

## **Workpackage JB, 'The Governance of Sustainable Development and Brownfield Regeneration in the UK'**

### **Objectives**

As a plus project, this research project is more *evaluative* than other projects in the consortium in that it examines the 'downstream' effects created by development projects and the costs and benefits experienced by different community groups. It also directly examines different perceptions of the meaning and significance of the term sustainability to different actors involved in the development process. The research therefore seeks to:

- Provide a retrospective analysis of the ways in which 'up-stream' decisions over site use have impacted upon the sustainability of subsequent development.
- Assess the social, economic and environmental impacts of regeneration on local business and residential communities.
- Explore differing conceptions of sustainable urban development and assess how they impact on policy-making processes.
- Examine the interaction between communities, policy-makers, investors and other key stakeholders in the brownfield development process.
- Explore the ways in which policy-making processes and governance arrangements can be restructured to enable brownfield development to be successful sustainable development .
- Assess the ways in which the discourse of sustainable development is deployed by different interests (both governmental and non-governmental actors) in the pursuit of broader agendas.

### **Conceptual Model**

The government has identified brownfield regeneration as the key to sustainable urban development (ODPM, 2003). Reclaiming development sites in central urban areas can reduce transport costs and pollution, generate employment for deprived urban communities, and bring investment and people back into the inner city (DETR, 2000; UTF, 1999). The notion of the 'compact city', with its emphasis on 'liveability' and 'densification' has underpinned contemporary policy agendas concerning the future of Britain's urban areas (Burton, 2000). However, in practice brownfield urban regeneration initiatives have often had ambivalent impacts on urban communities and environments. In many instance, flagship, high-profile property developments encourage long distance commuting, provide employment opportunities for city-users, rather than city-dwellers, and create new forms of social exclusion as local people are pushed out of their communities by expensive, high-class residential and commercial developments (Lees, 2002; 2003). In many places, local communities have been excluded from the decision-making processes that shape the form and character of brownfield development projects as the necessity to make developments commercially viable shifts priorities away from social and/or environmental objectives. Brownfield development projects do not, therefore, *a priori* promote sustainability in terms of decreasing long term pollution, enhancing the prosperity of places, or improving the long term prospects for local businesses and residential communities.

## Method

- Data to be collected or generated
  - (i) *Literature review (primarily months 1-6 but continuing through the project):* to critically assess a range of theoretical literature that enables the research data to be analysed and understood and to explore the experiences of brownfield development projects in the UK and abroad and to enable the reflexive modification of the research during the project period.
  - (ii) *Collection of data sources (primarily months 1-6 but continuing through the project):* to document the scale, form and character of regeneration projects in the case study areas and identify the ways in which the development process has been implemented over time.
  - (iii) *Semi-structured interviews (months 6-27):* to develop a body of qualitative data through which the discourses and practices of decision-making processes can be examined and assessed. There will be a particular emphasis on examining the processes in and through which development decisions came to be made, identifying the key constraints and opportunities in the development process, and establishing the influence that different stakeholders have had on developments that have taken place. The 'downstream' angle of the project enables a retrospective analysis to be undertaken.
  - (iv) *Focus groups (between months 16-24):* to explore perceptions of community involvement, influence, and knowledge in local development projects. In particular, the discussions will identify how local communities believe that they have been influenced by the regeneration, what experiences they have had of local decision-making processes, and what alternative imaginations and associations exist concerning the specific sites.
  - (v) *A survey of businesses and employees (between months 20-24)* to assess the impacts of the regeneration on company competitiveness and to document and assess the factors that shape profitability. It will also enable an analysis of the links between local firms and local labour markets and the ways in which brownfield development influences urban transport and resource use.
- Experiments/surveys

See above

- Interpretation

The work will develop a range of quantitative and qualitative data which will be interpreted in a theoretically rigorous manner. Analysis will be made of the impacts of specific projects and an assessment made of the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to sustainable urban regeneration. In addition, constructive suggestions towards 'best practice' in regard to the future direction of local, national and international regeneration policy will be made.