly polemical for many actors involved in cultural manifestations.

Furthermore we will scrutinise a fundamental dimension of cultural strategies in urban regeneration, i.e. the use of the arts and culture as tourism promotion and the extent to which this affects both understandings of community and of culture.

Finally we will evaluate the extent to which these particular strategies relate to Community Arts or Arts in the Community in such a context.

1. CONTROVERSIAL REPRESENTATION AND HIDDEN AGENDA

As has been mentioned in chapter one, issues of community, culture and representation are closely yet problematically linked to each other. We will start with the obvious observation, that 'culture' is as multireferential as 'community'. We have seen in the previous chapter that 'community involvement' assumes and implies that the 'community' in question is homogeneous; this in turn implies the unicity of cultural representation (I.e. there is 'one culture' associated with 'one community'). Genuine cultural representation is thus thought to be ensured by the process of community involvement. As we have seen the highly fragmented nature of community points to the complexity of such implication. We will see in this section how understandings of 'community' reflect understandings of 'culture', which in turn echo specific conceptions of politics and, in some cases, history. This multiplicity of cultural interpretations for one community points to the problematic and potentially controversial issue of representation.

1.1 Debates over the Baishakhi Mela

The Baishakhi Mela is unequivocally presented by its organisers as a replica of a very popular celebration of the New Year in Bangladesh, which traditionally takes place at the beginning of the monsoon season. The festival consists of various outdoor cultural events seeking to reproduce what was happening 'back home'. As Ruhan Chowdhury, the Treasurer of the Baishakhi Mela Committee, explained

> *The Baishakhi Mela is celebrated all over [Bangladesh], by cooking food, especially sweets – Indian sweets, michti - which are everywhere and free for everybody. Everybody is wearing nice clothes (red and white) etc. There are a lot of celebrations, music, dance, performances. It is an important time of the year for everybody in Bangladesh*[67].

Even though it was impossible to reproduce the cow or boat races held in Bangladesh, the organisers in Tower Hamlets tried to replicate the joyful, crowded and artistic atmosphere, which they saw as the authentic hallmark of the Mela in Bangladesh. Brick Lane was transformed into a pedestrian zone, allowing the restaurants to install tables and chairs 'al fresco', whilst a multitude of stalls sold homemade food and small handicrafts. Each year the event has grown and the attendance of several tens of thousand people makes for a 'typically' crowded sub-continental atmosphere. The focal point of the Mela's cultural activities is the three stage sets where different artistic events are performed - (1) baul (traditional folk music), (2) classical (music, dance, poetry and drama) and (3) pop/DJs. In the local Altab Ali Park, a 'Fringe Fest' is organised by Shamim Azad, a London-based poet and journalist, focusing mainly on Bengali literature and poetry.

However this alleged authenticity was not a unanimously shared outlook on the festival. Thus the imam of the East London Mosque insisted that the Baishakhi Mela was not an Islamic event but something which was promoted by a minority in Bangladesh, principally Dhaka and fairly recently, by local secular Bangladeshis

> *In Bangladesh they don't exercise like this [only a] minority... it is nowadays happening in Dhaka...there is a secular trend and there are people who are purely having their own understanding about community, about culture...Nowadays there are some new generation that are adopting these ideas...This was the culture of the Hindus*[68].

---

[67] Interview. 7 April 2000.
[68] Interview. 31 March 2000.

As we have seen earlier the organisers of the Baishakhi Mela adhere to a secular nationalist ideology and the organisation of the festival is clearly located in this framework.

It is important to recognise, and the organisers would certainly not leave of this issue unclarified, that Bangladesh is a nation born out of the struggle for cultural recognition. Thus the report of one of the first meetings projecting the organisation of the Baishakhi Mela emphasised that

> [The Baishakhi Mela] will be a unique event to celebrate Bengali New Year 1405. As you know the Bengali culture has its own intense personality and a unique character formed by its nature, history, traditions, habits, customs and long arduous struggle for national identity and survival (Rouf, 11/02/1998).

The myth of the war of independence is a fundamental element in the linkage between Bangladesh and Britain. 'Bengali uniqueness' was one of the pillars which underpinned the war against West Pakistan. To the defenders of the Baishakhi Mela the opposition shown by the East London Mosque reflected a major political gulf between Muslim 'fundamentalists' and secular Bengali nationalists. Shamim Azad thus sought to locate the celebration of the Bengali New Year within the political history of Pakistan's creation in 1947 and the emergence of a secular Bangladesh in 1971

> If we look into the history of the sub-continent, when Bengal was divided on the basis of religion [in 1947], it gave birth to fundamentalism and unrest. The majority of the population resented, and protested the discrimination. During the Pakistan regime Bengali New Year acted as a political movement. It was to show their togetherness through an occasion, which would simply celebrate their Bengaliness (Azad, 2000: 27).

This interpretation contradicted the imam's claim that the festival was a recent event. It also implied that the Baishakhi Mela's opponents were not supporters of a secular Bangladesh. Indeed, Azad's interpretation might also be seen as suggesting that all Mela's opponents were sympathetic to the old Pakistan regime - a charge which had been levelled at particular leaders of the East London Mosque. A former imam of the mosque, for example, had been accused of war crimes committed during the 1970-71 conflict which had led to the birth of Bangladesh (Eade, Fremeaux, Garbin, 2002). The bitter memories of betrayal and atrocity were kept alive in the continuing struggle between secular activists and their 'fundamentalist' Islamic opponents.

The recognition and respect of important global links is thus submitted to a set of norms, where the division between secular nationalism and universalistic pan-Islamism seems

impossible to overcome. Moreover as we have seen in the previous chapter, a sharp and rigid distinction is made between 'good' connections with a secular Bangladesh and 'bad' associations with the Middle East. The 'local community' is defined in terms of a history of struggle for Bengali language and culture and a continuing political and ideological struggle between secularists and Islamists, which transcends local boundaries between Bangladeshis in Britain and Bangladesh.

The danger that the third generation may lose touch with their country of origin and its cultural traditions would be offset by a celebration of Bengali culture. Young Bangladeshis - *Londonis* - might never return permanently to Bangladesh but they would still be exposed to Bangladeshi national heritage through such public events as the Baishakhi Mela. This dimension is even more marked since 2000, when Sunawhar Ali became chair of the Steering Committee. Indeed Ali is also a prominent member of the Nirmul Committee, a Bangladeshi organisation which aims notably at pursuing 'killers and collaborators of the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971'

> Ekatturer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee (Committee for Resisting Killers & collaborators of Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971) is an... anti-fundamentalism national-level organization. It has been working to try the war criminals, establish human rights, especially of women who are deprived by religions and ensure a democratic secular society free from all kinds of superstitions (An Appeal from Central Executive Committee, www.geocities.com/Vienna/Studio/6022/appeal.html).

In London it has a clear agenda regarding the relationship between Bangladeshis in London and their country of origin that remains informed by the aims and ideology of the mother organisation based in Bangladesh. The Nirmul Committee in London conducts most of its cultural activities through the Shadinata Trust.

> The Shadinata Trust promotes Bengali history and culture to ensure its representation as an essential part of the history of Britain and by extension, our contemporary world... The need for such a Trust has arisen from a sense that, an absence of documentation and social data representing Bengalis' heritage, historical presence and achievements internationally, can contribute towards a sense of marginalisation, low self-esteem and alienation of young people in particular, as part of a minority ethnic community within wider society. This in turn, can limit their participation and contributions to mainstream culture (www.shadinata.org/docs/nirmul.htm).

This vision of the integration of the Bangladeshi youth in Britain was also violently denounced by the imam of the East London Mosque, for whom the younger generation was especially vulnerable to the enticements of a festival, which was originally observed by Hindus and Sikhs

> *Like our younger generation, why are they jumping to all the wrong things, drugs and crime? Because they find ways to enjoy the life in a wrong way. We have our framework of celebrations, our cultural exercise we have our own thing. Don't adopt this*[69].

Moreover a prime theme in the imam's discourse was the importance of 'correct' behaviour between men and women, which the Baishakhi Mela neglected as they insisted of making it a 'family event', therefore mixed gendered.

> *Islam is very strict about how men and women will be working, how the dress code should be, how a code of conduct will be there*[70].

For him the festival encapsulates a wider process which takes people away from the values they should adhere to

> *Nowadays some people are getting very much influenced by some other faith, that's why those people who are away from Islam they look for something fun. Whatever it is, which culture, which religion, no matter*[71].

The East London Mosque's opposition to the Baishakhi Mela was publicised on the day of the event through the hailing of Bangladeshis by young members of organisations affiliated to the East London Mosque and through the distribution of leaflets.

> Enjoyment through music, immodesty, and free mixing of men and women is not the culture of Islam. This is shameless western culture... If accepting and practicing un-Islamic cultures does not help us in this life...then one must ask, for what reason and for what gain are some of our community members inviting our youth to this un-Islamic culture[72].

The antagonism between the organisers of the festival and the representatives of the East London Mosque was such that worries emerged during management meetings, after the

---

[69] Interview. 7 April 2000.
[70] Interview. 31 March 2000.
[71] Interview. 31 March 2000
[72] Flyer distributed during the Baishakhi Mela 2000 entitled 'Baishakhi Mela. Is the grass greener on the other side?' A footnote defined the Baishakhi Mela as a 'fair commemorating the start of the Bengali New Year, which includes haram activities like fashion show, dance, concert and free mixing'.

Chair, Sunawhar Ali, claimed having received death threats by phone[73]. The police was warned and came to one of the meetings to reassure the Committee that increased safety measures would be put in place, thus showing that the claims were taken very seriously.

Furthermore some tensions rose among the organisers due to different interpretations of what should be included in the cultural programme of the Baishakhi Mela. The strongest point of divergence regarded the appropriateness of the presence of a DJ tent, for young local people[74]. Indeed even though the Chair of the Steering Committee stated that [*the Baishakhi Mela] is a celebration of the Bengali people here. There are differences between here and Bangladesh. This means [that we need] to consider the three generations of [Bengalis]*[75], debates emerged as some members of the Steering Committee argued that the *Baishakhi Mela should be about classical Bengali culture*, whereas others pointed to the fact that *the youth, this is what they like, this is what they do. You are not in Bangladesh here!*[76]. However as one of the three stages was already to be devoted to 'pop music' (where some Asian Underground bands such as Joi would be performing), some felt that this contemporary hybrid culture would be given too much emphasis, when the aim of the festival was *to keep the youth in touch with their Bengali roots*. Moreover some practical reasons were put forward not to include a DJ tent, especially logistical and financial problems (costs of hiring the tent; street jamming if it was to be set on Brick Lane itself, etc). The debate rapidly turned into a struggle of power rather than principle: those 'against' the DJ tent were accused by those 'for' of trying to keep a bigger part of the budget for themselves (as the former were in charge of organising the programme for the 'classical' stage) and arguments about the fairness of the distribution of the monies between different stages rose. Eventually the decision was made that no DJ tent would be set up. This internal dispute highlights the difficulties associated with the complex notion of 'cultural representation', in that it points once again to the great diversity of possible interpretations of whose culture should be represented and how? In this particular case, the seemingly simple notion of 'Bengali culture' opens up a wide array of (mis)understandings depending on the outlook taken on the subject

---

[73] I do not want to imply that Mr Ali might be lying, but having had no proof of the threats in question, I cannot assert with certainty that they actually were made. For this research, the outcome is almost identical whether or not these threats have been carried out. It emphasises an extraordinarily acute antagonism between each side.

[74] It is important to point out here that in the area, electronic music based on DJ sets is an important part of the musical culture and practice for many teenagers. This partly follows (among many other factors) the success of the 'Asian Underground', a musical movement which for a decade and a half has been working on merging Asian classical music with British influences, including reggae, hip hop, soul, drum n' bass etc. This movement, which includes the world famous musician Talvin Singh, but also Sam Zaman from State of Bengal, and artists from the UK-based independent label Outcaste Records, has great resonance in the area, since one local DJ set called *Joi* set has become a highly celebrated band (winning in 1999 the BBC Asia Music Award). The set, made up by the two Shamsher brothers (until the death of one of them in 1999), started out in the late 1980s as members of London's pioneering Joi Bangla Sound System (JBSS), which grew out of the Bangladesh youth movement and more specifically with an organization called The League of Joi Bangla. The original League had been set up to promote Bengali culture. However the brothers always insisted that they 'wanted to take it further, because to us Joi Bangla means "victory to the oppressed"'.

[75] Interview. 7 April 2000.

[76] Observation of Steering Committee meeting.

and emphasises once again the highly problematic conception of 'cultural authenticity'. This dispute also underlines the complex and challenging position of the 'third generation' Bengali youngsters: thus even though the organisers of the Baishakhi Mela have a clear desire to cater for the young 'British Bengalis' in their programme, this provision does not fail to trigger disagreements as there are tensions between a political agenda which aims to 'keep the youth with their roots' and the willingness to recognise the new hybrid cultural artefacts developed by the youngest generation.

1.2 An excessively celebratory outlook from AWW?

The controversial legitimacy of cultural representation was also faced by AWW, most acutely a few weeks before the beginning of the festival, when the programme came out. This leaflet presented the school Musical as

> A fabulous musical (...) [having] all the ingredients of folktales the world over: a magic tree, a wicked stepmother, a handsome prince and a beautiful heroine (1999, Bangladesh Festival Programme).

The Musical was in fact based on a folktale from the Chakma culture, one of the communities that together make up the indigenous Jumma people of the Hill Tracts, a southern region of Bangladesh where cultural oppression has been witnessed for more than twenty-five years (Jumma languages were denied; stories, songs, and plays censored or banned).

The story 'Dhabi Kabi' came to be part of the Bangladesh Festival as a result of storytelling workshops led by Joyoti Grech in primary schools in Tower Hamlets. Grech is an active militant, passionately involved in the struggle for the rights of the indigenous Jumma people. She became outraged at the fact that none of AWW's publicity made any mention of the fact that 'Dhabi's Story – A Tale from the Time of Truth' is a retelling of the original Chakma folktale, 'Dhabi Kabi'. The audience was thus not made aware of the origin and context of this tale (which she saw as an allegory of the resistance of the Jumma People against the central government of Bangladesh) and launched an intense campaign denouncing AWW's representation of Bangladesh

> Arts Worldwide has raised funds for the Festival in the name of the Bangladeshi community, whose basic concerns have been sidelined. Instead of telling a "Tale from the Time of Truth", they have used artists and the arts to present their own, censored version of Bangladesh (Grech, 1999).

Even though a rectification was made on the last imprints of the programme and on the final report, which acknowledged the origin of the tale, AWW was criticised for presenting an

ideologically biased picture of Bangladesh by glossing over deep (but little publicised) internal splits in the nation. The celebratory dimension of the event, which aimed above all at 'providing the public in Britain with an unprecedented opportunity to experience, appreciate and understand the arts and culture of Bangladesh' led the organisation to neglect important political struggles rooted in cultural debates. For Grech this is an irrelevant and deceptive manner to present the situation.

> *Community leaders around here keep going on about how Bangladesh was born out of a fight for cultural recognition. I am not denying it is true but there is a fight for cultural recognition in the Hill Tracts, you know, and you don't hear them too much about that... As for AWW... well they don't want to offend the [Bangladeshi] Prime Minister who is coming, so they want me to shut up. They tell me that their festival is "cultural not political". How stupid! For the Jumma people, the cultural IS bloody political. And as far as I am concerned, what AWW is doing is political as well*[77].

AWW's willingness not to present offensive material was also denounced by Clive Sall, the curator of the 'Off the Streets' Multi Media installation. His proposal to tackle some of the difficult issues faced by young British Bangladeshis such as drugs, gangs, women's rights, equal opportunities, was firmly rejected. The theme chosen was focusing on Identity, but the photographers were expected not to promote engagement with controversial issues.

> *What they want is a pretty, exotic, touristy postcard of Bangladesh and Bangladeshi people here. This is what their festival is all about; this is what they want the [Multi Media] Installation to be. This shows really dodgy ideology, doesn't it? Because actually I think that for the kids who live in the shitty estates behind Brick Lane, their identity <u>is</u> determined by problems like drugs and gangs and stuff. It is dishonest to hide that*[78].

It is important to bear in mind that an important objective of both events was to enhance the local potential for tourism, which could explain the desire to celebrate an exotic and glossy representation of Bangladesh and Spitalfields.

---

[77] Interview. 14 June 1999.
[78] Interview. 4 April 1999.

2. ARTS AND CULTURE AS TOURISM PROMOTION

As has been presented earlier, City Regeneration Ltd had proposed as soon as the bidding process had started that a promotion of tourism in the area would be an integral part of the regeneration of the neighbourhood. In the application document this was formulated as one of the priorities of the projected programme:

> [Cityside will] create an integrated package of cultural attractions, environmental improvements and enhanced facilities, which will increase the appeal of the area for residents, for Londoners and for those beyond (*Cityside* bidding document, 1996: 1).

This dimension of the programme was also one of the four grounding themes for *Cityside*: 'releasing the visitor economy', itself comprising four strands (i.e. 'key attractions', 'streetscapes', 'gateways' and 'raising the profile').

The project was thus to

> link future growth in the property market to employment creation initiatives, by developing existing sectors and diversifying the economy into new sectors which complement corporate activities alongside an emergent visitor economy (*Cityside* bidding document, 1996: 1).

The emphasis on tourism as a way of energising the local economy was thought of in the terms 'en vogue' at the time: as we have seen in chapter 3, cultural policies had started, from the 1980s, playing the 'cultural card' in order to boost urban economies. Cityside Regeneration Ltd adhered to this new focus and asserted that

> Our innovative programme for revitalising the day and evening economy involves enhancing the image, identity and profile of the area; development of links between agencies/attractions; and building their capacity to benefit from this vibrant visitor and cultural destination (*Cityside* bidding document, 1996: 15).

Significantly it thus identified that 'opportunities for diversification are provided by emerging growth sectors including: urban tourism, cultural industries...' (*Cityside* bidding document, 1996: 5). The programme offered by Cityside Regeneration Ltd was thus in correlation with a general framework, which promoted the ill-defined 'cultural industries' in order to lead urban regeneration. This particular dimension of the programme was mostly taken on under the 'Raising the Profile' project, which was carried out by a local and well-established arts organisation called Alternative Arts.

The appraisal document proposed by Alternative Arts for Raising the Profile 1999/2002 followed tightly the framework drawn by Cityside Regeneration Ltd and put great emphasis on the aforementioned visitor economy and cultural industries. The latter would thus be used as 'a catalyst for the regeneration of the commercial and community environment' (Raising the Profile Project Appraisal Form, 1999/2002: 1). In this context, both the Baishakhi Mela and AWW Bangladesh Festival were identified as key events to reach the set aims and objectives: each was listed as an important contributor to the strategy aimed at raising the profile of the area. Interestingly Alternative Arts seemed to see the Baishakhi Mela as a building block for the AWW festival rather than a local event in its own right

> Baishakhi Mela (Bengali New Year Festival): co-ordinated by the Baishakhi Mela Committee consisting of local business and restaurant associations together with local community and arts groups. The festival will provide important capacity building for local performers and community groups in anticipation of the Arts Worldwide Bangladesh Festival 1999 (Raising the Profile Project Appraisal Form, 1999/2002: 4).

2.1 Banglatown

One of the pillars of this strategy was 'Banglatown', a rather elusive concept which lacks any clear territorial boundaries or administrative status but which seeks to establish Brick Lane as the British Bengali heartland. It is difficult to trace back precisely the origin of this marketing model. According to Jacobs' seminal study of Spitalfields in *Edge of Empire* (1996), the idea stemmed from the Spitalfields Development Group (SDG), 'a local Bengali think-tank established by the male business sector in order to influence, but not halt, proposed development in Spitalfields' (1996: 98). As Brick Lane has been the focal point of numerous waves of immigration over the last centuries and constitutes the symbolic centre of the Bangladeshi community (it represents the original point of settlement for Bangladeshis, the focus for anti-racism demonstrations during the 1970s and 1980s, and the heartland of Bangladeshi community and political organisations), SDG projected to make 'Banglatown' 'a vital and exciting focus of commercial and cultural life... a bazaar area representative of the full range of Bengali, English, Jewish, Somali and other ethnic ingredients of the area' (1989, quoted in Jacobs, 1996: 99). It was (already) 'hoped that this unique development would attract tourists to the area' (Jacobs, 1996: 99). The project was enthusiastically taken up by Cityside Regeneration Ltd, which offered in its bid to use it as 'a motor for promoting the local economy' (*Cityside* bidding document, 1996: 7). As a result, the cultural strategy embodied by the 'Raise the Profile' project relied on the Banglatown concept to attain its local

rejuvenation aim: '"Banglatown" will provide the basis for a marketing strategy which will realise the benefits of increased visitors numbers for the local ethnic community' (Raising the Profile Project Appraisal Form, 1999/2002: 7). The labelling of the area as 'Banglatown' is thus undoubtedly a multi-layered enterprise. Taking its inspiration from Chinatown, its objectives are as cultural and political as they are economic. Banglatown involves the appropriation of space through a strategy, which entices potential customers to patronise its 'curry houses' and shops. An important dimension of this strategy is an operation of 'visibilisation' of the Bengali culture locally: the street furniture on Brick Lane (especially lampposts) have been painted in red and green – the national colours of Bangladesh and of its flag – and an imposing £70,000 arch – clearly inspired by that marking the entrance into Chinatown – has been built at the South end of Brick Lane. These visual signposts of the ethnic nature of the area will be accompanied by a series of other marketing measures aimed at developing the tourist potential of the thoroughfare: small grants attributed to local shops to improve their window dressing, grants attributed to restaurants to modernise their façades, encouragement to open 'curry houses' in a café style, etc.

The Baishakhi Mela was thought of from the outset as an essential part of the promotion of Banglatown. Since then, it supports this strategy by attempting to give greater visibility to the newly labelled neighbourhood. Thus in 1998 already in the first presentation of the project for the Baishakhi Mela, the aims and objectives were identified as follows

> Celebrate Bengali New Year; Raise the profile of the area; Promote Bengali culture; Work for the development of BANGLATOWN (Rouf, 1998).

Moreover in 2000, the setting up of the Banglatown Arts and Culture Trust (which had started in 1999) was finalised and stated as its aims

> To establish a community led and managed Banglatown Arts and Culture promotion agency; to promote the concept of Banglatown through the arts and initially and specifically through the promotion of the Baishakhi Mela/Bengali new Year Festival; to increase and enhance the area's visitor economy by attracting a growth in visitors and visits, increasing the level of visitor expenditure through linkages between the arts and events and local businesses/community enterprises; to improve and to enhance Banglatown's identity and profile locally, nationally and internationally (Banglatown Arts and Culture Trust. Business Plan, 2000: 1).

Likewise in the brochure of the Baishakhi Mela 1999 the Steering Committee declared

> The Mela gives everyone the opportunity to celebrate Bengali culture as well as helping to market the area as an attraction destination for visitors and support the business in and around Brick Lane – Banglatown (1999).

The link between the celebratory event and the Banglatown concept was thus firmly established by the organisers of the festival, in a way that closely corresponded to Cityside Regeneration Ltd's vision. Indeed Alternative Arts projected that in its Appraisal of Raising the Profile that the 'Baishakhi Mela [would be] linked to the intensive promotion of the Banglatown marketing initiative' (Raising the Profile Project Appraisal Form, 1999/2002: 9).

It is important to stress again that most prominent members of the Steering Committee of the Baishakhi Mela are local businessmen. In that sense their enthusiastic endorsement of the concept of Banglatown is unsurprising.

As Jacobs (1996) argued, in the local context of intense urban change, the reification of a Bengali identity serves partnership strategies between a small section of the Bangladeshi 'community' and important economic actors and developers

> [the idea of Banglatown] was an activation of an essentialised identity category by one sector of the Bengali community within the terms of the enterprise-linked development opportunities available. [...] The structures of identity marketed (quite literally) through the notion of 'Banglatown' worked to renaturalise and reconsolidate hegemonic notions of being 'Bengali'. They formed the cultural framework around which alliances could be made between big business and Bengali small business (Jacobs, 1996: 100).

This dimension was clearly identified by the Chair of the Steering Committee of the Baishakhi Mela, Sunawhar Ali

> *We need to work on our potential, you know. The City is moving in, the Dockland are round the corner, this is the only way the community can survive and local businesses sustain... Otherwise the local community will have to move out of the area and the City will take over*[79].

The importance of the economic dimension of the festival and the expectations that some prominent members of the Steering Committee had in terms of its potential to increase trade

[79] Interview. 7 April 2000.

and profits was clear during the organisation meetings, and especially the debriefing meeting after the Baishakhi Mela had taken place. Indeed the evaluation of the success of the event in 2000 was determined in the first place by reports of increased trade and, on that particular occasion, the great frustration caused by a lack of organisation and logistics that led the restaurants to make less profits than during previous years: two stages on Brick Lane itself caused high levels of congestion and the police blocked the streets a few times during the day. Hardly any discussion took place regarding the cultural programme on the different stages or in Altab Ali Park: apart from the satisfaction that no excessive disturbance had taken place around the stages and in the park, the debate focussed on the alleged disappointing results for Brick Lane restaurants and the discontent expressed by some members regarding the power structure of the Steering Committee (see previous chapter). It seems thus that the Baishakhi Mela is above all a spectacular symbol for the Banglatown marketing strategy.

It is somehow predictable that this strategy is not without adversaries. A local Bangladeshi poet, Nazrul Islam, voiced his frustration at the cultural representation embodied in the Banglatown project

> *We have some of the finest poets in the world: Tagore, Kobi Nazrul and all they show is the 'curry houses'... There is so much more to Bengali culture than its restaurants... but what is emphasised is the most marketable aspect of it*[80].

Nazrul Islam recognised that some efforts were made by the Baishakhi Mela organisers to include some cultural programme that made justice to the great cultural heritage of Bangladeshi culture but insisted that overall it was overshadowed by a greater project, which only focuses on cultural commodification.

As for the religious actors of the neighbourhood, they see Banglatown as a reflection of an artificial and nationalistic creation, which goes against the fundamental values of Islam and the global territory of the Umma (Garbin, 2001). Indeed as we have seen in the previous chapter, the East London Mosque follows a specific version of Islam, part of a movement referred to by some as 'neo-fundamentalism' (Roy, 2002), in which most human constructions are rejected. Wishing to 'return' to a 'pure' Islam, they see the ideas of nation,

[80] Interview. 23 July 2000

ethnic belonging, etc as artificial and going against 'proper' Islam. The only acceptable identity rooting is thus in the universality of the global Umma and 'Banglatown' embodies an unacceptable frame of reference.

On the other hand 'Banglatown' is seen by many as going beyond a marketing concept. Thus for Ali, it is the symbolic landmark, the marking of a territory for the Bangladeshi people to identify with, and therefore it plays an important role in the quest for 'cultural recognition' that Ruhun Chowdhury insisted on.

> *Brick Lane is a Banglatown. It is true for the local community but also for Bengali people outside London or outside this area. For them Brick Lane is theirs. They can identify and think: "Hang on, this is ours". Like Afro Caribbean[s] think: "It is ours" about Brixton, even though they live somewhere else*[81].

2.2 Multiculturalism: a mobilising notion

The area thus becomes charged with high levels of symbolic power and the Baishakhi Mela is aimed at becoming an emblematic event to mark the territorial and cultural presence of the Bangladeshi people in the neighbourhood. Moreover the festival would symbolically

> *celebrate the achievements of the first settlers. They had to overcome so many barriers, you know: language, culture, racism, you name it*[82].

Yet the organisers do not see the Baishakhi Mela as a 'nostalgic' commemoration of a mythic Bangladesh but rather as an exercise aiming at playing the role of a 'cultural bridge'. As has been seen above, the event aims (even though problematically) at engaging the youngest generations of Bangladeshi parentage; it also intends to bring in non-Bangladeshi people.

> *At the same time we want to accommodate as many people as possible. This means [that we need] to consider the Bengalis themselves - and the three generations of them - but we also want other communities to be able to relate. We are trying to promote a multi-racial event but keep the focus on the Baishakhi [Bengali New Year]*[83].

Thus Shamim Azad, a London based poet and journalist who organised a 'Fringe Fest of the Baishakhi Mela' in 1999 and 2000 in Altab Ali Park, indicated that her proposed programme

---

[81] Sunawhar Ali. Interview. 7 April 2000.
[82] Sunawhar Ali. Interview. 7 April 2000.
[83] Sunawhar Ali. Interview. 7 April 2000.

targeted 'Adults across all races working towards "New Multicultural Britain"'. Likewise the brochure of the Baishakhi Mela 1999 stated

> Tower Hamlets is the heartland of the Bengali community in the UK and therefore the Bengali New Year Festival has tremendous symbolic value for the multi-cultural communities of the borough. To many of us who are concerned with creating an integrated community life in the borough... it is extremely important that we understand distinctive features of different communities that compose the local community... To re-route monocultural community into a multicultural society is not going to be an easy task... and probably the best place to start such a journey... is the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (1999).

In the narratives of local urban development 'multiculturalism' has thus a central role to play. The desire to 'put Banglatown on the map' of the global and cosmopolitan city echoes the celebration of diversity of the present Labour government. In that sense, the local 'culture ' described as an important capital for the revival of the area has to be enhanced by various projects reflecting the particularity of the local ethnic community. A milestone of the urban reinvention embodied by Banglatown, the Baishakhi Mela echoes the 'multiculturalist' ideology of the Cool Britannia praised by New Labour.

It seems important to highlight at this point that the issue of multiculturalism certainly found greater resonance in 1999 with the bombing that took place on 24 April on Brick Lane. An obviously racist attack hitting the area a couple of weeks after an explosion in Brixton, it did not cause any casualties but destroyed a couple of restaurant facades and cars. However it raised awareness and questions about the sustained racial tensions that the country in general and this area in particular was still subject to. The Steering Committee in accordance with advice received from the police rapidly made the decision to go ahead with the Baishakhi Mela, due to take place only a few weeks later on May 9th. The director of Cityside Regeneration Ltd clearly made the link between the Baishakhi Mela, Banglatown and the core notions of community and multiculturalism in his statement on the festival's programme

> This year's mela will provide an important focal point for the whole country to show that the people and businesses of Banglatown will not lie down in the face of racist attacks. The Baishakhi Mela will demonstrate the pride of the local people in the multicultural community that exists around Brick Lane (1999: 4).

The Prime Minister referred to the attack a year later in his encouragement statement to the organisers of the Baishakhi Mela in order to reiterate his vision of a 'multicultural Britain'.

> As I said at the time, I am proud to see the way your community reacted to the Brick Lane bomb. Together we will make bigots like this realise that they are the real minority. There is no place for them in the multicultural, multiracial community we are building today in Britain (Blair, May 2000)[84].

Finally, the organisers want the Baishakhi Mela to be a 'family event', and, as such, to provide a temporary re-appropriation of this male dominated area by women, who usually consider Brick Lane a 'no-go area'. It is indeed a characteristic of the area that the symbolic heartland of the Bengali community is one avoided by women. Shopping is carried out in 'cash and carry' shops on adjacent streets or more frequently on Green St further east. As Aiesha, a 22-year old British Bengali woman, confessed

> *I never go to Brick Lane. I went there some months ago, to hand a video back for a friend of mine. By the time I had arrived home, three of my uncles had called my mum to ask what I was doing there... Anyway I hate it. Even with the scarf you get stared at all the time*[85].

This particular status of Brick Lane was confirmed during numerous conversations with Bangladeshi women. The organisers of the Baishakhi Mela have recognised that this spatial re-appropriation will be a slow process for local families, but the event has begun to attract families from outside the immediate neighbourhood, as well as from Birmingham, Bradford and other settlement areas.

2.3 Multicultural controversies at AWW

The issue of multiculturalism was also a major theme for the AWW Bangladesh Festival, as it emphasised that 'its mission is to present high profile international, multi-cultural and culturally specific work of exceptional quality' (1999: 1) and presented as one of its aims 'to promote understanding between British and Bangladeshi people at both a national and international level' (1999: 3). Thus the office of the Prime Minister, who was an official patron of the Festival, stated that

---

[84] Incidentally, and rather interestingly in the context of this research, one might notice an ever malleable and shifting notion of 'community'. In the first sentence, the PM speaks of 'your community' as a victim of the bomb attack, thus clearly defining a space of otherness; but by the third sentence, 'we' are together building the British 'community'. Could the boundaries of 'us' and 'them' be so movable that they follow political interests?

[85] Interview. 25 June 1999.

> The Prime Minister believes that this is an important event that will highlight the enormous contribution the Bangladeshi community makes to the cultural, social and economic life of the UK (1999: 3).

Despite this multiculturalist backdrop, the organisers of the festival attracted major criticisms for the way they dealt with artists and Bangladeshi members of staff. They were thus accused of great disrespect towards Bangladeshi artists, who had been invited from Bangladesh. The most acute blame regarded the Bangladeshi artists' accommodation and daily expenses: many artists were invited to stay in student hostels, which was interpreted as an insulting treatment by local Bangladeshi people. Thus Mahmoud Rouf wrote in an evaluation report of the Bangladesh Festival that 'our national poet and other respectable guests were accommodated in a student hostel. This is grossly undermining the national dignity' (1999). This refers to the fact that Shamsur Rahman, certainly the most highly regarded Bangladeshi poet, expressed outrage and refused the accommodation that was offered to him. A Bangladeshi volunteer, Ritha Khan, thus felt obliged to invite him to stay at her house to avoid him refusing to perform[86]. Syed Shamsul Haq also refused the accommodation and stayed with local Bangladeshi people as a higher standard hotel was a solution rejected by AWW.

Problems also arose with the provision of meals to artists, which according to Razia was due to some restaurants owners' fury at not being invited to the Opening Reception organised in the presence of the Bangladeshi and British Prime Ministers. Despite promises that invitations would be sent, these never reached restaurant owners who felt shunned by AWW and consequently decided not to provide the promised free meals.

Finally there was great discontent regarding the daily expense amounts that were made available to the artists by AWW.

The interpretation of these problems was highly negative among local Bangladeshi people and took part in the decision of four members of Advisory Committees to resign.

> We have come to learn from the artisans of Bangladesh that they aren't being paid what they were promised in Bangladesh. Furthermore what is most degrading, insulting and humiliating to the entire Bengali community is that the artisans are being paid a mere £2 (two pounds) as daily expense. The "Arts Worldwide" a private profit making company, were rude and assaulted many locals at the opening of the festival... We will not tolerate AWW arrogant, patronising, colonial behaviour towards the Bengali people (1999).

[86] Interview with Ritha Khan. 29 August 1999.

Rouf criticised AWW along the same lines: 'In my opinion, AWW exploited the poor people from the poor country in the name of charity and community work' (1999). The polemic took such proportion that a meeting was organised on July 21st at the Bangladesh High Commission, in presence of the High Commissioner, local Bangladeshi and representatives of AWW. It was decided that Anne Hunt, the artistic director of AWW, would use the opportunity of a trip to Dhaka in August to apologise to the artists.

The accusations made against Anne Hunt, the real head of AWW, of having a colonialist attitude were also put forward by the team who conducted the consultation process and the design of the Community Events Programme, prior to the Festival: Fahmida Bakht and Warren Lakin. They both admitted that her outlook and behaviour were some of the reasons why they left AWW. Fahmida explained that she felt that

> *Anne never felt comfortable with me, because I am young and Bengali but I would not let myself be treated like dirt. I know what I am worth and I want to be treated with respect. For her that is just so hard to conceive. It doesn't to fit her category of "the little deprived Bengali who take any shit because she is so grateful". Grateful for what? She shows no respect for Bengalis. Not the people here not even the artists. She is convinced that she is doing people a great favour by organising her festival when it is the artists doing her a favour*[87].

As for Lakin, his analysis is even more forward

> *Yes I believe Anne Hunt has a colonialist state of mind. She is not involved in "Non European Arts" because she loves them and respects them. What she loves is rubbing shoulders with dignitaries, going to "do good" in poor countries and poor communities. And as Fahmida said she feels that people are ungrateful when they complain about the way she handles her festival, because she thinks that just having a festival should be enough to satisfy them*[88].

This was even more emphasised as the Community Events Programme team, composed exclusively of British Bengali members, joined these criticisms. Razia thus felt that her team was treated as 'second-class', an impression confirmed by Tippu Shamsu Uddin, one of the Modern Apprentices.

---

[87] Interview. 15 August 1999
[88] Interview. 15 August 1999

Razia added

> *I think that it is for instance quite significant that we [the Community Events team] had to pay for any event we wanted to go to... Even the concert of Asian Dub Foundation, who came only because Tippu had asked them to, we had to pay for. I felt so bad for the MAs. I think it says a lot*[89].

Multiculturalism is therefore a multi-facetted and ambiguous notion, which can reflect some contextual events or tensions. This will be developed further in the next chapter, where we will investigate the strategic dimension of the notion of multiculturalism.

3. COMMUNITY ARTS, ARTS IN THE COMMUNITY

The final and complex dimension of the case studies that I wish to investigate is that of a relation with Community Arts: to what extent can the AWW Bangladesh Festival and the Baishakhi Mela, which both make strong claims in terms of community benefits, be analysed in the light of the Community Arts / Arts in the Community movement? This analysis aims at examining in this light the implementation of cultural projects in the context of urban regeneration with a specific outlook on community.

We have seen in the third chapter of this thesis that Community Arts are difficult to define and that blurred boundaries exist between Community Arts and Arts in the Community. Our analysis has shown that the Community Arts movement, which was very active in the 1970s, had progressively lost its influence from the mid to late 1980s. It stemmed from a particular political movement, which was at the time concerned with using new tools – including arts – in order to bring power closer to people. This ideology encompassed the conviction that increased creativity would promote radical political struggle. However this overt political aim was progressively dissolved. Moreover there never was a precise set of procedures or techniques that would qualify (or not) as Community Arts. Even though, as Dickson reminds us (1995), the 'workshop' was the favourite tool of Community Artists, the movement was marked more by values and beliefs than by a specific methodological approach to its work. Moreover the movement suffered from some connotations that became attached to it, in particular the idea that Community Arts focused excessively on 'process' at the expense of 'quality'.

The will of many to distance themselves from both a reputation of mediocrity and of political radicalism led the movement to be progressively converted into what became known as 'Arts

---

[89] Interview. 16 September 1999

in the Community', a less radical, less 'offensive' yet still 'well-intentioned' approach to arts for ordinary people.

> Arts in the Community are concerned with the social impact and role of the arts as well as with creation and appreciation. They are arts plus social concern, combining professional artistic standards with additional criteria of social excellence (CDF, 1992: 1).

This thus refers to projects that are

> set apart from traditional presentations of performing or visual arts and from the passive consumption of art or popular entertainment (CDF, 1992: 11).

Many outreach missions by museums, galleries, theatre companies; the contribution of artists to health and social services, to working with youth, elderly and those with disabilities, etc therefore fall under the wide encompassing umbrella of Arts in the Community. The crucial notions in this movement can be identified as: active participation of non-professional artists in creative activities, led by professional artists with the aim of social benefits (whatever these benefits would be).

3.1 Baishakhi Mela

This description of Community Arts and Arts in the Community rapidly writes off the Baishakhi Mela from such influence. Indeed we have seen that even though there is a 'social concern' as part of the remit of the Festival, it is rather seen as a ripple effect of the urban regeneration it is part of rather than as an intrinsic element of the project.

Moreover the artistic programme is presented in a very traditional way which does not seek to challenge 'the passive consumption of art or popular entertainment'.

Thus the strong emphasis on community and social benefits that could be seen as an important part of the Baishakhi Mela is completely outside the realm of Community Arts and much more in a traditional Urban regeneration model, which emphasises, as we have seen, the growing tourism potential of the area.

3.2 AWW's Community Events Programme as Arts in the Community?

At this point it seems useful to offer a brief reminder of the different activities that constituted the Community Events Programme, itself part of the Bangladesh Festival. The Community Events was composed of a the Community Musical 'Dhabi's Story: A Tale from the Time of Truth', which involved pupils from local primary and secondary schools; the Off

the Streets Multimedia Installation, involving teenagers in photographic and video projects; and Banglatown Sounds, a DJ competition open to local teenagers.

As was seen earlier, the Community Events Programme was devised by Warren Lakin, as the outcome of a substantial research process. The titles that he had given to the project clearly indicate his inspiration: 'Bangladesh Community Musical. Parts One and Two. A programme of Community Arts development. January 1998 to December 1999'. Interestingly as soon as he departed from AWW, the mention of 'Community Arts' were no longer to be found on any documents; the expression had been replaced by the more neutral Community Events Programme. Moreover in a Progress report dated April 1998, Warren Lakin presented the aims of the Bangladesh Community Musical (as was still named the Community Events Programme) in the four following points

- To create a new model for community participation through the arts
- To highlight the role of ethnic and cultural minority groups
- To raise the local, regional and national profile of Bengali culture
- To become an integral part of the on-going programme of community arts development in the borough (1998: 2).

However in a general document about the Community Programme dated 1999, AWW presented it as

> An on-going programme which provides education, training, life skills development and capacity building through creative projects, aimed primarily at young people from ethnic minorities in deprived areas of London (1999: 1).

Thus it seems as though a rhetoric shift has taken place from a Community Arts discourse to an urban regeneration based discourse, as the project is presented focusing on functional dimensions of the educational project (training skills, employability, etc) as opposed to dimensions emphasising citizenry. We will now examine the extent to which the implementation of the different projects that form the Community Events Programme reflects this shift.

The Community Musical was a vast and ambitious project, which involved ten primary and secondary schools and more than two hundred pupils. It was a long process, which spread over nine months, during which numerous workshops took place in order to satisfy the remit that children should be in charge of the Musical from beginning to end. Thus during the

autumn term of 1998, two story tellers, Joyoti Grech and Rezaul Kabir, led workshops at the outcome of which the story on which the Musical was to be based, was chosen. This was followed by story telling workshops so as to adapt the story and music and dance workshops to compose the Musical. Some costumes and props were designed by children (even though the majority of these were the responsibility of Keith Khan). All the workshops were led by Community Artists[90] who had a great deal of experience in working in schools (as well as Community Centres, prisons, etc). From May onwards, the director, Stephen Langridge, the musical director, Howard Moody, the choreographer, Gauri Sharma Tripathi, and the stage manager, Ann Ogbomo, started leading workshops in order to rehearse the Musical.

Dhabi's Story was given five public performances at Allen gardens off Brick Lane, three of which were reserved for school audiences, whilst the remaining two were public performances that took place on the Festival Launch Day. These performances occurred on a purpose built amphitheatre with a 400 seats capacity. The Musical was produced to a highly professional standard and it involved a production manager, a site manager and a production assistant for total production costs of £55,125. On the other hand the total of the artists costs amounted to £35,750.

Despite this infrastructure and relatively high budget for such project, the School Musicals did not raise as much satisfaction as expected among those involved. All the artists voiced much frustration at what they felt was a lack of professionalism and understanding of this type of project from the AWW team. Thus Stephen Langridge and Howard Moody declared that in fifteen years experience working on similar projects, it was the first time they had been close to resignation. The logistics of such projects was challenging but crucial to the success of the work, and both artists felt that this was not handled satisfactorily.

> *They [AWW] just have no idea what they are doing... The MAs [Modern Apprentices] have no experience, Razia not enough to train them properly and fast enough... and since they are the interface between us and the schools, the whole thing is a mess. They are reasonable admin staff but they have no understanding whatsoever of what it takes to organise and co-ordinate the work we do with ten schools*[91].

These organisational problems were also felt by the schools, and most teachers involved were not very satisfied. Thus the head teacher of the Thomas Buxton Junior School declared that she was very enthusiastic about such projects as she believed them to be of great benefit to the schools, as much as in terms of creative and language skills (99.6% of pupils

---

[90] Marcina Arnold, Jan Hendrickse, Michael Osborn.
[91] Interview. 9 June 1999.

are of Bangladeshi origin and English skills are a problem) as in terms of life skills such as self-confidence, self-respect, etc. Her school is consequently frequently involved in such work (Spitalfields Festival, work with Guildhall School of Drama and Dance, etc). Yet she could not hide her disappointment with this particular project.

> *The artists are good overall, but administratively this is a bit of a non-sense... It has spread over far too long, with great lapses of time between workshops. The kids lose momentum, interest and they don't feel that they own the project... I am sure the result on stage will be good, but in terms of process I am not convinced that it is so successful... Which is a shame as I heard there was a very significant budget for it. In that case I consider it a bit of a waste*[92].

This tension between 'process' and 'product' was at the heart of many misunderstandings between the artists and AWW, as well the source of much frustration. Thus Jan Hendrickse, a music workshop leader, was very unhappy about the ethos of the project.

> *It is true I have never work for such grandiose end product: the specially designed stage, the professional production manager for a show only with kids outside a major venue, etc... But honestly this is crap work compared to what can be achieved. I work a lot with other schools and if kids are given a chance, they can do marvels. This time, Anne [Hunt]'s mentality is a bit "if the kids are not good enough, we'll turn the level of the pros*[93] *a bit" ... Makes me sick. She does not deserve all this funding she got*[94].

The Off the Streets multimedia project was also a challenging one from the beginning. Indeed as we have seen in the previous chapter, many difficulties arose for its organisation which led to many hasty decisions being made, affecting its development. Thus after the decision to replace the original plan for a 'post musical' by the Multimedia installation and the DJ competition, problems appeared in the recruitment of young participants. We have seen that this caused strong discontent among the photographic workshop leaders, who all believed that the recommended recruitment policy (I.e. by getting in touch with young people they had already worked with) prevented the project from reaching its aims.

However this recruitment strategy was not the only dimension of the Off the Streets project to cause dissatisfaction. Thus the time and material provided also were thought of as badly

---

[92] Interview. 30 June 1999.
[93] Professional musicians were hired for the final performance.
[94] Interview. 11 July 1999.

thought through and crucially insufficient to conduct quality work. Indeed the project was initially devised to take place over four full-days long workshops, which proved impossible to carry out since most teenagers were taking exams. It had thus to be replaced by seven bi-weekly workshops, which also were difficult to implement. Furthermore only two disposable cameras per participants were made available, which was denounced by all photography tutors as absolutely deficient so as to obtain satisfactory results. The complaints echoed those articulated by the artists involved in the School Musical. Annie Bungeroth voiced her disappointment

> *It should not be difficult to know when exams take place... They [the participants] are not available. Even when they come they are not focused... And we don't have enough cameras. There is no way we can do something of quality, really build on something... it does not allow for group bonding, there is no real exploration of the medium etc. This is a real shamble... The only good thing here is the kids. They are great*[95].

The documentary maker in charge of tutoring the video workshop, Ruhul Amin, was also deeply frustrated with the time and equipment provided to him and the group. His task was to have a group of eight teenagers putting together a ten minutes video in four days. Whilst he joined the project on the assumption that it would be a learning process for the youngsters, he confessed that he felt that he was expected to just do the work himself, by *vaguely involving the kids*. This, in his eyes, was contrary to the declared ethos of the project

> *This is totally chaotic. AWW has no understanding of what is required to conduct such project properly and make it worthwhile. Basically it will be all about what they say about it, but in terms of learning process for the kids, it will be nothing. It is very typical of al these organisations which put all their money into advertising and marketing rather than on content*[96].

Photography tutor Phil Maxwell was also adamant in his criticism of the Off the Street project, even more so since he has a lot of experience in using this particular medium (workshops and disposable cameras) for educational projects with youngsters.

> *When I go about my own projects, I probably have a tenth of their budget. And then I can tell you that I achieve so much more with the kids. In this project honestly we are doing crap work. There is not enough time, the organisation is totally chaotic, well no, there is NO*

---

[95] Interview. 17 May 1999.
[96] Interview. 14 May 1999.

organisation, not enough cameras... interestingly for a photographic project! The only reason why I haven't pulled out is out of respect for the kids. But I really hate this project[97].

The final installation to come out of the youngsters' photographs was put together by curator Clive Sall in the form of huge banners. These were exhibited in the corner of Brick Lane as well as in the café of the Whitechapel Gallery (the exhibition zerozerozero focusing on young Asian artists was coupled with the Bangladesh Festival and therefore used as a platform to exhibit the work). However Sall was unhappy about the process required by AWW, which meant that he would choose the photographs and design the banners with a graphic designer. He identified this as a recurrent flaw of Community Arts projects, which too often were conceptualised by artists and executed by the participants. For him it should tend towards the opposite, because

what is interesting is to get people's views, opinions, sensibilities and then it is the artist's job to put this in artistic terms. Not the other way round. That only fuels the traditional scheme of art authorship, recognition routes, etc... All these things that Community Arts was trying to challenge in the first place[98].

On both projects, the artists' insistent and voiced frustration about the faults of the project highlighted a decades-old problem in Community Arts, which was articulated by Razia

The tutors all focus on the process. They complain because they think the kids are not getting much, or at least not enough, out of it. But what they don't realise is that AWW is a high profile arts organisation which needs to put together high quality shows. I am not saying that artists are not concerned with the quality of the shows, but their priority are not the same as Anne's [Hunt, AWW's artistic director][99].

However Sall expressed his disagreement with this point. As he explained

Trying to evacuate the question by saying "we never said we would do Community Arts" is a very easy way out. At the end of the day, they secured funding on all this stuff about "education, skills development, creativity enhancement, self-confidence building, etc". Well, given the way they do things, they are not even achieving this. Let alone make the kids think seriously about the relation between artists and

---

[97] Interview. 18 May 1999.
[98] Interview. 28 April 1999.
[99] Interview. 8 June 1999.

audience, the value of authorship, etc. But that, forget it, I am not even sure they [AWW staff] are aware of such issues themselves[100].

The Banglatown Sounds project did not raise so much frustration. Indeed this part of the programme did not involve a great deal of input from artists in educational terms and required a great deal less logistics than the other two projects (it also costed significantly less: the total costs of the competition amounted to a mere £2,000). Thus a panel from the Asian Underground music scene was appointed to judge a music talent competition for young DJs, MCs and bands. The panel included some the most prestigious musicians of the Asian underground movement: Deedar and Dr Das from the world famous band *Asian Dub Foundation*, Mo Magic from Outcaste Records, Sam Zaman from *State of Bengal* and DJ Ritu[101]. These musicians are all highly recognised Asian musicians and thus played an important emulating role for the young local musicians (this is even more true for Deedar as he his himself Bangladeshi, whereas the other members of the panel are Indian).

The panel members judged sixteen entries from twenty-five young people who entered the competition (six of whom had taken advantage of music workshops which had been organised as part of the project). Seven finalists were given the opportunity to develop their sounds in recording studios and perform live at the finals which took place at the Davenant Centre, Tower Hamlets, on July 11th. The winners showcased their acts at the Festival Club Night at the very trendy 333 Club in Old Street the same evening with well known names from the Asian club scene including Pundit G from ADF, Mo Magic, Ges-e and Badmarsh from Outcaste New Breeds. The Club Night should have featured the local and world famous DJ set *Joi*, but one of the members, Haroon, died two days before the event which led to the cancellation of the performance.

The three winning songs included one by MC Sensor about the recent bomb blast in Brick Lane and another Ahktar Vetar (Eastern Liberation) who had been the victim of an attack earlier in the year by the gang of youths after receiving media coverage about his musical talent and professional potential. He used this competition to make a comeback into the music scene.

Banglatown Sounds was therefore a highly relevant project for the local teenagers since it allowed showcasing celebrated young Asian bands, who successfully and proudly promote the integration of their Asian background in a British cultural context. These particular role models, source of great pride amongst young British Asian, were even more significant since

---

[100] Interview. 28 April 1999.

[101] Outcaste records is considered as the UK's leading label for music of British-Asian origin or influence. Outcaste Records is home to Nitin Sawhney, DJ Badmarsh & Shri, Niraj Chag, Sutra Sonic, Ges-E & Usman and Mo Magic.

most of these musicians (and especially ADF) address the youngest generations' issues and needs. Thus ADF, which famously started off thanks to a Community Arts musical project[102], has set up an education foundation, ADEF (ADF Education),

> born out of ADF's experiences as a developing music collective and their realisation that there is a distinct lack of structures and role models for young, particularly Asian, bands and musicians who are trying to make headway in an industry in which they are grossly under-represented; both as performers and technicians[103].

However as such Banglatown Sounds cannot be considered as Community Arts, nor as Arts in the Community. Indeed the project did not include any educational dimension per se (except for the short experience in professional studios for the finalists), which is one of the most important sides of Arts in the Community. All participants were already active in their artistic field, even though they were all amateurs. The aim of Banglatown Sounds was thus to promote existing local talents and to try to serve as a potential platform, but not really to serve as a social project in itself. It is also important to underline the fact that for such an organisation as AWW, the showcasing of highly famous bands is important, as it is an organisation that relies on marketing. Indeed if the Community Events projects were funded and free, they were also used to publicise the rest of the festival: thus ADF performed on July 18th at the Barbican, whilst State of Bengal, Ges-E, DJs Badmarsh and Mo Magic performed at the Whitechapel on July 11th and July 16th.

Thus it seems that overall the AWW Community Events Programme highlights the long-standing tension of Community Arts between 'process' and 'end result'. Indeed this programme has separated out these two notions by underscoring the training process of the four Modern Apprentices as the most important process, whilst the artistic dimension had to be a 'high profile product'. Ignoring the controversies over their incapacity to fulfil their aims, AWW summarised the Community Events Programme in its final report thus

> The success of the Community Events Project has been to develop a model of community development through the arts whereby work undertaken at grass roots level is programmed into high profile events, and training and skills development opportunities are built into the project as a whole (1999: 8).

---

[102] ADF formed whilst at Community Music Limited in London: Dr Das and Chandrasonic were both tutors and Deedar was a student.
[103] ADF official website www.asiandubfoundation.com

CONCLUSION

The tensions over culture are thus multifold as the notion is mobilised in a variety of contexts and towards very different objectives. However at its core remain crucial power struggles that might deeply affect the local area and its population. Indeed it has emerged that culture is at the centre of strategies that aim at shaping the local cultural and urban regeneration policies. This is what is going to be analysed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7 – STRATEGIES AND EFFECTS

INTRODUCTION

The data that emerged from this presentation of the two case studies point to a set of observations. First of all, there undoubtedly is a strategic dimension to the use of the notion of community in discourses that anchor and surround urban regeneration. This is partly rooted in the multi-facetted nature of the concept, which allows for manipulation in different directions by different actors. Moreover the similarly multi-facetted and polysemic notion of culture is also mobilised by different actors for different purposes. Each notion is thus used and called up in a highly strategic fashion. More importantly it is the combination of these two concepts that grounds the strategy of different actors.

We will see that in the cases on which we have focused, the result is leading towards cultural reification and commodification of 'the Bangladeshi community'. We will emphasise how the context of urban regeneration discourses and policies is determinant in this outcome and how notions such as multiculturalism have become instrumentalised in ways which can be seen as contradictory. In this situation, I suggest that it is the concept of community which enables the process to occur.

1. COMMUNITY: AN OBJECT TO BE MANIPULATED AND APPROPRIATED

In the presentation of the uses of the term of community by the different actors, it strikingly emerged that these uses were marked by inconsistency as the variety of contexts affected the meanings and understandings of the term. Yet, paradoxically, there seemed to be some coherence in this inconsistency: different actors seemed to use only a certain range of the different meanings available. I would suggest that these uses reflect as much the asymmetry of power between the actors as their position in the projects in focus (e.g. 'organisers' / 'recipients') or their belonging (or not) to the 'community'.

We have thus seen that there were similarities between the uses of the term by Cityside Regeneration Ltd and AWW, whilst the members of the Steering Committee organising the Baishakhi Mela used the notion in a slightly different way. However it is important to emphasise that the use of the term 'community' was not so much determined by the ethnic

identity of the Bangladeshi population, as it was by the very structure of the urban regeneration framework set up in the area: the geographical boundaries drawing the area for the urban regeneration programme to take place were also the assumed boundaries of the 'local community'. This community happened to be largely Bangladeshi. Most importantly, the tendency from both Cityside Regeneration Ltd and AWW to 'adapt' to the institutional rhetoric was prominent: both organisations have mobilised the notion exactly along the rhetorical lines set by the urban regeneration bidding guidance documents. Thus the documentation of both these agencies strikingly features the notion as an external entity, which had to be 'involved' and 'empowered'. In that sense, it adheres to the tradition in social policy that consists of attaching the notion of community to connotations of social exclusion and deprivation. At the same time, 'community' is used as an abstract notion legitimising the activities put in place through the use of numerous expressions conveying notions of safety and concern which were exploited by both agencies.

Thus we have seen that in the rhetoric of Cityside Regeneration Ltd and AWW, community is at once the deprived population that will benefit from the regeneration process, the process of involvement of the 'relevant people' (whether these are the beneficiaries of the urban regeneration activities or the actors involved in their implementation (e.g. London Underground, Sedgwicks)) and the abstract notion that invokes a better environment for the beneficiaries of the scheme (e.g. community spirit). In that sense, the rhetoric used by Cityside Regeneration Ltd and AWW illustrates Plant's belief that community is at once fact and value (1974). Yet - and more importantly in my view - it instrumentalises the concept so as to fit in the urban regeneration general rhetorical framework.

Indeed I would suggest that the evident mobilisation of 'regeneration rhetoric', invoking 'capacity building', 'participation', 'involvement', which is at work in the discourses of both Cityside Regeneration Ltd and AWW calls for blurred boundaries. The inconsistency is thus as much a consequence of using an ill-defined concept, as a facilitating device to achieve the set aims and goals. Indeed these are notions that, even though they have increasingly been invoked in urban regeneration rhetoric, have remained problematic. It has been highlighted in chapter two that in the government's policy setting documents, definitions of community are exceedingly vague, amalgamating local residents, private sector and / or voluntary and community groups[104]. It has been shown in chapter five that both Cityside regeneration Ltd and AWW have followed these very hazy lines to refer to the community they were supposed to deal with. It has also been shown that most of the anchoring notions of the new urban regeneration were equally problematic, with for instance the confusion between 'involvement'

[104] In that particular situation, it seems that defining 'community' as that which integrates 'community groups' is a rather interesting tautology!

and 'consultation'. Not only have these terms never been delineated in great detail, but also they remain rather controversial in that there are doubts regarding the efficiency of such seemingly laudable practices. Indeed many commentators of urban regeneration policies have emphasised that not only recipients and implementers of urban regeneration rarely have similar aims and goals (see chapter two), but also that it is utopian to imagine that each 'camp' will be a homogeneous entity sharing similar objectives, vested interests, etc. The issue of internally fragmented 'communities' is acutely important here. In such a political minefield, devising urban regeneration strategies by anchoring them in notions that prove so indefinable that they can be interpreted in as many ways as there are actors, allows a greater margin of action for those in charge of carrying out the programme. Even though it does not completely eradicate the possibilities of contentions from different actors, it opens a greater space for reaching set objectives.

Thus it has been suggested that both Cityside Regeneration Ltd and AWW have manoeuvred around the issues of 'community involvement', 'participation', etc in such a way that their set objectives could be claimed to be reached. In the case of AWW this was done amidst great discontent from the 'community' supposed to have been so successfully involved and affected. In that sense I would suggest that the term 'community' is undoubtedly used strategically by agencies such as Cityside Regeneration Ltd or AWW – I.e. agencies that bid for public funding and therefore adapt their rhetoric to the framework given by funding bodies, in this instance Central government departments. This is a typical situation, as described by Rose (1997) where 'application speak' needs to be spoken and mobilised to ensure funding. Whether this language fluency indicates a sharing of the goals and values deployed in policy setting documents is another matter. Indeed as was seen in chapter two, a number of commentators have emphasised that despite rhetoric of 'empowerment', urban regeneration agencies tend to resist processes of power sharing. Behind language of 'participation' and 'involvement' thus often hide superficial procedures.

On the other hand, the references to 'community' by Bangladeshi people were equally marked by inconsistency. However the irregularities were more linked to issues of representativity (i.e. who is the community?) than to widely different sites of reference as seen with AWW or Cityside Regeneration Ltd. This is not to imply that the inconsistencies noticed in the rhetoric of Bangladeshi actors were of lesser importance or significance than those remarked in the rhetoric of Cityside or AWW; on the contrary it emphasises the suggestion that differential uses of the concept of community (and its related notions) are determined by differential power positions.

There was no need – or no space – for the organisers of the Baishakhi Mela to mobilise such notions as 'community participation' or 'community involvement' because they were the community: in other words, they fulfilled the 'community participation' requirement needed

by Cityside Regeneration Ltd to satisfy their own objectives. As such they did not need in turn to invoke such practice in order to bid for funding. This highlights how the use of these expressions mirrors the power position of those who involve and those who <u>are</u> involved.

Moreover the different references to 'community' were highly dependent on contexts: the rhetoric of community was thus differently conducted whether it was a matter of debating the lack of 'community involvement' (see the dispute with AWW) or when it was about being the 'genuine' community leader (see organisers of Baishakhi Mela). In these different strategies, the notion of culture was actively mobilised. Thus in the case of the dispute between AWW and some Bangladeshi actors, the importance of the link between community, culture and power was highlighted. Indeed what was clearly expressed by most of the actors who showed discontent at AWW was not so much the rejection of a festival representing Bengali culture organised by non-Bangladeshis, but being by-passed in this process. This was demonstrated in the insistence that those Bangladeshi people who had been consulted were not 'the relevant people'. Mr Uddin, editor of the newspaper *Jonomoth*, offered the most striking illustration of this feeling of humiliation as he admitted that his opposition to the festival was partly fuelled by the fact that he had never been contacted even though he considers himself, in his own words, *a prominent member of the community* and an *unavoidable interlocutor*. For the protagonists, it therefore was clearly an issue of power, but one which necessitated the mobilisation of the concepts of community and culture to justify their ire. Indeed frustration stemmed from the observation that a white middle class organisation was about to organise a cultural event on 'their' country and culture, on a scale that was much larger than any of the events they had themselves pulled together. Issues of pride and status were more at stake than culture per se: the criticisms that concentrated on the quality of the programme or the choice of artists invited to take part of the festival were marginal compared to those that focused on the lack of involvement of prominent members of 'the community'. Furthermore the presence of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh as a patron of the AWW Bangladesh festival acutely stressed this feeling of being by-passed as such a high political personality is a symbol of power and significance. The fact that she was the host of AWW was interpreted as undermining by many prominent Bangladeshi actors. As Cohen pointed out

> ... members find their identities as individuals through their occupancy of the community's social space: if outsiders trespass in that space, then its occupants' own sense of self is felt to be debased and defaced (1986: 109).

The mobilisation of the notion of culture is thus fundamental in the strategy that aims at justifying one's position as central. This has also been illustrated in the context of the

Baishakhi Mela where secular nationalists made references to the national history of Bangladesh and the cultural struggles that underpinned the war of independence against Pakistan to explain and justify their antagonism against members of the East London Mosque. The latter in turn invoked the moral and cultural values of Islam as the origin for their opposition to the Baishakhi Mela. Each discourse aimed at anchoring the legitimisation of the claims that they 'truly' represented 'the community', whilst the others were only the voice of a (condemnable) minority. This illustrates the extent to which the Bangladeshi identity is used, to refer to Cohen's model of the symbolic construction of community, as an umbrella under which a variety of meanings develops. The festival becomes a symbol for the boundary at which power struggles are at play. The different agendas make the meaning of the festivals differ, but always in the name of the 'community'. Thus one's positioning in the cultural arena seems to play a determining role for the positioning in the political one.

These various controversies have emphasised the importance of a highly problematic yet unavoidable category: the 'community leaders'. As was highlighted in chapter five, the political landscape of the Bangladeshi population is fragmented and complex. These 'community leaders' tend to be seen by many Bangladeshi actors as well as by most urban regeneration officers as inevitable intermediaries or interlocutors when issues regarding the 'community' are taken up. These community leaders are, as Neveu (1993b) has emphasised, a 'new' category in the sense that they are different from more 'traditional' leaders such as the religious mullahs. The emergence of these men, often-bilingual English/Bengali, has been encouraged by the combination of several factors (Neveu, 1993b). First of all, as was mentioned in chapter five, they usually were members of associations, which aimed at lobbying for services (in housing, health and education) for Bangladeshi people. This involvement has allowed these young men to be recognised as privileged interlocutors by various administrations, which became used to dealing with them on numerous issues. To this self-organisation dimension, was added the fact that much subvention attribution had increasingly become linked to the ethnic minority as a criterion (Neveu, 1993b). This was especially the case under the GLC, but was followed by many local authorities. Finally the equal opportunities policies implemented in many administrations and the establishment of numerous 'ethnic minorities teams' offered those who had been for years the interface between local associations and social services the occasion to be 'officially' in positions of mediation. Another important path towards the accession of 'community leader' position has been through the engagement with parliamentary elections. Eade (1989) has powerfully demonstrated the strategic games that took place within the local Labour party, in order to accommodate the wants and needs of all (i.e. Bangladeshis and traditional white working-class, who increasingly needed the electoral power of the Bangladeshi population). Once again the 'community leaders' – bilingual and well versed in the subtleties of the British

administrations - became indispensable interfaces between the Bangladeshi population and the traditional Labour representatives.

> Whether in the realm of the administrative apparatus or in that of parliamentary politics, we are thus faced with a group of young men, who, through their training, their history and their engagements, are today in a fundamental pivotal position between an ethnic minority and the surrounding society (Neveu, 1993b: 152, my translation).

However this category is highly complex and the observer should not be misled into overlooking its internal contradictions and discrepancies. As Neveu rightly emphasises, the absence of women among 'community leaders' as well as the lack of recognition of the specific problems faced by Bangladeshi women is very significant of the partial representativity of these men. Women interrogated by Neveu can thus be very critical of the community leaders, especially pointing to the tendency that many have to

> ... use the possibilities offered by the equal opportunities policies in order to satisfy a desire for prestige and a valorising status within the "community" (1993b: 154, my translation).

This links to another intrinsic problem of the category of 'community leaders', which has been strikingly illustrated with the severe struggle between two potential chairs of the Baishakhi Mela Steering Committee. Whilst the notion of 'community leaders', supposedly representing the Bangladeshi community to the surrounding society assumes the existence of a neatly bounded internally homogeneous community, power struggles reveal fractures and factions. Eade had already demonstrated the extent to which

> The Bangladeshi community, as an object of representation, was presented by those activists as a distinctive, united community whose needs they were articulating in the political arena... Although representatives spoke as though they understood the wishes of whole communities, they tried to advance the claims of specific individuals or particular pressure groups (1986: 189).

This has led Neveu to conclude

> There is not one Bangladeshi community, but as many Bangladeshi communities as there are political strategies. The interests that each would like to see defended as if they were those of "the community" are in fact the interests of a fraction of this minority, or those of a political tendency. The Bangladeshi "community" can thus be in turn the bastion of a policy in terms of class, of a unifying strategy in the

> name of a common heritage – a heritage whose profoundly secular nature can be claimed by some, whilst others will claim its central religious dimension (1993b: 157, my translation)

This strategic appropriation of 'community' to serve one's interests is however not restricted to 'community leaders' and can also be observed in the controversy that opposed AWW and story-teller Joyoti Grech regarding the origin of the tale used for the AWW School Musical. The terms she used to signify her outrage at AWW's unwillingness to acknowledge the particular situation of the Jumma people (from whose culture the original tale was drawn) were thus significant:

> Arts Worldwide has raised funds for the Festival in the name of the Bangladeshi community, whose basic concerns have been sidelined. Instead of telling a "Tale from the Time of Truth", they have used artists and the arts to present their own, censored version of Bangladesh (Grech, 1999).

Grech denounced a certain vision of the Bangladeshi community – that determined by a national identity - by generalising her concerns as those of 'the community'. Yet as the large majority of the local Bangladeshi population comes from Sylhet oppression, it is improbable that the oppression that has been taking place in the Hill Tracts for decades is amongst their 'basic concerns'.

The controversy at the origin of Joyoti Grech's anger also emphasises a rather common issue attached to the concept of community, especially salient when it relates to ethnic minority: the extent to which it is linked to hegemonic definitions of the nation. In this instance, 'local community', 'Bengali', 'Bangladesh' are three notions presented as congruent and synonymous, whilst Grech insists on highlighting the internal fractures of the Bangladeshi nation. This is somehow archetypal of the politics of 'nation': an entity presented as homogeneous and universally recognised as such - even at the expense of minority groups. This emphasises another facet of the all-encompassing 'community' as ethnic minority: more often than not they are perceived as 'representative' of their country of origin, where internal differences / fractures are overlooked or judged irrelevant.

Thus 'community' becomes an object that all actors seem to try to appropriate for their own interest, either by claiming being a representative element or by claiming having involved representative elements. It is important to emphasise that this very dimension is open to manoeuvres: community representatives will be 'community leaders' in some situations (Cityside Regeneration Ltd), youth in others (AWW festival), local residents, local businesses,

etc. The understanding of community is 'situated': the community is an 'imagined world', which different elements see and mobilise in different ways according to their position and their interests. Appadurai's concept of 'scapes' thus becomes applicable at the micro level: 'community' is itself made of disjunctive entities, autonomous and nonetheless dependent on each other. It is made of overlapping spheres, which all play their part in the overall representation of the 'community'. This contributes to Albrow's critique of Appadurai's supposition that, as was seen in the first chapter, the global flows contrast the relatively stable communities and networks through which people move. Indeed the Bangladeshis 'community' corresponds to what Albrow (1997) would like to be the sixth element of Appadurai's framework: 'socioscape'. It is in fact a 'vision of social formations which are more than the people who occupy them at one time' (1997: 38). The 'stability' is no more evident in these delimited localities (mainly because the locality is also very much imagined and made sense of by global means (Eade, 1997)) than in more fluid 'scapes'. They display the same disjunctive and perspectival features.

I would thus concur with Neveu's opinion that

> If the term "community" can be kept, it is not because of the existence of an organic entity "Bangladeshi community", but because the object designated by these people as being that of their representation is that of community, the content of which each defines depending on his/her engagements and his/her objectives (1993b: 158).

However I would certainly insist on the fact that in the specific framework of urban regeneration initiatives, these differential rhetorics are determined by the position on the chessboard set by urban regeneration programmes. Indeed the Baishakhi Mela is part of the local regeneration process but its members remain recipients (and as such are instrumentalised to serve the regeneration's purposes), whereas AWW are seen as regeneration implementers. This has fundamentally affected the way the term 'community' has been used, understood and manipulated by these actors.

These multiple understandings and uses of the notion of community also mark the discrepancy with the understanding of the concept by New Labour. Indeed the stance taken by New Labour on the concept, anchored in the dialectic of rights/responsibilities and its moral consequence, seems to be highly inadequate when examined in the light of local implementation of policies such as urban regeneration. The assumption that 'community' has an intrinsic set of shared values, which are all desirable and prone to maintain a 'good' social order, is thus difficult to sustain if it is confronted with the examination of local struggles for

power. The solidarity that is purportedly an essential dimension of community, thus seems to be not only internally fragmenting but also ever shifting and determined much more by individual ambitions and political strategies than by the community's shared 'moral voice' that Etzioni (1995: ix) praised so highly.

2. COMMUNITY, CULTURE, COMMODIFICATION

The previous section has emphasised the limitations of essentialising understandings of community as well as the extent to which the notions of culture and community are strongly, if problematically, linked to each other. As was mentioned in chapter one, this has also been brilliantly explored by Baumann in the London multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Southall, where he set out to analyse the complex discursive relations between the two concepts, both in the dominant discourse of society and in the non-dominant – the demotic – discourse of locals. The starting point of his analysis was the dominant discourse about culture and community, which reifies the former in the name of the latter based on the assumption that communities have distinct cultures. According to Baumann, the critical advantage of such a dominant discourse is its provision of a complete discursive closure, especially when the discourse about culture and community engages with ethnic minorities. Indeed these minorities are readily presumed to share a culture in its reified form.

> The two key terms mutually reinforce each other, for those defined as ethnic minorities must form a community based on their reified culture; and their culture must appear in reified form, because they are, after all, identified as a community (Baumann, 1996: 17).

The process of cultural reification is important to emphasise because it provides the foundation for processes of cultural essentialisation, where culture is fixed and defined as radically different from that of Others.

> [Culture] seems to connote a certain coherence, uniformity and timelessnes in the meaning systems of a given group, and to operate rather like the earlier concept of "race" in identifying fundamentally different, essentialised and homogenous social units (as when we speak about "a culture"). Because of these associations, ... [it] falsely fixes the boundaries between groups in an absolute and artificial way (Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990, quoted in Baumann, 1996: 10-11).

However it is important not to be misled into thinking that processes of cultural reification are only external: indeed Baumann emphasises that 'people may reify their own *culture* as readily as they reify "other" *cultures'* (1996: 12. Emphasis in original).

These processes of cultural reification in a dominant discourse around culture and community, especially when focusing on ethnic minorities, gives natural way to a specific understanding of multiculturalism. It is this – admittedly controversial - aspect of the debate that I will now investigate and especially the way in which it has reinforced cultural reification as well as cultural and spatial commodification.

Multiculturalism is a highly controversial, ill-defined notion. As Stephen Castles pointed out, much of what is encapsulated in the term multiculturalism concerns 'abandoning the myth of homogeneous and monocultural nation-states' (2000, quoted in Vertovec, 2001). Multiculturalism is associated with many - sometimes divergent, sometimes overlapping - discourses, institutional frameworks and policies invoking the term in rather different ways (Vertovec, 1998). It may refer to a demographic description, a broad political ideology, a set of specific public policies, a goal of institutional restructuring, a mode of resourcing cultural expression, a general moral challenge, a set of new political struggles or a kind of feature of postmodernism (Vertovec, 2001). However there are some common points between all these approaches to multiculturalism. As Parekh emphasised

> Multiculturalism is not about difference and identity *per se* but about those that are embedded in and sustained by culture... Multiculturalism is about cultural diversity or culturally embedded differences (2000: 2. Emphasis in original).

This leads to many problems highlighted by Grillo, who outlines six commonly identified problems with multicultural theory and practice: multiculturalism's implicit essentialism; the system of categorization which underpins it; the form that multicultural politics takes; the ritualisation of ethnicity often associated with it; the elision of race (and class) that it appears to entail; and the attack on the 'common core' which it represents. 'Many of these criticisms,' Grillo rightly observes, 'stem from a focus on "culture"' (1998, quoted in Vertovec, 2001: 2). In addition to the core critique of essentialism, Alibhai-Brown (2000) outlines the following 'troubles with multiculturalism': it is only about 'ethnic minorities'; it has created a sense of white exclusion; its model of representation only deals with elites; it freezes change and can entrench inequalities; it erects group barriers; it is seen as 'woolly liberalism'; it has not engaged with globalisation. It is beyond my scope to analyse in great depth the difficulties associated with the concept of multiculturalism, however I would like to emphasise that, as was shown above, communities are usually seen as the primary site from which these culturally embedded differences emerge, as communities are supposed to provide the boundaries that mark these differences. It is thus unsurprising that Parekh explains that 'a multicultural society, then, is one that includes two or more cultural communities' (2000: 6)

or that in the report of the Commission on the Future of multi-ethnic Britain, Britain was described as a 'community of communities' (2000). However it seems important to bear in mind that multiculturalism, which, as was seen in chapter six, is so frequently referred to is in fact ridden with theoretical and practical problems.

In this context and with such a discursive background, it is also important to recall the link made between community, culture and urban regeneration. Indeed it has been demonstrated in the second and third chapters that community and culture are two prominent notions in urban regeneration: both are apprehended as fundamental to a successful engagement with the problems that British inner cities suffer from. Community should thus be the anchor for regeneration programmes to be carried out in a joined-up manner and thus owned and accepted by those benefiting from it as adequate to their needs. On the other hand, art and culture are seen as a crucial element for this process to occur satisfactorily and fruitfully. It has thus been highlighted in chapter three that the Policy Action Team 10 explicitly reported to the Social Exclusion unit that the arts, sports and culture were crucial for urban regeneration schemes to reach their goals. I have discussed issues surrounding culture-led urban regeneration in chapter three. At this point it also seems necessary to reiterate the emphasis put by the current government on cultural industries as the centre of their cultural policies. Thus if arts and culture have been seen as determinant for successful urban regeneration, it is in terms of cultural industries and of 'products' to be 'consumed' (PAT10, 1999: 21) that this contribution should be understood.

This is not without serious consequences at the local level. Thus Cityside Regeneration Ltd has invested in cultural projects in order to conduct its urban regeneration programme according to national guidance. These projects, and especially the two which have constituted my case studies, seem to concord with Henry's remark about the 'multicultural' fabric of Birmingham: 'what may once have been a weakness may now be a recognised strength' (2001: 6). Indeed it is clear that Cityside Regeneration Ltd has decided to invest greatly in the multicultural nature of the area, and especially in the Bangladeshi identity that derives from the large number of Bangladeshi inhabitants in this area. This is undoubtedly the essence of the Banglatown strategy. It seems indeed that

> the regeneration of Spitalfields is based on the wisdom that where cultural and ethnic groups have remained distinct, an economic advantage can be gained (Begum, 2002: 1).

This 'activation of an essentialised identity category' (Jacobs, 1996: 100) was indeed the basis of the marketing strategy that aims at regenerating the local area surrounding Brick Lane through the dynamisation of the visitor economy and local tourism. In other words, in

order to fight the dire economic deprivation from which the local area suffers, the idea was to 'play the ethnic card'. However, and bearing in mind Baumann's important remark about people's capacity to reify their own culture, Banglatown should not be seen as 'simply an appropriation by external interests of essentialised notions of Bengali in the service of economic diversification and expansion' (Jacobs, 1996: 100). Indeed as the case studies have clearly demonstrated, numerous local Bangladeshi businessmen were actively involved in the expansion of Banglatown, not least through the annual organisation of the Baishakhi Mela.

This 'bold and strategic mobilisation of essentialised, commercially viable and adequately consumable notions of being "Bengali"' (Jacobs, 1996: 100) was thus the basis of this local reinvention that constituted Banglatown and a process of cultural instrumentalisation of space, where the exotic nature of the place is almost theatrically staged. The colourful arches and lampposts on Brick Lane, the emphasis put on restaurants – even during the most 'cultural' manifestation of Banglatown, i.e. the Baishakhi Mela – took part in this exoticisation of the area. This is a typical illustration of what Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (2000) has criticised as 'consumer' or 'boutique multiculturalism'. Along with artistic and style multiculturalisms, corporate multiculturalism and role model multiculturalism, these minimalist, celebratory and tribal forms of multiculturalism tend, she claims, to 'keep diversity in a box' (2000: 42) and may end up doing more harm than good. As Jacobs also pointed out

> [Banglatown] attracted attention to local economic aspirations because it packaged them in a racialised construct tuned to multicultural consumerism (Jacobs, 1996: 100).

This situation reflects that invoked by Parker when commenting on Hardyment's point that 'the answer to coping in a multicultural society is celebration of difference' (1995, quoted in Parker, 2000: 78). For Parker such remark means that

> Multiculturalism here becomes a problem to be coped with by the offering up of cultural treats, thereby evading a more profound engagement with the possibilities for cultural transformation (2000: 78).

Indeed one of the most acute problems with this celebratory, consumerist multiculturalism is that, by relying on processes of cultural essentialisation and exoticisation, it not only fixes cultural boundaries but also hides more profound problematic processes. Thus for Parker, 'multiculturalism is held within the confines of service industries at the disposal of the dominant' (2000: 79). I suggest that it is undoubtedly the process at work in Banglatown, where multiculturalism seems to be focused on restaurants and other vectors of tourism enhancement. Moreover

> celebratory multiculturalism simplifies the terms of contact between cultures, overlooking the unequal terms of interchange between Europe and Asia in both past and present... Superficial interest in other cultures has all too often underpinned imperialism of various forms (Parker, 2000: 79).

This is certainly how some have interpreted the attitude of the Artistic Director of AWW, under whose leadership many Bangladeshi artists were treated with contempt during the Bangladesh Festival. Moreover the capacity to commodify difference is only available to groups with colourful leisure and consumption activities, while those with fewer resources are more likely to have their cultural difference marked out as the source of enjoyment. In other words, they tend to be the 'object' of commodification (Begum, 2002).

Indeed although there undeniably are thousands of Bangladeshis coming to the Baishakhi Mela every year, just as there were thousands partaking in the Opening Day of the AWW Bangladesh Festival on Brick Lane, I would suggest that these are operations aiming at truly marking the identity of the area, rather than a genuine concerted effort to provide a more open space for the whole of the local Bangladeshi population. The symbolic heart of the 'Bangladeshi community' – i.e. Brick Lane – is indeed a highly gendered space, male dominated where women consequently make themselves very sparse. Shopping is thus done in Green Street, further east or in streets off Brick Lane, and many young women confessed[105] that they would rather take a longer detour than go through Brick Lane. It is thus a very specific Bangladeshi identity that is ascribed to Banglatown. It is only during the Baishakhi Mela that entire families, including women, throng to the street and that the space becomes open and less gendered. But this is certainly not sufficient to alter the common gendered feature of the street. Whilst an ever increasing numbers of restaurants and bars open every month on Brick Lane, a critical observation of these venues reveal spaces that remain highly racialised and gendered. As Begum argued

> The exclusively business orientation of, and consumption through, "Banglatown" precludes the possibility of the mixed use development of an area that is a powerful symbol for all sections of the local population, not just businesses (2002: 4).

bell hooks (1992) has also suggested that through consuming different cultures the consumers assert power and privileges over those whose cultures are being consumed. As Anderson (1991) has argued, using the examples of Chinatowns, cultural hegemony in multiracial societies is in part ensured through the socio-historical construction of racialised

---

[105] I interviewed around 15 young women – aged 15 to 23 years old – during participant observation of photography workshops organised for the AWW Community Events programme.

categories in and through place. Indeed the local level should never be simplified as a monolithic entity: as was demonstrated through the case studies there are in each 'community' a complex game of power struggles linked to issues of representation. Thus as Jacobs argues

> [S]patial struggles are not simply about control of territory articulated through the clear binary of colonialist constructs. They are formed out of the cohabitation of variously empowered people and the meanings they ascribe to localities and places. They are constituted from the way in which the global and the local always already inhabit one another. They are products of the disparate and contradictory geographies of identification produced under modernity (1996: 5).

This last aspect is crucial in order to think the complex processes at work in regeneration policies involving 'communities' and their multi-cultural fabric. What these policies tend to overlook is the actors' capacity to internalise the ideological dynamics that serve to give political meaning to 'culture'. Indeed I would thus suggest that stable notions of (ethnic) 'cultures', understood in relation to a dominant one, are reinterpreted and mobilised in 'community' interactions. As Baumann also found out in Southall

> [people] engage the dominant discourses as well as the demotic one. They reify *cultures* while at the same time making culture. Even when they explicitly engage the demotic discourse, the faultlines of the dominant one are effective, and moreover, empirically visible (Baumann 1996: 31).

This is strikingly illustrated by the way the concepts of 'community' or 'multiculturalism' have been used strategically by the Baishakhi Mela organisers. Indeed we have seen that in certain contexts, the notion of multiculturalism was mobilised by Bangladeshi actors in order to demonstrate that the Baishakhi Mela was in an acceptable ideological framework so as to suit the requirements of the local regeneration programme. We thus saw that the invocation of the notion on the brochure was put forward so as to fit the ideology of New Labour, as it echoed the government's rhetoric of multicultural, multiracial Britain.

It thus appears that there is an evident process of spatial and cultural commodification at work through the concept of Banglatown and that this process is legitimised in manifestations such as the Baishakhi Mela or the AWW Community Events. This process aims at marketing an area in such a way that its identity becomes well suited to consumerist goals. As was pointed out in chapter two, there are problems with such plan, beyond mere ideological concerns: such a strategy runs the risk of inciting a process of gentrification, as has been witnessed in many other cities or neighbourhoods in London. Attfield (1998) showed that, in

Hoxton, a neighbouring area to Banglatown, the regeneration scheme carried out with a focus on 'cultural industries' did not benefit the local people and that it triggered the well-known process of boosting property prices to such an extent that it transformed the fabric of local occupancy, without addressing persistent problems such as drugs, unemployment and/or youth crime. On Brick Lane and some of its adjacent streets, many signs of gentrification have emerged recently: the property prices rising sharply have brought in a new local population of young wealthy professionals, whilst the dire problems of overcrowding and drug-related violence in council estates on the other side of Brick Lane[106] seem to remain. It is important to emphasise that another process of reinvention, focusing on the Georgian character of certain abutting streets, has played an important part in the process of gentrification around Brick Lane, as the restoration of the eighteenth century houses had entailed the settlement of wealthy residents (Eade, 1997; Jacobs, 1996). As Eade has emphasised

> Their [the developers] image of locality was designed to attract tourists and other outsiders who could not fail to see the Bangladeshis impact on this area but who could also look past the complicated and diverse present to a homely, vanished world (1997: 23).

The area is thus marketed to suit all tastes. From the 'multicultural' to the 'authentic', it becomes a 'shopping mall' of cultural commodification.

Community Arts

Unsurprisingly in such a context, there is no space for 'conventional' Community Arts. Indeed we have seen in chapter three that the founding premises of community arts is that

> access to the arts is not equally distributed across society, and this is not only a consequence of the uneven spatial distribution of arts facilities, of the cost of tickets, and of building design, among other things; it is also caused by a number of powerful assumptions about who can really appreciate and practise the arts (Rose, 1997: 189).

Community Arts has always been located in a radical struggle aiming for self-determination, facilitating participants' self-discovery, promoting collective achievements over individualism and using creativity as a vector of radical expression. In that sense Community Arts has always been related to issues of deprivation. As was seen during the examination of the case studies, this relates only partly to the AWW Community Events Programme - the only case

---

[106] On the abutting streets on the Eastern side of Brick Lane (i.e. closest to the City) feature Georgian houses, whilst on the Western side there are mostly council estates.

study whose remit was close to Community Arts. It has been seen that there was substantial discrepancies between the implementation of the Programme and its intentions. All conventional community arts practitioners involved in the programme agreed that the Community Events Programme could fulfil its objectives in terms of outputs, but that in terms of outcomes, it certainly was not successful. Thus if AWW could effectively claim having 'involved' several hundred school children and trained four young British Bangladeshis, it had not addressed the fundamental aspects that Community Arts are supposed to tackle. Yet the language of Community Arts was mobilised.

The controversial outcome of the AWW Community Events Programme sheds light on another strategy attached to rhetoric manipulation anchored in community. Indeed as was highlighted in the first three chapters, the notions of social inclusion and empowerment are crucial to the current urban regeneration discourse. Social inclusion is apprehended as being strongly linked to community (traditionally understood as essentially socially inclusive), whilst also facilitated through arts and culture. It is necessary thus to mobilise these notions in order to bid for funding. This has been demonstrated in the analysis conducted in chapter five as well as in other studies. Thus in Rose's (1997) investigation of Community Arts projects in Glasgow, it clearly emerged that in a situation where 'those who are seen as dominating the discursive arena are also those who control the funds' (1997: 191), it became indispensable that 'they [the community arts workers] are fluent in the left-liberal discourses of community development and empowerment' (1997: 191).

> But the vocabulary of that language is also qualified, parodied, critiqued and refused, because the powerful are using it to non-radical ends. The discourse of community arts workers then is marked by a kind of doubleness. The words are there but the meaning is elsewhere (Rose, 1997: 192).

The development of the AWW Community Events Programme was thus to follow a dual rhetoric where the design of the project by a Community Artist was to be modified to suit the rather different agenda of the Artistic Director, but in a way that would still fulfill the set criteria of the 'application speak' (as coined by Rose). Yet the differential understandings of the aims and goals of the project were still underlying this 'rhetorical spin'. These discrepancies mostly hinged on the long-standing dilemma of Community Arts about the relationship between product and process. Where traditional Community Artists attached a great deal of importance to the benefits that participants would draw from the process of contributing to the projects, the Artistic Director was focused on the end product.

This is in fact hardly surprising since an agenda relying on cultural commodification, as is the case in Banglatown where the Community events Programme was taking place, focuses on

what is displayed rather than on how it came into being. In other words, I would suggest that the marketing strategy embodied in Banglatown is not so much concerned with a genuine empowering process of young participants as it is with the fixing of a Bangladeshi identity into an exotic spectacle.

The AWW project is a clear illustration of the effects of the funding patterns on the kind of projects organized by diverse agencies. Indeed it seems that AWW organised the Community Events Programme rather because there was money available in this sort of projects than out of genuine interest in Arts in the Community. This is certainly not a new phenomenon in the cultural sector, but it emphasises once again the limitations of the instrumental benefits of arts and culture if these are not accompanied with proper procedures.

Moreover it points to the pervasive impossibility to overcome the debate between High and Popular culture, even though it has been somewhat displaced by the recent emphasis on cultural industries. Indeed the discussion of the AWW festival has clearly shown that issues of 'respectable' traditional High arts versus instrumentalisable popular culture were an important dimension of the disputable scheme carried out by AWW. It seems that the stress of cultural industries only pushes towards cultural consumerism – and attached boutique multiculturalism - rather than renew the important debate about the place of popular culture in cultural policy.

3. IN FINE

Urban regeneration policy and an important part of cultural policy are thus currently about tackling social exclusion through 'community', which is traditionally thought of as being essentially and naturally inclusive. Yet these strategies are ridden with problems, which can hinder the efficiency of the approach and point to the inner contradictions of the ideology of New Labour.

I have insisted that community tends to be essentially fragmented. Indeed even though I would conceive of community fundamentally as an 'imagined' entity – in Anderson's terms (1983) – I would be adamant that this entity never is nor can be homogeneous. Multiple faultlines (in terms of gender, age, class, religion, culture, politics, etc) prevent this homogeneity from taking place – without this necessarily being a negative dimension in the conception of community. Indeed if the notion of community remains a notion mobilised organically by actors in order to stabilize their social and cultural anchoring in a fast-changing world, there remains some space for the organic emergence of counter discourses. As Baumann found out about Southallians in their relationship to discourses about culture and community – and I believe this to be a verifiable process in any 'community':

> [They] thus engage not only in the dominant discourse about ethnic minorities, but also in an alternative, non-dominant or demotic, discourse about culture as a continuous process and community as a conscious creation. In this way, they command, and make use of, a dual discursive competence. Depending upon their judgements of context and purpose, they will affirm the dominant discourse or engage the demotic, and in pitching one against the other, the very meanings of "*culture*" and "*community*" become the objects of social contestation. Some of the most momentous contestations indeed concern the reaffirmation or the redefinition of the meaning of "*community*"(1996: 35. Emphasis in original).

In a context where 'community' is not an instrumental vector for policy implementation, the contestations, reaffirmations and/or redefinitions of the meanings of community are subject to organic pressures. These processes have important social, cultural and / or political consequences[107] and they are in constant evolution.

On the other hand, in the current framework where community has become such a crucial factor for the design and the implementation of urban regeneration policies, these processes of contestations, which are necessary to the evolution of any 'community', are strongly affected. Indeed it has been seen that the current urban regeneration policies resort to a notion of community whose boundaries are fixed and stable. Moreover this notion of community is understood as hinging on a homogeneously shared 'culture'. The resorting to the notion of community in urban regeneration thus tends to fix or contribute to a freezing of processes that otherwise would be in motion[108].

Moreover these policies, which aim at tackling social exclusion as was seen in chapter two, prove to be divisive in the 'community' that they target. This is due to two distinct yet intertwined factors: the reliance on community leaders and the competition for scarce resources that such programmes entail. Indeed the understanding of community that drives the urban regeneration policies call for representatives that will be the voice of 'their community'. These representatives are in the large majority the local 'community leaders', who tend to represent a very partial and limited section of the local population. Moreover these 'community leaders' form a highly factionalised group marked by intense political rivalries, which are rooted in local, national and transnational political struggles. The

---

[107] These pressures are important in the political spheres outlined by Garbin (2000), which in turn are determinant with regards to issues of social control.

[108] It is obvious that, on a certain level, these processes remain in motion; however there is another level on which a freezing of the boundaries is taking place.

prominence given to their role only exacerbates these rivalries. This is all the more intensified since urban regeneration schemes represent a substantial pool of resources in an area which has always been marked by a lack thereof. Being a chosen 'partner' in the local regeneration agency thus provides a source of status for a 'community leader' as it legitimises his position as significant, whilst giving access to considerable resources: undoubtedly an objective worth fighting for!

As this structure of the urban regeneration scheme enhances divisiveness in the locality in which it is implemented, it simultaneously promotes a hegemonic model of community through the reliance on these community leaders. Indeed even though there is great competition and rivalry between these men, it has been seen previously that they tend to have similar background and values. Thus most of the 'community leaders' involved with Cityside Regeneration Ltd, especially in the promotion of Banglatown, are middle aged men, in their majority either local business men or local activists and who subscribe to a vision of the Bangladeshi identity as essentially nationalist and secular. The prominent position given to them and their status as representative of 'the community' could allow their 'imagined community' to take a prominent positioning in the aforementioned processes of redefinition and reaffirmation of 'community'.

In that sense I would put forward the hypothesis that this situation can partly explain the fact these local community leaders have supported the Banglatown marketing strategy, even though it would promote processes of cultural and spatial commodification. Indeed I suggest that these consequences are, from the community leaders' point of view, 'the price to pay' to see their own interests served and power position preserved.

This outlook has also been presented rather controversially by Arun Kundnani, a researcher at the Institute of Race Relations, in the aftermath of the violent confrontations between young Asians and the police that took place in some Northern English cities between April and July 2001.

> [This] new generation had also been sold short by its own self-appointed community leaders. The state's response to earlier unrest had been to nurture a black elite, which could manage and contain anger from within the ranks of black communities. Where a middle-class existed it was co-opted; where one did not, it was created. A new class of "ethnic representatives" entered the town halls from the mid-1980s onwards, who would be the surrogate voice for their own ethnically-defined fiefdoms. They entered into a pact with the authorities; they were to cover up and gloss over black community

> resistance in return for free rein in preserving their own patriarchy. It was a colonial arrangement, which prevented community leaders from making radical criticisms, for fear that funding for their pet projects would be jeopardised. The authorities hoped that if they threw some money at the bigwig blacks, they would stop complaining. And the community leaders proved them right (Kundnani, 2001: 3).

Even though this particular perspective is obviously polemical, it points to a crucial problem of urban regeneration: the co-optation of the 'community leaders', who, as was seen earlier, are central to the implementation of these schemes.

In that sense, the processes of cultural reification which pave the way to cultural commodification through consumerist multiculturalism is partly rooted in this dual situation: the capacity that people have to reify their own culture and the collaboration between the urban regeneration agencies and the local leaders. Moreover the discourse of community, grounded in notions of participation and involvement as though of all the people, provides a discourse of legitimisation for these processes. This legitimisation also authenticates the exotic version of the multicultural area that is staged as 'Banglatown' and which reduces the issues of multiculturalism to 'saris and samosas' (Kundnani, 2001: 2) without tackling more pressing local issues that affect primarily the Bangladeshi population, such overcrowding, drugs, etc (Modood, 1997).

New Labour's contradictions

In my view, the problems described above with the cultural strategy of the local urban regeneration scheme point to the inner contradictions of New Labour policies, which aim at achieving everything and its opposite at once.

Indeed we have seen in chapters two and three that both urban regeneration and cultural policies have evolved greatly over the last thirty years and that, in the light of these decades of experience, New Labour developed a new approach – at least rhetorically.

Indeed the eighteen years of Conservative rule had undoubtedly profoundly marked Britain, as much ideologically and economically as it did socially. Many of the policies carried out during the first part of these near two decades had been heavily criticised, especially the property-led, private sector dominated urban regeneration programmes, which had been imposed on local populations without addressing the social problems that they suffered (poor housing, unemployment, poverty, deprivation, etc). Despite attempts by some movements to

develop alternative cultural responses to this climate (e.g. Community Arts), the realm of culture was also apprehended from an elitist and economist viewpoint: the arts were now considered as a fruitful economic sector. Most of the urban regeneration schemes were thus combined with prestigious flagship cultural programmes, which most often only assisted the processes of gentrification that the urban regeneration programmes had induced. Few of the urban problems affecting mostly the inner cities thus had been resolved, but merely pushed away by these market-focused policies. However from the mid 1990s efforts were made to attempt to address some of these downfalls, especially by improving the consultation and participation of the populations inhabiting the areas where urban regeneration programmes were implemented.

As it concentrated funding on urban regeneration schemes such as the Single Regeneration Budget, New Labour insisted on this last dimension, whilst keeping most features of the scheme designed under the Major government such as competitive bidding or partnership structure. Indeed urban regeneration was developed along new rhetorical lines but technically the programmes were not fundamentally altered. Thus at the core of urban regeneration discourse emerged the notion of social exclusion and the need to attack its multiple causes (Levitas, 1998), for which 'community' was instrumental. This marked a clear distanciation (which had already started under Major) from property-led development and flagship cultural projects. The programmes were no longer primarily focused on structural and economic investments and development but started to engage with social issues. 'Community involvement' became the motto of the new urban regeneration rhetoric. Thus if culture and the arts were recommended as taking an important place in these schemes, it was on the premise that they guaranteed 'community ownership' of the programmes carried out and facilitated the restoration or establishment of 'community spirit'. Yet despite the seemingly similar objectives between this discourse and the Community Arts movement, this marked in no way a return to Community Arts as the focus was clearly put on cultural industries.

As was seen earlier, celebratory multiculturalism is also a feature of the discourse of New Labour. This is not without contradictions, as there have been recent announcements of measures to be taken with clear assimilationist inspiration (e.g. compulsory citizenship and English classes for immigrants). This suggests a superficial apprehension of multiculturalism by New Labour, where the 'cultural difference' to be celebrated would be that reduced to such practices as culinary customs, music and/or clothes. These assimilationist measures indeed imply that some principles and practices related to notions such as citizenry, nation belonging, etc must be universally integrated – which is rather antagonistic with multiculturalist principles.

Overall urban regeneration as carried out under New Labour has marked a step towards a more holistic approach to local development, but the focus undoubtedly remains on the private sector as has been shown by the structure of the partnerships that drive the programmes. Indeed even though 'community involvement' has been given a major emphasis, we have seen that partnerships still give priority to representatives of local businesses – often through the argument that they too can be considered as representing 'the community'.

This points to a major problem that characterises the core of New Labour's rhetoric and policies: even though community has been put at the heart of the strategies, the notion has not been defined with sufficient clarity so as to be applied non-problematically to the schemes which it underpins. Indeed it has been seen that 'community' has been apprehended by New Labour in a rather uncritical manner, as though it was a straightforward, descriptive notion. Most significantly 'community' has been mobilised and embraced without engaging with the notion of power, seen as it was as an entity where power would be naturally equally distributed - or at least 'satisfactorily' distributed. Indeed I have emphasised in chapter one that New Labour has taken a highly moral stance on the notion of community, associating it with order and the family. In that sense it is unsurprising that 'community leaders' are seen as valuable interlocutors and partners in the framework of urban regeneration as most of them represent symbols of authority as New Labour would like to see it: embodied in middle-aged men, who most often are heads of families, local businessmen or involved in local organisations.

Yet the choice of community and social inclusion as a logical rhetoric association (i.e. community as a tool to achieve social inclusion) has hidden the most striking contradictions in the New Labour ideology. If the connotations of the notion of community lead to naturally see the latter as the tool that will ensure social inclusion, the focus on the market and resorting to consumption as the ultimate cultural expression seems to me to go against this process. If New Labour has rightly connected issues of social exclusion with culture, it is improbable that the path it has decided to take will provide a consistent strategy to reach the goal of 'attacking social exclusion at its roots'. To borrow Zukin's expression, this seems to me to be closer to 'pacification by cappuccino' (1995: 28) than genuine empowerment. It illustrates, in my view, the ultimate strategic use of the notion of community, where it is resorted to, on the one hand, to call for traditional models of solidarity – more affiliated to social control than collective unity – whilst, on the other hand, pushing towards an agenda that emphasises the importance of the market and the individual. I suggest that New Labour

uses the mobilisation of the notion of community in order to legitimise their neo-liberal agenda.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to explore the strategic use of the notion of community by cultural organisations in the context of urban regeneration schemes. At the heart of this investigation was the idea that the concept of community had intrinsic attributes that would give it a strategic influence on such a scheme. A further goal of this research was to evaluate the extent to which the examination of such a model could reveal some features of New Labour's ideology. Indeed it was highlighted that the concept of community has been central to the rhetoric and the ideology of New Labour. By looking at the implementation of such policy, this research offers a concrete example of the practical effects of policy-making as shaped by New Labour's rhetoric. In order to carry out the investigation, two Bangladeshi festivals organised within the framework of an urban regeneration programme in the East End of London have been studied.

The first part of this thesis presented the three spheres that would provide the framework of analysis of this research (the concept of community, urban regeneration and cultural policy). As an exploratory investigation of the phenomenon arising from the convergence and the integration of community, urban regeneration and cultural policy, it seemed indeed necessary to analyse each domain so as to understand what the issues at stake were in their integration.

The first chapter of this thesis set out to analyse the aforementioned intrinsic attributes of the concept of community. A review of different conceptualisations of the notion of community sought to provide an understanding of its status in political rhetoric. Community is what Nisbet called a 'unit idea in sociology' (1966: 47) and more generally a core concept in social sciences. Yet it is also a much debated and controversial notion that has been defying agreement for more than a century; so much so that there have even been attempts to abandon it altogether (Stacey, 1967). This contentious dimension takes root in the fact that 'community' is an ideologically driven concept, pervasively associated with connotations of solidarity and social cohesion. Even though numerous studies have demonstrated the deceptiveness of such an association (Elias and Scotson, 1965; Brent, 1997), community remains a value-laden concept, but one characterised exclusively by positive connotations. In that sense it is a desirable political rhetorical tool. The term has thus long featured in social policy terminology, which, whilst drawing on the positivity of the notion, has also consistently connected it with social deprivation and exclusion. There is a long tradition in British political

rhetoric of using the notion of community to signify at once problem and solution. This has been exacerbated under New Labour, which has made community one of its core ideas. Whilst maintaining the problem/solution dialectic, New Labour has also given a moralistic dimension to its use of the notion, drawing on the American communitarianism tradition associated with Amitai Etzioni (1993). This first chapter thus sought to demonstrate the extent to which New Labour has taken a very specific understanding for the notion that they have made instrumental in their policy making. I suggested that this understanding, which ignores the most problematic aspects of the concept, is ideologically driven and lends itself to foreseeable contentions when practically applied.

The second chapter focused on urban regeneration policies that provide the framework in which such the practical application of the concept is exemplified. A historical account of urban regeneration policies since 1968 aimed at offering an understanding of the development of such policies through a presentation of the different models that have been carried out to address urban problems. The most influential of these programmes, as much ideologically as in terms if their impact on the localities where they had been implemented, were certainly those developed under the Conservative governments. These grand schemes of property-led, private sector dominated strategies have marked numerous British cities. These programmes such as the re-named area Docklands in the East End of London, have been characterised, especially in the early years, by a clear 'top-down' approach where the schemes were imposed on local populations with hardly any consultation or involvement, with a strategy based on prestigious flagship projects paralleled by a neglect for housing, unemployment and general social issues linked to poverty and deprivation. Many of these programmes were combined with equally prestigious flagship cultural projects that most often led to gentrification. Such a review permitted to understand and evaluate the current model proposed by New Labour by tracing its genesis and tracing a grid for comparison. The main features of urban regeneration as devised by New Labour and the issues at stake in the proposed model have thus been analysed. This chapter aimed at emphasising that, first of all, urban regeneration was carried out rather similarly under New Labour as to the way it was under the last Conservative government. Indeed some of the most important and potentially most problematic features of these policies (i.e. competitive bidding, partnerships) have been maintained. The most significant shift resides in the much greater emphasis put on community involvement, which was already seen as fundamental to ensure success by the previous government. The analysis of this notion highlighted that community involvement was a long-standing stumbling block in urban regeneration policies and that most often mechanisms had been found by those in charge to implement the programme so that the involvement in question was as limited as possible. In other words, the leap from rhetoric to

practice had rarely been achieved and there were doubts about the fact that New Labour had set up procedures that would significantly improve this state of affairs.

In the third chapter, the development of cultural policy in Britain was examined. A brief review of the different stages of this policy provided a framework to understand the genesis and the potential consequences of its convergence with urban regeneration. In the examination of this evolution, focus was put on the Community Arts movement, which in the 1970s and 1980s had developed a set of cultural practices rooted in participatory methodologies in order to address issues such as social exclusion. This was carried out, in the vast majority of experiments, within a socialist agenda. This particular analysis showed that Community Arts had been active and offered innovative methods, but had withered away from the late 1980s onwards. The study of this movement aimed at introducing a historical perspective on some of the issues put forward under New Labour, which, as had been seen in the previous chapter, emphasised 'community involvement' as an integral part of urban regeneration.

This chapter also showed the ideological breakthrough that Thatcherism imposed on cultural policy, by introducing the idea that the cultural domain should be considered in economic terms, whilst maintaining an elitist outlook. This led to an integration of cultural strategies in urban regeneration, conducted through prestigious flagship projects and focusing on the marketing of cities. An analysis of such schemes demonstrated that they tended to lead to processes of gentrification, rather than urban regeneration.

Cultural policy offered by New Labour marked a break from the Conservative agenda. The broadening of the definition of culture and the focus on the notion of 'creative industries' indicated a consumerist approach which was combined with an instrumentalisation of culture. Indeed New Labour not only saw an economic advantage but also social benefits to be gained from the cultural sphere. It is from this dual angle that the combination of cultural strategies with urban regeneration has been maintained and even emphasised, as it impeccably suits the agenda set for the latter.

This first part thus aimed at presenting the ways in which the notion of community, urban regeneration and cultural policy are imbricated and offering some of the potentialities that lay at the heart of these intersections.

The fourth chapter presented the chosen methodology for the thesis. It was shown that for such exploratory investigation that aims at investigating a particular phenomenon within its context, case study methodology is highly relevant. For this research the case studies consisted of two Bangladeshi Festivals organised within the framework of an urban regeneration scheme in the East End of London. These two cultural manifestations were

particularly relevant as they provided interesting data with regards to differential understandings of the notion of community and community involvement as well as the practical consequences of a cultural strategy within the urban regeneration of a neighbourhood. The conflation of archive analysis, interviews and participant observation provided a triangulated methodology in order to ensure consistency and reliability of the investigation.

In chapter five, we saw that that the rhetoric of community and community involvement was prominent in the programmes studied. More importantly these two notions were characterised by their multi-referentiality: the term 'community' – and by association 'community involvement' – was referred to in a variety of ways (even within the same organisation or agency), which were sometimes contradictory and emphasised the fact that 'community' remains at once fact and value. These two dimensions are unclearly delineated, which leads the schemes to be rooted in highly unstable notions. Programme implementers used this multi-referentiality in order to develop a rhetoric of community involvement without carrying it out fully. This was particularly the case with regards to the Bangladesh Festival organised by AWW, which consequently faced severe controversy from the local Bangladeshi 'community leaders'. On the other hand, the Baishakhi Mela provided an example of a supposedly 'community-led' festival. It shed light on the inherent difficulties of such a concept, not only since the involvement of the local urban regeneration agency highlighted the subjectivity of the notion of 'community leadership', but also as the festival leadership created serious contentious between Bangladeshi local actors. The deep fragmentation of the 'Bangladeshi community' stressed that the rhetoric of 'community involvement' was founded on a simplistic understanding of the very concept of 'community' and was bound to face and create many difficulties.

The sixth chapter demonstrated that controversial issues related to community, especially in terms of community representation (as in representation(s) of the community and community representativity) were fundamentally connected to issues of culture. The fragmentation of the 'Bangladeshi community' was thus formulated by actors along cultural and religious lines, whilst the representation of the 'Bangladeshi community' by AWW was also contested through cultural argumentation.

In this chapter the cultural strategy of the local regeneration scheme was also presented. It was thus shown that arts and culture were used mostly to promote local tourism; a strategy for which the concept of Banglatown was instrumental. In order to implement this scheme, the notion of multiculturalism was mobilised by most actors, whilst also creating tensions between some Bangladeshi people and AWW with regards to the treatment of Bangladeshi

artists during the festival organised in 1999. Finally it was demonstrated that this cultural strategy was, unsurprisingly, profoundly different from the Community Arts movement.

The last chapter aimed at providing some analytical perspective on the research. I demonstrated that the notion of community is subjected to a number of strategic manipulations by all the actors that mobilise it and that these strategies aim at appropriating the notion to serve one's interests. It is this process of appropriation that provides the only reality for 'community'. In other words, community is an imagined, abstract entity, a concept that different actors invoke for different purposes. This of course does not imply that as a concept it does not have 'real' consequences on actors. On the contrary, the more strategic the concept is, the more real it becomes. Indeed we have seen that the concept of community is not only crucial ideologically in urban regeneration (and more generally in New Labour beliefs) but also that it has been become a practical tool for the implementation of the programmes. In that sense one could be led to query the extent to which this social concept, or indeed any social concept which is both a piece of theory and - at least in intent - a social reality is likely to be susceptible to strategic use. The question then would be about the extent to which definition should take these strategic uses into account. Such questions would undoubtedly have to explore the differential capacity of different actors to enforce 'their' understanding of such concept.

On the other hand, it has been shown that in these strategies the notion of culture is instrumental as it provides a legitimising ground for various claims of representativity – a fundamental issue in the battle over community. Moreover the specific understanding that has been given to the two concepts and most importantly to their combination by urban regeneration discourse has paved the way for a specific implementation of 'multicultural policies', which, rooted in cultural reification, lead to cultural and spatial commodification. This dimension also shed some light on the transnational processes at work within and around the diasporic 'community' in question and some of the ways in which these processes were 'by-passed' by the institutional framework of policy making. Indeed we have seen that the transnational nature of the Bangladeshi 'community' points to complex social, political and processes, in which the relation between 'here' and 'there' needs to be apprehended in all its intricacies. Yet the policy framework of urban regeneration and cultural policy tends to reduce greatly this complexity in the ways it forces it to be staged.

The example of Banglatown has been analysed as an example of co-optation of local 'community leaders' by the local urban regeneration agencies, who in a strategy that aims at preserving their own power and serve their own interests, lend themselves to a scheme promoting 'consumerist multiculturalism'. This dimension also pointed to some of the ways in which the 'cultural agenda' of some actors, here the so-called 'Bangladeshi community'

remains unclear. This aspect, which has not been explored in depth in this thesis as it was beyond its scope, generally remains under-theorised. Indeed we have seen that if local 'community leaders' enthusiastically followed the consumerist agenda of the local urban regeneration agency, they also involved themselves with the organisation of a cultural manifestation for other, underdeveloped, reasons. Thus issues of 'recognition' were put forward but hardly expanded upon. This points to the aforementioned under-theorised dimension of 'representation': in the taken for granted correlation between culture and representation, the issue of the link between cultural projects (or manifestations) and representation has been overlooked. At the core of such a 'black hole' lies the potential for culture to be 'recuperated' in the way I showed in Banglatown. Indeed even though Cultural Studies thinkers have explored, at length and fascinatingly, the question of *how* some cultural practices and representation of collective identity are connected (Hall, 1997; Gilroy, 1987), it seems to me that the question of *why* people consciously resort to culture to reach representation and recognition, which is intrinsically a political effort, is one without an obvious answer and which would deserve some attention.

Finally I suggested that the processes deconstructed in this research, when put in the perspective of New Labour's rhetoric of community, pointed to the inner contradictions of the party's ideology. In that sense I would concur with Callinicos when he asserts

> It is tempting to see all the invocations of "community" and affirmations of "values" as a kind of kitsch, a "caring" veneer pasted over the relentless commodification of the world that is the inner truth of the Third Way (2001: 65).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABRAMS, P (1978) 'Introduction: social facts and sociological analysis' in ABRAMS, P (ed) *Work, urbanism and inequality: UK society today*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson

ALBROW, M, EADE, J, DURRSCHMIDT, J, WASHBOURNE, N (1997) 'The impact of globalisation on sociological concepts: community, culture and milieu' in EADE, J (ed) *Living the global city. Globalisation as local processes.* London: Routledge

ALBROW, M (1996) *The global age*. Cambridge: Polity Press

ALBROW, M (1997) 'Travelling beyond local cultures. Socioscapes in a global city' in EADE, J (ed) *Living the global city. Globalisation as local processes.* London: Routledge

ALLAN, G & CROW, G (1995) 'Community types, community typologies and community time' in *Time and Society*. 4 (2)

ALIBHAI-BROWN, Y (2000) *After Multiculturalism.* London: The Foreign Policy Centre

ALTHEIDE, D & JOHNSON, J (1994) 'Criteria for assessing interpretive validity in qualitative research' in DENZIN, N et al (eds) *Handbook of qualitative research*. London: Sage

ANDERSON, B (1981. 2nd edition: 1991) *Imagined communities.* London: Verso

ANDERSON, K (1991) *Vancouver's Chinatown.* Montreal : McGill-Queen's University

APPADURAI, A 'Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy' in FEATHERSTONE, M (ed) (1990) *Global culture: nationalism, globalisation and modernity*. London: Sage

ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN (1977) *Community Arts. A report by the Arts Council's community arts evaluation Working group*. London: ACGB

ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN (1985) *A great British success story*. London: ACGB

ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN (1985b) *The Glory of the Garden. The development of the arts in England*. London: ACGB

ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN (1988) *An urban renaissance. The role of the arts in urban regeneration, the case for increased public and private sector cooperation*. London: ACGB

ATTFIELD, A (1998) 'Bread & Circuses ? The Making of Hoxton's Cultural Quarter and its Impact on Urban Regeneration in Hackney' *Rising East*. 1 (3)

ATKINSON, R & COPE, S (1997) 'Community participation and urban regeneration in Britain' in HOGGETT, P *Contested communities: Experiences, struggles, policies*. Bristol : the Policy Press

ATKINSON, R & MOON, G (1994) 'The City Challenge inititative: an overview and preliminary assessment' in *Regional Studies*. 28

BAUMAN, Z (2001) *Community*. Cambridge: Polity

BAUMAN, Z (1993) *Postmodern ethics*. London: Blackwell

BAUMANN, G (1996) *Contesting culture. Discourses of identity in multi-ethnic London.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

BAUMGARTNER, M (1988) *The moral order of a suburb*. New York: Oxford University Press

BEGUM, H (2002) 'Commodity cultures and urban regeneration in the East End'. Paper presented at the Bangladeshis in Britain : changes and choices, configurations and perspectives conference held London Guildhall University. 24-25 May

BELL, C & NEWBY, H (1971). *Community studies*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd

BELL, C & NEWBY, H (1974). *The sociology of Community*. London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd

BENNETT, O (1995) 'Cultural policy in the UK: collapsing rationales and the end of a tradition' in *Cultural Policy*. 1 (2)

BERRY, L (1988) 'The rhetoric of consumerism and the exclusion of community' in *Community Development Journal*. 23 (4)

BEST, S & KELLNER, D (1991). *Postmodern theory: critical interrogations*. London: Macmillan

BIANCHINI, F & PARKINSON, M (eds) (1993) *Cultural policy and urban regeneration: the West European experience.* Manchester: Manchester University Press

BIANCHINI, F (1990) 'Urban renaissance? The arts and the urban regeneration process' in MACGREGOR , S & PIMLOTT, B *Tackling the inner cities*. Oxford: Crendon Press

BLAIR, T (1995) *The Guardian*. 23 March

BLAIR, T (2001) 'The ideas associated with the third way are still the wave of the future for progressive politics' in *Prospect*, March

BLAIR, T (2001) 'This is a battle with only one outcome: our victory' *The Guardian*. 3 October

BOOTH P & BOYLE R (1993) 'See Glasgow, See Culture' in BIANCHINI, F & PARKINSON, M (eds) *Cultural policy and urban regeneration: the West European experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

BOURDIEU, P (1984) *Disctinction. A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routeledge

BRADEN, S (1978) *Artists and people*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

BRENT, J (1997) 'Community without unity' in HOGGETT, P *Contested communities. Experiences, struggles, policies*. Bristol: Policy Press

BROWN, S (1995) 'Crime and safety in whose "community"? Age, every day life and problems for youth policy' in *Youth & Policy*. 48

BROWNHILL, S (1998) 'From exclusion to partnership ? The LDDC and community consultation and participation' in *Rising East, the Journal of East London Studies*. 2 (2)

BUD, L & WHIMSTER, S (eds) (1991). *Global finance and urban living*. London: Routledge

BULMER, M (1984) *The Chicago School of Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

BULMER, M (1986) *Neighbours. The work of Philip Abrams.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

BURNS, D et al (1994) *The politics of decentralisation : revitalising local democracy.* Basingtoke: Macmillan

BURSCHADT, T & HILLS, J (1999) 'Public expenditure and the public/private mix' in POWELL, M (ed) *New Labour, new welfare state ? The 'Third Way' in British social policy.* Bristol: The Policy Press

CALLINICOS, A (2001) *Agaisnt the Third Way.* Cambridge: Polity

CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACISM & FACISM / SOUTHALL RIGHTS (1981) *Southall. The birth of a Black community.* London: Institute of Race Relations

CAROLL-FOSTER, T (ed) (1993). *A guide to agenda 21.* Ottawa: International Development Research Centre

CARVEL, J (2000) 'Blair links "old" values to new agenda' *The Guardian.* 8 June

CASTELLS, M (1984) 'Space and society: managing the new historical relationships' in SMITH, M (ed) *Cities in transformation.* London: Sage

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT – INTER PROJECT EDITORIAL TEAM (1977) *Gilding the ghetto. The State and poverty experiments.* London : Home Office

CHALMERS, A (1982) *What is this thing called science?* Milton Keynes: OU Press

COCHRANE, A (1986) 'Community politics and democracy' in HELD, D & POLITT, C *New forms of democracy.* London: Sage

COHEN, A (1985). *The symbolic construction of community.* London: Tavistock Publications

COLENUTT, B (1988) 'Local regeneration and inner city regeneration' in *Local Economy.* 3 (2)

COLENUTT, B & TANSLEY, S(1990) *Monitoring of Urban Development Corporations.* Manchester : Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (1992). *Arts and community.* London: CDF Publications

COOKE, P (1989) *Localities: the changing face of urban Britain.* London: Unwin Hyman

CROW & ALLAN (1994) *Community life: an introduction to local social relations.* London: Harvester Wheqtsheaf

DAMER, D (1990) *Glasgow: Going for a song.* London: Lawrence & Wishart

DCMS (1998) *A new cultural framework.* London: DCMS

DCMS (1998b) *Creative industries. Mapping Document.* London: DCMS

DCMS (1999) *Arts and Sport. Policy Action team 10. A report to the Social Exclusion Unit.* London: DCMS

DCMS (2001) *Building on PAT10. Progress report on social exclusion.* London: DCMS

DCMS (2001b) *Creative industries. Mapping Document.* London: DCMS

DE GROOT, L (1992) 'City Challenge : competing in the urban regeneration game' in *Local Economy.* 7

DENZIN, N (1978) *The research act.* Chicago: Aldine

DETR (1996) *A guide to bidding for resources from the government's SRBCF.* London: DETR

DETR (1997) *Regeneration: The Way Forward.* www.regeneration.detr.gov.uk

DETR (1998a) 'Evaluation of the SRBCF : A partnership for regeneration – an interim evaluation' in *Regeneration Research Summary.* Number 19

DETR (1998b*) Housing and regeneration Policy. A statement by the deputy Prime Minister.* www.regeneration.detr.gov.uk

DETR (1998c) *Good practive guide for sustainable regeneration.* London: DETR

DETR (1999a) 'City Challenge – Final National evaluation'. in *Regeneration Research Summary.* Number 27

DETR (1999b) 'Evaluation of the SRBCF : first evaluation of three SRB short duration case studies'. in *Regeneration Research Summary.* Number 26

DETR (1999c) *Annual Report.* www.regeneration.detr.gov.uk

DETR (1999d) *Local evaluation for regeneration partnerships. Good practice guide.* London: DETR

DETR (1999e) *New Deal for Communitites. Phase 1 proposals. Guidance for applicants.* London: DETR

DETR(2000) *SRB Bidding guidance. Round 6.* www.regeneration.detr.gov.uk

DICKSON, M (ed) (1995) *Art with people.* London: an publications

DIGGLE, K (1984) *Guide to arts marketing.* London: Rheingold

DoE (1988) *Improving urban areas. Good practice in urban regeneration.* London: HMSO

DoE (1991) *Urban Programme Annual Guidance.* London: HMSO

DoE (1992) *Policy guidance to the local government Commission for England.* London: DoE

DoE (1993) *News release : John Gummer announces measures to bring 'a new localism' to improved gorvernment services.* London: DoE

DONALDSON, L (1976) 'Arts now' in *Arts Monthly,* December

EADE, J (1989). *The politics of community: the Bengladeshi community in East London.* Aldershot: Avebury

EADE, J (1990) 'Nationalism and the quest for authenticity: the Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets' in *New Community.* 16 (4)

EADE, J (ed) (1997) *Living the global city. Globalization as local processes.* London: Routledge

EADE, J & MELE, C (1998) 'The "Eastern promise" of New York and London' in *Rising East* 1 (3)

EADE, J & FREMEAUX, I (2000) 'Competing constructions of urban space. East London's Baishakhi Mela and Mosques' at the New landscapes of religion Conference. School of Geography. University of Oxford. 27-29 Sept

EADE, J ; FREMEAUX, I & GARBIN, D (2002) 'The construction of diasporic communities in the global city' in GILBERT, P (ed) *Imagined Londons*. New York: Sunny Press

ELIAS, N & SCOTSON (1994, first edition 1965) *The established and the outsiders*. London: Sage

ELIAS, N (1974) 'Foreword' in BELL, C & NEWBY, H *The sociology of Community*. London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd

ETZIONI, A (1993) *The spirit of community. Rights, responsibilities and the communitarian agenda*. New York: Crowns

EVANS, K '"It's all right 'round here if you're a local": community in the inner city' in HOGGETT, P *Contested communities. Experiences, struggles, policies*. Bristol : Policy Press

FAIRCLOUGH, N (2000) *New Labour, new language?* London: Routledge

FEATHERSTONE, M (1988) 'In pursuit of the postmodern. An introduction' *Theory, Culture and Society*. 5 (2-3)

FEATHERSTONE, M (1991) *Consumer culture and postmodernism*. London: Routlege

FEYERABEND, P (1975) *Against method: an outline of anarchist theory of knowledge*. London: New Left Books

FIELDING, N & FIELDING, J (1986) *Linking data*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage

FLICK, U (1992) 'Triangulation revisited: strategy of or alternative to validation of qualitative data'. In *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*. 22 pp175-97

FREMEAUX, I & ALBERTAZZI, D (2002) 'Discursive strategies around "community" in political propaganda. The case of Lega Nord'. In *National Identities* 4 (2)

FREMEAUX, I & GARBIN, D (2001) Nation, Islam et "Banglatown": Politiques transnationales et territoires identitaires des Bangladeshis de l'East End de Londres'. Paper presented at Représentations de l'environnement et construction des territoires Conference at Laboratoire IcoTEM, University of Poitiers (France). 11-12 October

FREMEAUX, I & GARBIN, D (2001) 'New politics of urban cultural dynamics: are "real geography" and development strategies at odds? Multiculturalism, community and the global age'. Paper presented at the The European City in Transition EuroConference. Bauhaus University. Weimar (Germany). 14-15 December

FRIEDMAN, J (1994) *Cultural identity and global process*. London: Sage publications

GANS, H (1962) *The urban villagers*. Glencoe: Free Press

GARBIN, D (1998) *Immigration, territoires et identités. Enquête dans un quartier de l'East End de Londres*. Mémoire de DEA Sciences de la Ville. Université François Rabelais, Tours (France) & University of East London

GARBIN, D (2000) *Entre "Banglatown" (Londres) et Sylhet (Bangladesh): Réseaux transnationaux et processus migratoire bangladeshi.* Unpublished paper for Journées doctorales. Laboratoire ICoTEM. Université de Tours (France)

GELLNER, E (1983) *Nations and nationalisms.* Oxford: Blackwell

GIDDENS, A (1991) *Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age.* Stanford: Stanford University Press

GIDDENS, A (1998) *The Third Way. The renewal of social democracy.* London: Polity

GIDDENS, A (200) *The Third Way and its critics.* London: Polity

GIDDENS, A 'The globalizing of modernity' in SREBENY-MOHAMMADI, A, WINSECK, D, [1]MC KENNA, J, BOYD-BARRETT, O (1997) *Media in a global context: a reader.* London: Edward Arnold

GILROY, P (1987) *There ain't no Black in the Union Jack.* London: Hutchinson

GLC (1982) *Community arts revisited: a critical discussion document on policy and criteria.* London: GLC

GLC (1985) *State of the art or art of the state?* London: GLC

GLC (1986) *Campaign for a popular culture.* London: GLC

GOL (1999) *SRB. Summary of Round 5. Final bids received.* London: HMSO

GOR (1994) *Bidding guidance. A guide to funding from the Single Regeneration Budget.* London: GOR

GOR (1996) *Bidding guidance. A guide to funding from the Single Regeneration Budget Round 3.* London: GOR

GOR (1998) *Bidding guidance. A guide to funding from the Single Regeneration Budget Round 5.* London: GOR

GRAY, J & MC GUIGAN, J (1993). *Studying culture : an introductory reader.* London: Edward Arnold

GREENE, J (1996) 'Qualitative Evaluation and scientific citizenship. Reflections and refractions'. In *Evaluation.* 2 (3)

GUPTA, A & FERGUSON, J (1997) 'Culture, power and place: ethnography at the end of an era' in GUPTA, A & FERGUSON, J (eds) *Culture, place and power.* London: Duke University Press

HABERMAS, J (1991). *The structural transformation of the public sphere.* Cambridge, Massachussets: MIT Press

HALL, S & DU GAY, P (1996). *Questions of cultural identity.* London: Sage in ass. with the OU

HALL, S & GIEBEN, B (1992). *Formations of modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

HALL, S & NEVIN, B (1999) 'Continuity and change : a review of English regeneration policy in the 1990s' in *Regional Studies*. 33 (5)

HALL, S (ed) (1997) *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices.* London: Sage in ass. with the OU

HALL, S (1998) 'The great moving nowhere show' in *Marxism Today. Special New Labour Edition*

HALL, S (2000) 'Conclusion: the multi-cultural question' in HESSE, B *Un/settled multiculturalisms: diasporas, entanglements, 'transruptions'.* London: Zed Books

HALL, S (2000) 'The way forward for regeneration ?: lessons from the Single Regeneration Budget Challenge Fund' in *Local Government Studies*. 26 (1)

HAMBLETON, R & THOMAS, H, eds (1995) *Urban policy evaluation. Challenge and change.* London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd

HAMMERSLEY, M (1992) *What's wrong with ethnography?* London: Routledge

HARPER, D (1992) 'Small N's and community case studies' in RAGIN, C & BECKER, H (eds) *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

HARVEY, D (1989) 'Down towns' in *Marxism Today*. January

HARVEY, D (1989) *The condition of post-modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell

HARVEY, D (1993) 'Good Bye to all that? Thoughts on the social and intellectual condition of contemporary Britain' in *Regenerating Cities*. 5

HASTINGS, A (1996) 'Unravelling the process of partnership in urban regenration policy' in *Urban Studies*. 33 (2)

HEWISON, R (1995) *Culture and consensus. England, art and politics since 1940.* London: Methuen

HIGGINS, J et al (1983) *Government and Urban poverty. Inside the policy making process.* London: Basil Blackwell

HILL, D (1994) *Citizens and cities. Urban policy in the 1990s.* Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf

HILLERY, G (1955) 'Definitions of Community: Areas of agreement', *Rural Sociology*. 20

HOGGART, R (1957) *The uses of literacy*. London: Chatto & Windus

HOGGART, R (1979) 'Excellence and access: and the Arts Council' In *New Universities Quarterly*. 33 (4)

HOGGETT, P (1997) *Contested communities. Experiences, struggles, policies.* Bristol: the Policy Press

hooks, b (1992) *Black looks: race and representations*. London: Turnaround

HOUSE OF COMMONS PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE (1989*) Twentieth report : Urban Development Corporations*. London : HMSO

HUTCHINSON, J & SMITH, A, D (1994). *Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

HUTCHINSON, J (1997) 'Regenerating the counties. The case of the SRBCF'. in *Local Economy*.
12 (3)

IMRIE, R & THOMAS, H (1993) 'The limits of property-led regeneration' in *Envrionment and Planning C : Government and Policy*. 11

JACOBS, J (1996) *Edge of Empire.* London: Routledge

JENKINS, R (1996) *Social identity*. London: Routledge

JENKS, C (1993). *Culture*. London: Routledge

KEITH, M & ROGERS, A (1991) *Holly Promises. Rhetoric and reality in the inner city*. London: Mansell

KELLY, O (1984) *Community, Art and the state: Storming the citadel* London: Comedia

KUHN, T (1970) *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: Chicago University Press

KUNDNANI, A (2001) 'From Oldham to Bradford. The violence of the violated' in IRR *The three faces of British racism.* London: Institute of Race Relations

LACY, S (1995). *Mapping the terrain: New genre Public Art.* Seattle: Bay Press

LAKATOS, T & MUSGRAVE, A (eds) (1970) *Criticisms and the growth of knowledge.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

LANDRY, C & BIANCHINI, F (1995) *The Creative City*. London: Demos in association with Comedia

LANDRY, C & al. (1996) *The Art of Urban Regeneration: Urban Renewal Through Cultural Activity*. London: Comedia

LAWLESS, P (1989) *Britain's Inner Cities*. London: Paul ChapmanPublishing Ltd

LEVITAS, R (1998) *The inclusive society ?* London: Macmillan

LEWIS, J (1990) *Art, Culture and Enterprise – The Politics of Arts and the Cultural Industries.* London: Routledge

LEWIS, O (1949) *Life in a Mexican village*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press

LIDDIARD, M (1995) 'Putting a price on culture: social policy and the arts' In BALDOCK, J & MAY, M *Social policy Review 7*. Canterbury: Social Policy Association

LISTER, D (2001) 'Election 2001: the Arts – Culture – the policies and the party spokesman – is even harder to spot'. *The Independent.* May 26

LYND, R & LYND, H (1937) *Middletown in transition*. New York: Harcourt Brace

MARQUAND, D (1998) 'The Blair paradox' in *Prospect*. 19-22 May

MAWSON, J & HALL, S (2000) 'Joining up locally ? Area regeneration and holistic government in England'. in *Regional Studies*. 34 (1)

MAWSON, J et al (1995) *SRB : the stocktake*. Birmingham: CURS

McGREGOR, S & PIMLOTT, B (1990) *Tackling the inner cities. The 1980s reviewed, prospects for the 1990s.* Oxford: Clarendon Press

MCGUIGAN, J (1996) *Culture and the Public Sphere*. London: Routledge

MILLER, C (1999) 'Partners in regeneration : constructing a local regime for urban management ?' in *Policy & Politics*. 27 (3)

MODOOD, T et al (1998) *Ethnic minorities in Britain: Diversity and disadvantages*. London: PSI

MORGAN (1995) 'Looking back over 25 years' in DICKSON, M (ed) *Art with people*. London: an publications

MULGAN, G & WORPOLE, K (1986) *Saturday night or Sunday morning?* London: Comedia

MYERSCOUGH, J (1988) *The economic importance of the arts in Britain*. London: PSI

NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE (1990) *Regenerating the Inner Cities*. London : HMSO

NEVEU, C (1993a) *Communauté, nationalité et citoyenneté. De l'autre côté du miroir les Bangladeshis de Londres*. Paris: Karthala

NEVEU, C (1993b) 'L'émergence de leaders communautaires à Spitalifields : processus réels et construction d'une catégorie' in BLANC, M & LEBARS, S *Les minorités dans la cité, perspectives comparatives*. Paris: L'Harmattan

NEW LABOUR (1997) *Because Britain deserves better*. London: New Labour Party

NEWBY, C (1980) *Community*. Milton Keynes: OU Press

NISBET, R (1966). *The sociological tradition*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd

NISBET, R (1974) *The social philosophers. Community and conflict in Western thought*. London: Heinemann Educational Books

O'CONNOR, J (1993) 'Manchester and the Millennium. Whose culture, whose civilisation?' in *Regenerating Cities*. 5

PAREKH, B (2000) *Rethinking Multiculturalism. Cultural diversity and political theory*. New York : Palgrave

PARK, R & BURGESS, E (1925) *The city*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

PARKER, D (2000) 'The Chinese take away and the diasporic habitus : space, time and power geometries' in HESSE, B *Un/settled multiculturalism. Diasporas, enanglements, transruptions.* London: Zed Books

PARKINSON, M & JUDD, D (1988) 'Urban revitalisation in America and the UK – the politics of uneven development' in PARKINSON, M, FOLEY, B & JUDD, D. *Regenerating the cities. The UK crisis and the US experience.* Manchester: Manchester University Press

PARKINSON, M (1996) 'Twenty-five years of urban policy in Britain – Partnership, entrepreneurialism or competition ?' in *Public Money and Management*. 16 (3)

PARKINSON, M, FOLEY, B & JUDD, D, eds, (1988) *Regenerating the cities. The UK crisis and the US experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

PICK, J (1988) *The arts in a state. A study of government arts policies from Ancient Greece to the present*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press

PLANT, R (1974) *Community and Ideology. An essay in applied social philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan

POWELL, M, ed (1999) *New Labour, new welfare state ? The 'Third Way' in British social policy*. Bristol: The Policy Press

PRATT, A (1999) 'The creative industries in the UK: national, regional and local dimensions, and the problems of value and governance'. Paper presented at the European Congress of Experts organised under the German Presidency of the EU: 'The Culture Industries in Europe. International Success through Regional Strength? A Comparison of Development Concepts'. 19-21 May

RAYNSFORD, N (1998) 'Building for the future : regeneration under New Labour' in *Rising East, the Journal of East London Studies*. 2 (2)

REDCLIFFE-MAUD, L (1978) *Support for the arts in England and Wales*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

REES-MOGG, W (1985) *The political economy of arts: An Arts Council lecture*. London: ACGB

REX, J & MOORE, R (1967) *Race, community and conflict. A study of Sparbrook*. London: Oxford University Press

ROBERTSON, R (1992) *Globalization*. London: Sage

ROBINSON, F & SHAW, K (1991) 'Urban regenration and community involvement' in *Local Economy*. 6

ROBSON, C (1993) *Real World research*. London: Blackwells

ROSE, G (1997) 'Performing inoperative community. The space and resistance of some community arts projects' in PILE, S & KEITH, M *Geographies of resistance*. London : Routledge

ROY, O (2002) 'L'Islam au pied de la lettre' in *Monde Diplomatique*. April

RUTHERFORD, J (1990) *Identity: community, culture, difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart

SASSEN, S (1991) *The global city*. Princeton : University Press
Secretary of State for the Environment (1977) *Policy for the Inner Cities*. London: HMSO

SENETT, R (1971). *The fall of the public man*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

SKEFFINGTON REPORT (1969) *People and Planning*. London: HMSO

SKELCHER, C (1993) 'Involvement and empowerment in local public services' in *Public Money and Management*. 13 (July-September)

SMITH, M (2001) *Transnational urbanism. Locating globalisation*. London: Blackwell

SPRADLEY, J (1980) *Participant observation*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers

STACEY, M (1969) 'The myth of community studies' reprinted in BELL, C & NEWBY, H (1974) *The sociology of Community*. London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd

STEIN, M (1964) *The eclipse of community*. New York: Harper Row

STENVENSON, D (1998) 'Setting the scene : assessing the impact of the LDDC' in *Rising East, the Journal of East London Studies*. 2 (2)

STEWART, M (1996) 'Competition and competitiveness in urban policy' in *Public Money and* Management. 16 (3)

SUTTLES, G (1972) *The social construction of communities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

THATCHER, M (1993) *The Downing Street Years*. London: HarperCollins

THE RUNNYMEDE TRUST – COMMISION ON THE FUTURE OF MULTI-ETHNIC BRITAIN (2000) *The future of multi-ethnic Britain. The Parekh Report*. London: Profile Books

THRASHER, F (1927) *The gang*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

TOMANEY, J & WARDT, N (2000) 'England and the "new regionalism"' in *Regional Studies*. 34 (5)

TÖNNIES, F (1957) *Gemeinschaft & Gesellschaft*. New York: Harper & Row

VERTOVEC, S (1998) 'Multi-multiculturalisms' in MARTINIELLO, M (ed) *Multicultural Policies and the State*. Utrecht: ERCOMER

VERTOVEC, S (2001) 'Transnational Challenges to the "New" Multiculturalism' Paper presented to the ASA Conference held at the University of Sussex. 30 March-2 April

WALLMAN, S (1986) 'Ethnicity and the boundary process in context' in REX, J & MASON, D (eds) *Theories of race and ethnic relations*. Cambridge University Press

WARNER, W & LOW, J (1947) *The social system of the modern factory*. New Haven: Yale University Press

WARNER, W & LUNT, P (1941) *The social life of a community*. New Haven: Yale University Press

WARNER, W & SROLE, L (1945) *The social system of American Ethnic Groups*. New Haven: Yale University Press

WARWICK, D & LITTLEJOHN, G (1992) *Coal, capital and culture. A sociological analysis of mining communities in West Yorkshire*. London: Routledge

WEBER, M (1978) *Economy and society. Volume 1 and 2* (edited by ROTH, G & WITTICH, C) Berkeley: University of California Press

WILKS-HEEG, S (2000) *Mainstream regeneration. A review of policy over the last thirty years*. London: Local Government Association

WILLIAMS, R (1961) *Culture & society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin

WILLIAMS, R (1976) *Keywords*. London: Fontana

WILLMOTT, P (1984) *Community in social policy. Discussion paper number 9*. London. PSI

YOUNG, M & WILLMOTT, P (1957) *Family and kinship in East London*. London: Routledge

ZORBAUGH, H (1929) *The gold & the slum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

ZUKIN, S (1988) *Loft Living. Culture and capital in urban change*. London: Radius

ZUKIN, S (1995) *The culture of the cities*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

ZUKIN, S (1998) 'Urban lifestyles: diversity and standardisation in spaces of consumption' in *Urban Studies*. 35 (5-6)

Documents

ALI, S, ULLAH, A. A, RASHID, M. A, HOQUE, M (1999) Press release – resignation from AWW Bangladesh Festival advisory committee

Arts 4 Everyone Application Form (1997)

AWW (1998) *Proposal for Sponsorship to Vibe Promotion.*

AWW (1998b) *Proposals for the Arts Worldwide Bangladesh Festival*. London: AWW

AWW (1998c) *Proposals to Cityside for a Bangladesh Carnival*. London: AWW

AWW (1999) *Final report to the Bangladesh Festival 1999*. London: AWW

AWW (1999b) *Report on the Community Events Programme. Arts Worldwide Bangladesh Festival*. London: AWW

AWW (internal document) (1999c) *Bangladesh Festival programme.*

Azad, S (2000) 'Baishaki Mela' *The Star*. April.

Baishakhi Mela – Bengali New Year (1999)

BANGLATOWN ARTS AND CULTURE TRUST (2000) Business Plan

Cityside Regeneration Ltd (1996) *Cityside. Bidding for SRB3*. London: Cityside Regeneration Ltd

Cityside Regeneration Ltd (1997) *SRB 3. Delivery Plan. Year 1*. London: Cityside Regeneration Ltd

Cityside Regeneration Ltd (1997b) *Art of Business. Contract Brief for Tender.* London: Cityside Regeneration Ltd

Cityside (1997c) *Raising the Profile project appraisal*. London: Cityside Regeneration Ltd

Cityside Regeneration Ltd (1998) *SRB 3. Delivery Plan. Year 2.* London: Cityside Regeneration Ltd

Cityside Regeneration Ltd (1999) *Connecting Communities. Bidding for SRB5.* London: Cityside Regeneration Ltd

Cityside Regeneration Ltd (1999) *SRB 3. Delivery Plan. Year 3.* London: Cityside Regeneration Ltd

Cityside Regeneration Ltd (2000) *SRB 3. Delivery Plan. Year 4.* London: Cityside Regeneration Ltd

GRESH, J (1999) *Arts Worldwide hijacks Jumma culture.* (Electronic press release) Yahoo.com

LAKIN, W (1997) *Bangladesh Community Festival. Parts One and Two. A programme of Community Arts Development. Progress report.* London: AWW

LAKIN, W (1998) *Bangladesh Community Festival. Parts One and Two. A programme of Community Arts Development. Progress report second phase.* London: AWW

Prime Minister Office (1999) *Press release. Arts Worldwide Bangladesh Festival.* London: Downing Street

Prime Minister Office (May 2000) *Press release. Baishakhi Mela.* London: Downing Street

ROUF, M (1999) *Bangladesh Festival 1999 in London by Arts Worldwide. An observation.*

ROUF, M (internal document) (11/02/1998) *Baishakhi Mela*