

11 July 2008

FOLKESTONE REGENERATION

RNF 1.1

Notes

These notes provide a summary of proceedings at the first Research Network Forum, held at the University Centre, Folkestone on 11 July 2008.

The purpose of this session of the RNF, along with those following on August 15th and September 12th, is to provide an introduction to the town's regeneration plans and to identify these plans as a research opportunity.

The day comprised a series of brief talks, an opportunity to explore the town and final discussion.

Dr Paul Rennie (Central Saint Martins) chaired the session and introduced the following speakers

Nick Ewbank (Creative Foundation) Spoke about the history of Folkestone and East Kent, and about the Creative Foundation's work co-ordinating the regeneration of the town through property renovation, educational development and through the support of the Folkestone Triennial. This triangulation of infrastructure, education and culture was presented as a unique and robust model for regeneration.

The Triennial is a festival of contemporary public art and sculpture.

Nick stressed the limits of the Foundation's role.

Professor Fred Gray (University of Sussex) spoke about the historical development of Folkestone as an aristocratic and residential seaside resort. The town's history was placed in the wider context of the economic and cultural development of the seaside.

Andrea Schlieker (Folkestone Triennial) briefly described that the Triennial project and explained that great effort that has gone into choosing appropriate works, so as to encourage the best possible engagement of local people.

Adriana Paice (public artist, formerly with Greyworld) described the kinds of collaborative interventions being made elsewhere. The spaces between buildings and the marginal back-yard spaces were presented as of special interest. The significance of fun and play in shaping the public's engagement with the work was emphasised.

After an informal break for lunch and an opportunity to explore the town, the delegates re-convened for a discussion.

The discussion allowed various points to be elaborated in more detail.

01/ Notwithstanding the talk of regeneration, the concept and term remained vague. It's not clear, either, who exactly are being targeted by these schemes. The scale and scope of the project remains unclear. So there is an opportunity, in the first instance, to produce much more detailed information on where and how the demographic, economic and social fault-lines of Folkestone lie. This is empirical work.

01.1/ The sociological history of the various seaside demographics found in Folkestone should provide us with an exemplary case-study of how unintended policy outcomes play themselves out.

01.2/ It is likely that these kinds of survey data will reveal details that confound the expectations of the various agencies engaged in regeneration. This is as likely to be true of the generalised big picture of Folkestone as it is of local knowledge. The need to overcome the prevailing tacit quality of most perceptions of Folkestone is urgent.

01.3/ The townscape of Folkestone old town is full of space that is badly used. The parking area at Mill Bay and the Old Market (behind Waterstone's) exemplify this. At the moment, these spaces function as back-yard plots with bins and waste awaiting collection. To make these spaces work better, they need to be given different functions and the adjacent building made to face both ways.

Reclaiming these spaces involves thinking about recycling and green issues as much as building and urbanism.

It should be noted that the new mall development in the town has exactly the same problem of large articulated vehicle access and waste disposal areas spoiling the public spaces of the development.

It's no accident that the area of the town being regenerated is the oldest part of the town with the most haphazard planning. The new masterplan, elaborated by Foster and Partners, proposes a very different accommodation between traffic, people and buildings. The imposition of a kind of rationalism through planning, so as to facilitate the distribution of resources etc, may be what we mean by regeneration.

Paul suggested Gordon Cullen as a figure whose work in townscape could usefully be applied to the analysis of Folkestone's regeneration. Also recommended were Patrick Joyce on the sociology of the city and Fred Gray on the cultural history of the seaside.

02/ The arrival of HS1 (high speed rail service to St Pancras) looms over the town. Quite apart from the obvious analysis of costs and benefits associated with this, there exists an opportunity to co-ordinate research activities in Folkestone with those looking at King's X, Stratford, Ebbsfleet and Ashford. Each of these locations, at 20 mile intervals, will be massively redeveloped over the next ten years. Working out how these projects inter-connect and work together is hugely important. So transport infrastructure in the south-east and regeneration are further possibilities.

It was stressed that all of these projects required sophisticated visualisations. So, there was some scope for practice-based researchers working at local or regional level. The collaboration of analytical and visual researchers should be encouraged throughout.

03/ It was suggested that, for a variety of reasons, a larger proportion of the Triennial artworks would remain in the town (the work is site-specific and large). This is a good thing, as it will provoke artists to find different sites and to produce different kinds of work.

04/ Nick made it clear that the Creative Foundation have no provision for supporting research through financial support. There are well-established funding mechanisms in place to support the kinds of research activities that were discussed. However, the regeneration programme and the ten-year cycle of Triennial, offer a rare chance for researchers to engage with a regeneration project as it evolves.

Paul re-iterated his belief that research proposals with inter-disciplinary and inter-collegiate models would be supported. Work into the analysis of exactly what is meant by regeneration and of how it works in practice is also likely to be well

received by funding organisations. Because of the particular circumstances of Folkestone, funding over a longer-term period should be considered.

The University Centre Folkestone has facilities that are available for researchers working in the field.

Conclusion

The next sessions of the Folkestone FNF is on Friday August 15th and Friday September 12th.

Delegates should work towards elaborating a research proposal that looks at some aspect of Folkestone, regeneration or any of the themes outlined above.

May we have four presentations for August 15th please?

Bibliography

Cullen G (1961) **Townscape** London, AP

Gray F (2006) **Designing the Seaside** London, Reaktion

Joyce P (2003) **The Rule of Freedom** London, Verso

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Folkestone, July 2008

15 August 2008

FOLKESTONE REGENERATION

RNF 1.2

Notes

The second session of the Folkestone RNF was held at the University Centre on Friday 15th August. These notes provide a summary of the discussions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you feel these notes are inaccurate or incomplete. I'll be pleased to amend the record.

News

The event proved timely for various reasons

Channel Four TV had begun a series, hosted by Kevin McCloud, about the architectural regeneration of Castleford, Yorkshire

The right-of-centre think tank, Policy Exchange, published a controversial report suggesting that some northern towns and cities are beyond regeneration. The report also suggested that seaside towns have particular problems that make them especially susceptible to decline.

You can find the whole document here

<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/libimages/418.PDF>

The success of Team GB at the Olympics (2008) has transformed the public perception of the games in 2012. The first phase of Olympic regeneration in Stratford is now assured

The developments along HS1 at Kings X, Stratford, Ebbsfleet, Ashford and Folkestone will now be part of an enormous Olympic effort in infrastructure engineering and construction.

The regional impact of these developments in East Kent is likely to be much greater than anticipated

On the negative side, *The Folkestone Herald* reported that the development plan for the Folkestone Seafront had been postponed by the credit-crunch

You can see the story here

<http://www.kentnews.co.uk/kent-news/Credit-crunch-hits-Folkestone>

Presentations

Dr Paul Rennie (CSM), chaired the session and introduced the various speakers.

Stephanie Fair (Canterbury Christchurch) and **Charles Fair**, gave a combined presentation that emphasised the rich historical resources of Folkestone. Stephanie spoke about the Roman and other antiquities of Folkestone, Charles of the important roll that Folkestone played during WW1.

Charles drew on his experience, as a military and battlefield historian, to give an indication, in terms of visitor numbers and revenues, of the value of this market.

Both Stephanie and Charles were keen to stress that the regeneration of Folkestone is about connecting past, present and future.

A good deal of what Stephanie and Charles spoke about was of modest improvements to street-furniture and signage around the East Cliff, harbour and old town. It was important, from their perspective, to remain connected to the

historical legacies of Folkestone. This, they argued, was a powerful tool in linking regeneration to community issues of subjectivity and identity.

Stephen Hayler (Canterbury Christchurch), spoke of his work in the evaluation of economic benefits associated with entertainments in seaside resorts around Britain.

Stephen spoke about the historical development of the entertainment industry in coastal resorts and about the difficulties of working within a seasonal and geographically marginal economy (see Policy Exchange notes above). However, Stephen stressed that his economic data suggested that, with the right approach, the value of seaside entertainment could be maintained.

Accordingly, the view that seaside economies were necessarily disadvantaged needed to be countered.

Stephen plans to extend his economic analysis and modelling of seaside resorts to the evaluation of broader cultural events.

As a first step towards the economic quantification of cultural regeneration and its benefits, this work should be invaluable.

Kathrin Bohm (Public Works), is an artist-participant in the Folkestone Triennial. Kathrin spoke of her professional work in “architecture without buildings” and about the conceptualisation of her “Folkestonomy” project.

The project is designed to produce a series of maps, based on data collection, charting individual perceptions of Folkestone, usage of various environments and feelings towards specific places around the town.

The results, expressed in visual form, began to assemble an atlas of the town that spoke of individuals, community, culture and psycho-geography.

There were obvious connections to the ideas proposed by Stephanie and Charles Fair, above.

Rebecca Ross (CSM), introduced her research work in urban geography and in interactive design. Her presentation included several impressive web-based environments that allowed for an alternative perception of the city based on experience and values as much as on economic resources.

Rebecca made the point that regeneration is often another word for gentrification and that is important to provide an alternative route, for local populations, to those promoted by developers and politicians.

The web-based tools available nowadays make these cultural interventions more widely available.

Discussions

The discussion raised several important points

Longitudinal study

The Creative Foundation's proposals, in all its spheres and over a ten-year period, provide an ideal opportunity for longitudinal study.

Funding

Professor Janet McDonnell (CSM) suggested that various charitable foundations might usefully be approached for support of research activities in Folkestone

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

Inward and Outward Facing Communities

One of the characteristics that distinguish the resident population of the old town and Creative Quarter is its relative introspection. This is partly to do with issues of language and education.

Notwithstanding the help at hand, the community often expresses feelings of being under siege.

It is important that regeneration schemes address the realities of this psychological state.

The Academy

The new Folkestone Academy should provide an environment where students' can develop beyond the usual scope of local opportunities and limited ambition. It makes sense to use the community of students as researchers and experimentalists in any of our projects.

Picturing Regeneration

It is vital that our research findings are expressed in ways beyond normal academic prose. Research may be about drawing, mapping and picturing the local environment and visualising a change for the better.

Presence

We should get out of the University environment and establish a visible research presence in the town.

HS1 and Olympics 2012

The success of our Olympians means that the development of Stratford will move forward quickly. Indeed, the whole 2012 project is now assured of unequivocal political support. The Olympic out-reach of facilities and personnel should automatically spread, and effect, the whole length of HS1.

Folkestone should attach itself to this new political reality,

The developments along the length of HS1 allow us to conceptualise a new southern city. This should be done as a matter of urgency.

Rebecca has organised a webpage for notes etc

http://dirtywiki.dirtymaps.org/wiki/Folkestone_page

September

The RNF session for September 12th has been incorporated into an *Art and Regeneration* event organised by Kathrin Bohm of PublicWorks. Please note the change of venue and the later start time.

Art and Regeneration.

A half day symposium from 14.00 to 18.00

followed by a public round table discussion at 18.30

Friday 12th September 2008

**Georges House,
8 the Old High Street,
Folkestone,
Kent CT20 1RL, UK
T: 44 (0) 1303 244533**

The event is an initiative by public works in association with Folkestone based Strange Cargo, Club Shepway, The Creative Foundation and the Research Network Forum.

The half day symposium brings together a number of practitioners and organisations from Folkestone and the South East Coast, who are involved in cultural programmes that are linked to regeneration issues.

Art and Regeneration are two terms frequently used to describe current changes in Folkestone. The event wants to provide a platform to look at actual cultural programmes and initiatives, and to discuss overlaps and differences in existing and projected ideas and strategies for Folkestone.

Programme

13.30	Registration
14.00	Welcome by Strange Cargo and public works
14.10	Introduction by public works
14.40	Presentation by Brigitte Orasinski from Strange Cargo followed
15.10	Presentation by Nick Ewbank Creative Foundation followed by questions
15.40	Coffeebreak
16.00	Presentation by Andrea Schlieker from Folkestone Triennial followed by questions
16.30	Presentation by Laura Mansfield by Club Shepway followed by questions
17.00	Break out Session
17.45	Plenum and feedback from the 2 sessions
18.00	Break and Refreshments
18.30 – 20.00	Public panel discussion with Andrea Schlieker (Folkestone Triennial) Nick Ewbank (Creative Foundation) Paul Rennie (Folkestone Research Network Forum) Laura Mansfield (Club Shepway) Brigitte Orasinski (Strange Cargo) Chaired by Kathrin Böhm (public works)

The event is free, but seats are limited.

For more information and bookings please contact Kathrin@publicworksgroup.net

About the partners organising the event

(all texts are taken from the organisation's websites)

public works is a London based artist and architects collective involved in this year's Folkestone Triennial. public works develops physical and non physical models to allow for a participatory and cross-hierarchical reflection and shaping of public spaces. Their contribution to the triennial is a mobile mapping station called "Folkestonomy" (www.folkestonomy.net) which traces everyday cultural spaces within the town and compiles individual mappings in a growing on line map.

www.publicworksgroup.net

Strange Cargo

Over its eleven year lifespan, Strange Cargo has established a reputation for high profile quality public art, and has delivered award-winning projects, including Like the Back of my Hand, an extensive installation at Folkestone Central station which recently won the Rouse Kent Public Art Award. In its public art involvement, Strange Cargo seeks to create works of context, leaving communities with lasting meaningful landmarks and a sense of participation in their surrounding environment.

www.strangecargo.org.uk/

Club Shepway

Centered in Folkestone Club Shepway is a group of emerging artists and writers, attempting to develop an active arena of cultural engagement and experimentation. Promoting contemporary art, music and its encompassing dialogue.

Playing with local histories, hidden memories and current affairs club Shepway is fundamentally concerned with the social and commercial development occurring in the area, locking onto its fading histories and current myths.

Club Shepway aims to create a diverse and critical dialogue within the boundaries of Shepway and beyond.

www.clubshepway.com

Creative Foundation

How do you regenerate a once-fashionable but now faded seaside town?

The regeneration question matters across Britain, and for the Folkestone-based Creative Foundation it demands an innovative answer: we want to revitalise the town by attracting and harnessing the energies of creative people and businesses.

www.creativefoundation.org.uk

Folkestone Triennial

One of the of the most ambitious public art projects to be presented in the UK, the Triennial is a three-yearly exhibition of works which will be specially commissioned for public spaces throughout Folkestone. The selected artists have responded to the invitation with proposals for artworks that engage with the Kent coastal town's history, population, culture and built environment to create a cutting-edge contemporary art exhibition.

The Triennial is conceived and curated by curator Andrea Schlieker, co-curator of the British Art Show 2005/06, and aims to examine changing notions of art in the public realm. The inaugural Folkestone Triennial will include both temporary works, which will remain in situ for the three months of the show, and a number of permanent works. This pattern will be repeated in subsequent Triennials so that, over time, Folkestone will become a centre for contemporary art of the highest calibre.

www.folkestonetriennial.org.uk

Regeneration Network Forum

The Research Network Forum (RNF) is organised by Dr Paul Rennie of Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London. It is hosted by University Centre Folkestone and is supported by the Creative Foundation.

The RNF will take place over three separate days over the summer of 2008. The RNF coincides with the Folkestone Triennial – an international festival of contemporary public sculpture.

The town of Folkestone is a historic seaside resort on the south coast of Britain (located at the English end of the Channel Tunnel). Like many seaside towns, it has suffered from a variety of economic and social problems that devolve from the perception of economic marginalisation and collapse of the traditional English seaside holiday.

Those problems are now being actively addressed through cultural regeneration. The Creative Foundation is engaged in promoting this regeneration through a variety of initiatives, not least the 2008, 2011 and 2014 Folkestone Triennials. In addition, the arrival of HS1 rail services to-and-from London will place Folkestone at one end of a development corridor stretching from King's Cross to East Kent, via the Olympic sites of East London.

Accordingly, Folkestone is a uniquely qualified environment in which to investigate the effectiveness of these regeneration strategies and to elaborate the interdisciplinary and collaborative methodologies that will support the proper analysis of regeneration economics.

www.rennart.co.uk/rnf.html