

Participants were asked to associate images of new 'places' with various emotions.



Note book workshop at Parkhead.

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"Members of the Active Communities group took the leading role in these workshops and again acted as valuable contact points within the community. They went out onto the streets and physically invited people inside." Everyday language rather than planning speak and an encouraging welcome from fellow residents helped to make participation less daunting. "And many people felt more at ease taking part in pairs, as they had done for the scrap books," says Currie.

The scrap book and note book processes have had several positive outcomes, she concludes. "Glasgow City Council is incorporating feedback from both parts of the consultation into its final version of the EELDS. In addition, the full report of the HIA, published by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, will feed into further regeneration efforts, both to integrate health in the planning process and to engage the community."

For the 54 local people on the Active Communities programme, the consultation provided a valuable opportunity to complete the voluntary practical work required of them in a real and very relevant context. "They are now working with Glasgow City Council, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and The Lighthouse on a Community Regeneration Vision and will develop a course to build community capacity for the 2014 Commonwealth Games."

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OPINION



Participant or conscript?

Alastair McIntosh, Visiting Professor of Human Ecology at University of Strathclyde, argues that asymmetries of power must be ironed out for true participation in planning to take place.

I have a push-button digital radio and when I wake up, I channel-hop between Good Morning Scotland and Radio 4. Recently I was fascinated to contrast their reporting on proposals to raise the English school-leaving age to 18.

If the proposed legislation goes through, truants may face on-the-spot fines. Astonishingly, the government wants to call such scholars 'participants'. But as I heard someone remark, when I zapped the button to seek relief over on Radio Scotland, a more honest description might be 'conscripts'.

PAN 81, Scotland's Planning Advice Note on Community Engagement, is a most welcome development. But to have the effect that Ministers desire, we need to confront some fundamental asymmetries between developers and communities.

Developers always have a vested interest in being participants. Often they're salaried professionals anticipating bonuses or capital gains if they win the day.

In contrast, 'participation' at a community level reminds me more of those English youths reluctantly faced with two more years banged up in school. A superquarry, a motorway or a shopping centre may challenge a community's wellbeing, and this forces them into the planning process reactively. Most volunteers are neither paid to participate nor schooled in planning issues, and there are other things they'd rather be doing with their time.

Scotland needs both entrepreneurial developers and community participation to combine economic strength, environmental sustainability and social

cohesion. Developers operate within democratic frameworks, and as citizens we owe it to ourselves to play our part in helping these to work for the common good. But if PAN 81 is to achieve that, then asymmetries of power must be ironed out.

To help see fair play, planners should be rewarded not only for their legal skills with due process, but also for their human skills as facilitators. Facilitation is vital to identify representative community interests and to hear, discern and thereby empower the voices of the ordinary and the marginalised.

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Beyond that, and beyond PAN 81, if developers are to gain financially, my personal view would be that they should contribute to the costs of community participation. After all, developers form a community of interest usually driven by self-interest. But 'community' in Scotland means more than just communities of interest. It also means community of place, and that is a responsibility that carries with it a trust that falls nothing short of sacred.

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