



The UK Man and the Biosphere Committee Urban Forum

Minutes of the UK MAB Urban Forum meeting held 12 September 2006 in room BS2, Dover Street Building, University of Manchester.

Present

Gerald Dawe	(GD)	Independent consultant (Chair)
Lucy Ball	(JF)	CEH Wallingford (Secretary)
Peter Cush	(PC)	Environment and Heritage Service, N.Ireland
Ian Douglas	(ID)	University of Manchester
Peter Frost	(PF)	Countryside Council for Wales
Matthew Fry	(MF)	CEH Wallingford
Grant Luscombe	(GL)	Landlife
David Nicholson-Lord	(DNL)	Independent consultant
Judy Ling Wong	(JLW)	Black Environment Network
Joe Ravetz	(JR)	University of Manchester (Guest Speaker)

1. Apologies and Welcome

Apologies have been received from John Box, Mathew Frith, Eilidh Johnson, Julie Proctor, Graham Leeks, David Goode, Peter Jarvis, Alison Millward, Peter Morgan, Richard Sharland and John Handley.

GD welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Dr Joe Ravetz the speaker.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the May 2006 meeting were signed by GD as an accurate record.

3. Matters arising from minutes

Outstanding actions complete.

Correction to current agenda, replace Item 5 with the role of the Forestry Commission in relation to urban issues.

4. Presentation: Ecological urbanisation: methods, models and applications (Dr Joe Ravetz)

Joe is a Research Fellow in the Department of Planning and Landscape at The Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology (CURE). He is a chartered architect with interests and experience in regional planning, economic development, environmental management and community regeneration. He is the co-ordinator of the 'Sustainable City-Region' programme, a partnership between the Town and Country Planning Association, public sector and academic community in the North West. Joe Ravetz is also working on the Economic and

Social Research Council's 'Global Sustainability' programme and has been actively involved in the European Commission's DG12 Integrated Visions project. He is author of *City-region 2020 (Integrated Planning for a Sustainable Environment)* published in 2000.

Abstract

In the average EU / North American city, representing the wealthiest 20% in the 'developed' world, there is a level of affluence of over 50 times that of the poorest 20% in the 'developing' world. Such disparities come from deep rooted economic and political processes, and can also be identified in terms of the flows of materials and energy, in sectors such as housing, transport, tourism etc. Tracing the flows through each of these sectors shows a similar pattern: environmental resource transfers, displacements and 'expropriation'; between local and global, urban and rural, and 'developing' and 'developed' worlds.

To understand this better we can construct a detailed model of material flows and environmental impacts in production and consumption. The model from the 'Ecological Budget UK' project tracks material flows through international trade, with a detailed profile of the urban environmental metabolism in North and South. Together, the historical view and the environment-economy cross section provide a detailed account of 'environmental urbanization', as cause and effect of a globalizing economy. The overall result is not surprising – that the affluence of the North appears to be inter-dependent with the poverty and disorganization of the South, and that particular types of urban environmental problems are the result in each case. It follows that the solutions to such problems are often found outside the urban policy arena, in international trade, finance and corporate responsibility.

This paper presents preliminary findings on the analysis of urban systems and their inter-dependencies between North and South, and points towards future research on the theme of 'ecological urbanization'.

Discussion:

- Why concentrate on city and regional budgets and not national? Is this the best way to capture the hearts and minds of the public? This cultural question recognises the opposite forces at work. The work redefines our understanding of place and the idea of community and accessibility. At the regional scale it has more relevance to the individual – we can see the impact of our own activities.
- Not all members of society, particularly ethnic minorities or those that are disadvantaged will have access to this information or awareness of its existence. However, this does not necessarily mean that these members of our society are not interested in these matters. The environment is often a fundamental part of the lifestyle of minority groups because of tradition, poverty or religion, and they can take a lead in this area, if given the tools and information to do so.
- Global trade clearly has an impact but there will also be an impact of increased ecological consumerism – to small overseas communities that are dependant on this income. The complexity of this subject was recognised and it was agreed that no issue can be view in isolation. Furthermore, it is not necessarily possible or desirable to turn the clock back. A large scale database with the central issues and links to policy is needed.

- The configuration of greenspace is a challenge to the compact city agenda; different models for living are needed.
- In general terms, people want a better environment in which to live but do not have the knowledge or the mechanisms in place to assist with the individual desire to modify current lifestyles. Local authorities could play an important role in this area particularly if there were set parameters within which to live as they could facilitate change.
- This work is beneficial but there is a need to bridge the communication gap by engaging with policy makers. However, it is possible to overstate the role of policy makers and city planners as there is the perennial problem of agency and responsibility. It is not difficult to gain support but it is difficult to elicit action – these are complex issues involving a wide number of groups: public; private sector; communities and civic authorities etc.

[**Action:** LB to put abstract of book on UF web site, JR to send power point presentation to LB who will distribute to committee on request]

5. The role of the Forestry Commission in relation to urban issues

GD is a non executive director of the Forestry Commission. He is interested in the peri-urban environment and would like to encourage a linked up approach to forest management and public awareness through social activities. GD asked the Committee for their opinion on this matter and suggestions as to how the Forestry Commission might engage with urban areas. The Committee made the following comments:

- Peri-urban environments are under supported.
- The Forestry Commission have a good record of community facilitation
- There is a greater role for the Forestry Commission in defending trees in the urban environment, e.g. subsistence claims.
- An information leaflet could be a valuable tool to educate people about the social and hydrological value of having trees in public and private urban environments (e.g. flood mitigation, heat reduction and therefore impacts upon mortality rates, personal comfort and energy demand through temperature control). The leaflet could also address building and legal matters to alleviate misunderstanding and social tension (e.g. neighbourly disputes). The Forestry Commission should be clear on its target audience, it was suggested that this could be householders. An educational leaflet was recently published by Woodland Wildlife covering topics associated with climate change
[**Action:** PF to send details to GD]
- The Forestry Commission needs to remain aware of the boundaries and remits of other organisations working within this sector and should be prepared to collaborate or share work with others. As there are only a few organisations in the UK with shared interests, concerns about competing with others are not too serious and can be managed.
- Forestry Commission should work at local scale before attempting national schemes. Pilot regional services (e.g. tree regeneration projects) may eventually lead to UK wide service.
- The Forestry Commission may have a role in supporting front line community workers.

6. Deferred Health and the Urban Environment Meeting

The original proposed date for the meeting (September 2006) has been cancelled due to cost, close proximity to other similar meetings and limited preparation time. GD asked the Committee for comments and suggestion on the draft agenda. The Committee made the following comments:

- UF could seek funding and/representation from the Heath Boards
- Contributions from the health sector would be valuable for the last theme, “The Realities of the Urban Environment” and could address the strategic areas of activity for future funding and the barriers that could be encountered. This area has been extensively researched and the aim would be to encourage novel work.
- A member of the BMA or a junior health minister could introduce the meeting.
- The UF should clearly identify its target audience and undertake specific marketing [**Action:** ALL to send contact details of suitable participants]. Suitable participants include: local authority parks and leisure departments; heads of primary care trusts and other senior managers with medical background; and planning authorities.
- If UCL is confirmed as a venue, there may be interest from the hospital for participation or collaborative involvement.
- The Kings Fund is a premier health network promoting joined-up research to identify practitioners and assess benefits and may be interested in participating or collaborating.
- CABE space may also be interested in participating or collaborating [**Action:** GD possibly via Graham Leeks).
- Participants of the “Culture of Urban Greenspace” conference (to be held in Liverpool as part of the “Liverpool city of culture” series of events) may also be interested (e.g. EUROPA, Landscape Institute (President Katherine Moore), CABE)
- The comprehensive spending review may provide a source of contacts write to the Treasury to highlight the importance of funding this area of work [**Action:** GD to provide briefing note]
- Advertising will be needed [**Action:** GD to circulate draft leaflet/email announcement and programme to UF members for wider distribution, information to include link to website]
- Alternative titles for the meeting were suggested [**Decision:** change title of the event to “Statins and Greenspaces”]. The new title would promote the health benefits of providing greenspace in urban areas.
- Try to finalise arrangements before next UF meeting [**Decision:** organise collaboration, book venue and confirm speakers ASAP]
- Aim for approximately 100 delegates (maximum) [**Action:** GD decide on deadline for registration]

7. Progress on the Work Programme

The parent committee of Urban Forum, UK MAB, reports every 10 years on biosphere reserves. A draft version of this document is currently being circulated amongst members of UK MAB [**Action:** ALL, contact PF if you would like a copy]. At the international level, a paper on the criteria for urban biosphere reserves will be available in October.

JLW requested that diversity and disadvantage needs to be added as a theme within the UF Work Package.

8. Publication of MAB booklet - Urban Greenspace and Mental Health Report (Ian Douglas).

The committee would like to see this paper published ASAP. Some further work is needed to get it into a suitable format for printing [**Action:** ID to undertake final edit, executive summary or foreword, include some photos or diagrams].

LB provided a quote for printing different quantities of a new yellow MAB booklet (A5, black & white, 24pp + coloured cover):

200 = £ 92.16
500 = £219.90
1000 = £432.80

[**Decision:** LB to organise production of 200 copies (after final editing) for circulation to UF members and distribution at the “Statins and Greenspaces” meeting]

9. Any Other Business

The membership list needs to be reviewed at future meetings and possibly refreshed [**Action:** members to nominate suitable candidates]

10. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 12 December 2006: London – venue TBA

Future meetings in 2007:

Wednesday 28 February – meeting venue TBA
Tuesday 27 March – UF Conference “Statins and Greenspaces”, UCL
Tuesday 22 May – meeting venue TBA
Wednesday 5 September – meeting venue TBA
Tuesday 4 December – meeting venue TBA