

**Steering Committee on Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy**

**Policy Study on Urban Regeneration in Other Asian Cities -  
Additional Report on South Bank London Case Study**

**Purpose**

This paper sets out the lessons to be learnt from the South Bank, London, regeneration case study and seeks Members' views on its applicability to Hong Kong.

**Background**

2. This case study was commissioned by the Urban Renewal Authority subsequent to the commencement of the Urban Renewal Strategy Review in July 2008. The regeneration of South Bank from a place for wharves, industry and working-class estates into a financial, commercial, cultural and political centre, that is, the "South Bank regeneration experience", has often been quoted as a good learning sample for the URS Review in Hong Kong.

3. South Bank is situated at the southern bank of the River Thames facing the Westminster on the northern bank. For the purpose of this case study, the Coin Street site, a 13-acre site lying between the Waterloo Bridge and the Blackfriars Bridge, is the focus of analysis.

4. We must bear in mind that the South Bank regeneration, made possible by the efforts of the private and the public sectors, has taken a long period to materialise and during the process, there has been changes in party politics and public policy, mode of community and political support, sources of revenue, etc in the UK. The regeneration was in essence brought about by the efforts of the local authorities, the voluntary sector, and the private sector including the Shell International, IBM and community groups, and the South Bank partnership.

**Lessons to be learnt**

5. The mixed regeneration of South Bank in the past fifty years involved the development of a significant cultural cluster (e.g. the South Bank Centre and the British Film Institute), followed by a small and yet significant cluster of businesses (e.g. Shell and IBM), and then a mixture of commercial, residential and festival developments by the Coin Street Community Builders (CSCB). The South Bank case is unique in terms of opportunities, site location, political structure and dynamics, related public policies, community dynamics. The key success factors are identified as follows:

- (a) A brown-field experience: The Coin Street site was a vacant site that enables regeneration with numerous possibilities and without any

- relocation or compensation considerations;
- (b) Initial public efforts in relocation of cultural facilities: the initial relocation of public and cultural activities to the South Bank had made South Bank more frequented by tourists, visitor and cultural activity participants;
  - (c) the double-edged planning results: the planning intentions to transform South Bank into a commercial development and offices have helped to clear the last housing estates on the site and attract some of the key private sector players to associate with the local community and trigger off the formation of the Coin Street Action Group, the social enterprise that enables the community participatory planning approach to become a reality;
  - (d) the facilitation due to public policies: The then Labour Government policy support for community participation had led to strong local community organization and the subsequent Conservative Government policy support for partnership development also made possible the alignment of power relationship in the community among the public sector, private sector and the local communities; support from local Members of Parliament and local authorities was also crucial;
  - (e) Access to financing: the availability of different modes of financial support such as loans from the Greater London Council, investment funding from the Housing Corporation, different pockets of public funds, future streams of rental income, bank loans etc have facilitated the regeneration; and
  - (f) the location of the site: the site at a prime location is an asset in itself.

### **Advice Sought**

6. The draft final report of the Case Study is attached at **Annex**. Members are invited to comment on the findings/lessons learnt from the Case Study which will be presented at the meeting and its relevance and applicability to Hong Kong. Upon finalization, the Case Study will be uploaded onto the URS Review website.

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**October 2009**

**Case Study Report:**  
**Regeneration of the South Bank, London**

**September, 2009**



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# **The Case of Regeneration of the South Bank, London**

## **Introduction**

1. This case study was commissioned by the Urban Renewal Authority subsequent to the commencement of the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) review begun in August 2008. This case study was undertaken primarily because of the frequently mentioned “South Bank regeneration” as a possible candidate for lessons to learn for the URS review in Hong Kong. The purpose of this case study is to identify the lessons that we might be able to learn from the South Bank regeneration experience.
2. The Research Team had conducted site visits in December 2008 and in July 2009<sup>1</sup>. During these visits, team members had attended a South Bank Forum<sup>2</sup> to meet the residents and other key stakeholders, and had also interviewed some of the key informants (See Appendix).
3. To identify lessons to learn in this particular case study, we should always bear in mind the following contextual factors
  - Planning policies and their history in United Kingdom and specifically in London;
  - Housing policies in U.K. and their evolution
  - Government structure in terms of the functions of and dynamics across different levels of government, e.g. local authorities, city/metropolitan government and the national government
  - Government policies in community development (with a Labour Party emphasis), and partnership (with a Conservative Party emphasis)
  - Party politics and changes over time
4. While it is not possible to provide a comprehensive background to all the above contextual factors in this case study, the relevance of the above factors would be mentioned either in the text or the relevant foot notes in this paper whenever appropriate.

## **London and South Bank**

5. London is the capital of United Kingdom and England with an estimated population size

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<sup>1</sup> These visits were scheduled during visits paid by the researchers when they were performing other academic and research activities in the U.K.

<sup>2</sup> The participants of the forum were mainly local residents.

of 7.6 million in 2007<sup>3</sup>. Being one of the major financial centers in the world, sustainable development and competitiveness is always an important political agenda. Urban regeneration is recurrent political issue ever since urbanization and industrialization has come to the stage where overcrowding in cities has raised serious public health concerns and daily traffic congestions in large cities such as London.



Figure 1: South Bank London

6. South Bank situates at the southern bank of River Thames facing the Westminster in the northern bank. For tourists to this area, South Bank basically refers to the southern shore of River Thames between the Westminster Bridge and the Blackfriars Bridge<sup>4</sup>, while very few visitors would go beyond the Waterloo Station. The South Bank is part of the Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark.

7. In this paper, one site area, the Coin Street site, is the focus of analysis. The Coin Street site was about 13-acre<sup>5</sup> lying between the Waterloo Bridge and the Blackfriars Bridge.

## The Urban Regeneration of London in the Background

8. The call for decentralization of population and industries from London began as early as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but met with little success (Miller, 1989<sup>6</sup>) until the World War II. The population of London reached its peak of 8.6 million in 1939<sup>7</sup>. Regeneration of London after the extensive bombing and destruction in World War II was both a

<sup>3</sup> [Office for National Statistics](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Mid_2007_UK_England_&_Wales_Scotland_and_Northern_Ireland%2021_08_08.zip), 21 August 2008 “Selected age groups for local authorities in the United Kingdom; estimated resident population; Mid-2007 Population Estimates” [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_population/Mid\\_2007\\_UK\\_England\\_&\\_Wales\\_Scotland\\_and\\_Northern\\_Ireland%2021\\_08\\_08.zip](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/Mid_2007_UK_England_&_Wales_Scotland_and_Northern_Ireland%2021_08_08.zip). Retrieved on June 3, 2009

<sup>4</sup> A narrower reference to the area of South Bank is the area between the Waterloo Bridge and the Blackfriars Bridge along the southern bank as the South Bank area. A broader reference would be extended down south to the Lambeth Palace Gateway and the Lambeth Road

<sup>5</sup> In comparison, the size of the Kwun Tong Town Centre redevelopment project (K7) in Hong Kong is also about 13 acres (or 5.35 hectares).

<sup>6</sup> Miller, Mervyn (1989) “The elusive green background: Raymond Unwin and the Greater London Regional Plan”, *Planning Perspectives*, 4(1989), p 15-44.

<sup>7</sup> Museum of London website: retrieved on December 8, 2008, <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/Collections/OnlineResources/X20L/Timeline/1980s.htm>.

challenge and an opportunity for comprehensive planning. The London County Council endorsed Abercrombie Plan<sup>8</sup> in 1945<sup>9</sup>. One major key to the plan was the movement of people away from the central London areas into the newly built areas, the New Towns. This has resulted in the drop of population of London from its pre-WWII population till it reached its lowest point at 1983 level<sup>10</sup> of 6.8 million before it started to grow again. As mentioned earlier, by 2007, the population of London has reached 7.6 million, though still substantially lower than its pre-WWII level<sup>11</sup>.

9. The late 1970s and early 1980s marked another turn in the regeneration of London. A battle against the Greater London Council (GLC) plan of designating the Covent Garden area as a Comprehensive Development Area (CDA) in 1974 was launched by a coalition of local businesses, residents and preservationists. The coalition met its success in 1978 when the massive office development was finally dropped<sup>12</sup> from the publication of the Covent Garden Action Area Plan in 1978 (Tiesdell, Oc & Heath, 1996, p. 6<sup>13</sup>). This success story has significant implications for other communities throughout England. This case, at least, illustrates the possibility of success when communities including businesses, residents and interest groups can work together; the keeping of the communities instead of dispersing it; and mixed regeneration including residential and commercial revitalization instead of purely offices and commercial redevelopment.

### **Regeneration of South Bank (before 1970)**

10. The regeneration of South Bank from a place for wharves, industry and working-class estates into an integral part of the financial, commercial, cultural and political power of London



Figure 2: London County Hall, South Bank

had been with the London planners ever since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Baeten,

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<sup>8</sup> Town planner Leslie Patrick Abercrombie devised the County of London Park System in 1943 and the Greater London Regional Plan in 1944. These plans are known collectively as the “Abercrombie Plan”. Abercrombie was also commissioned by the British Government to “redesign” Hong Kong in 1945.

<sup>9</sup> The plan was published in 1945 by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning (Self, Peter (2002) “The evolution of the Greater London Plan, 1944-1970”, *Progress in Planning* 57, 145-175).

<sup>10</sup> Museum of London website, *op cit*.

<sup>11</sup> At this particular juncture of time, we should also note that when United Kingdom is experiencing an annual population growth of about 0.7%, there is already call, particularly from environmental groups (e.g. the Optimum Population Trust), for measures to reduce the population growth and the reduction in crowdedness in urban cities such as London.

<sup>12</sup> The then Environment Secretary, Geoffrey Rippon, played a role by listing and thereby protecting from demolition key heritage buildings in the CDA which thus affected the viability of the whole CDA.

<sup>13</sup> Steven Tiesdell, Taner Oc, Tim Heath (1996), *Revitalizing Historic Urban Quarters*, Butterworth-Architecture (Boston)

2009<sup>14</sup>). One of the earlier efforts was to relocate the London Council Hall<sup>15</sup> to the South Bank, which was formally opened by King George V in 1922. However, the expected regeneration impact was not realized.

11. The 1951 Festival of Britain cleared basically the last housing estates, with the aim of clearing the way for businesses to move into the area. Yet, the response from the private sector had been very slow. Shell moved in the 1960s and followed by the IBM and a few others.
12. The more obvious efforts came mainly from the public sector. The Royal Festival Hall (1951), the National Film Theatre<sup>16</sup> (1957), the National Theatre<sup>17</sup> (1963), the Hayward Gallery (1968), the Queen Elizabeth Hall<sup>18</sup> (1967) were built in the 1950s and 1960s.



Figure 3: National Theatre



Figure 4: Royal Festival Hall



Figure 5: The Queen Elizabeth Hall (left) and Hayward Gallery (right)

### **The beginning of the campaign against office development plan in South Bank**

13. These major venues for cultural activities were developed to establish the South Bank as a major cultural site in London. The three buildings, the Royal Festival Hall, the Hayward Gallery and the Queen Elizabeth Hall, formed the Southbank Centre as a complex of artistic venues in London situated at the South Bank managed by the South Bank Board responsible to the Arts Council England.

<sup>14</sup> Baeten, Guy (2009) “Regenerating the South Bank: reworking community and the emergence of post-political regeneration”, in Inmire, R., Lees, L., & Raco, M. (ed) *Regenerating London*, Routledge, 237-288.

<sup>15</sup> The London County Hall was used as the venue for the Greater London Council (GLC) until 1986 when Margaret Thatcher government dissolved the GLC. Currently, the building houses the London Sea Life Aquarium, an amusement arcade, restaurants, the visitor centre of the London Eye, an art exhibition room, and two hotels. The major remaining part of the GLC history is the Council Chamber in the building.

<sup>16</sup> The National Film Theatre was moved to its present site in 1957 and redeveloped into the British Film Institute (BFI) Southbank in 2007.

<sup>17</sup> The current building of the National Theatre was built and opened by stage between 1976 and 1977 replacing its older 1963 version.

<sup>18</sup> The three buildings, the Royal Festival Hall, the Hayward Gallery and the Queen Elizabeth Hall, formed the Southbank Centre as a complex of artistic venues in London situated at the South Bank managed by the South Bank Board responsible to the Arts Council England.

14. While these regeneration efforts in the 1950s and 1960s had created spots of cultural events for the middle class and as tourist attractions, right behind these buildings and towards the Waterloo station, the area was still very rundown. Industrial employment was disappearing and the population in this area dropped from 50 thousands after the war to a mere 5,000 in the early 1970s. (Baeten, 2009<sup>19</sup>)

### **The battle between the “local” and the “central”**

15. Since being a Comprehensive Development Area in 1955, the South Bank was earmarked as a site for central area uses and office development<sup>20</sup>. However, substantial commercial and office development proposal did not turn up till the 1970s.
16. Perhaps, the introduction of public consultation in the planning process in the 1971 Town and County Planning Act marked the rise of local participation and the early success story of the Covent Garden gave hope to community leaders. The Waterloo Community Development Group (WCDG) was set up in 1972 initially to resist the extension of the Imperial War Museum into the adjacent public park, the Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park. With the assistance from a local architect, the WCDG’s alternative proposal was accepted after a public inquiry<sup>21</sup>.

### The Coin Street Battle

17. At the time of the 1970s, about half of the Coin Street site was privately owned by developers while the GLC owned the other half. In 1977, the Heron Corporation and the Vestey Company proposed a 140m skyscraper hotel and office space in the Coin Street. The nickname given by the local people for the proposal was the “Berlin Wall” on River Thames. The local community formed the Coin Street Action Group to campaign for an alternative vision: homes, parks, restaurants, cafes, etc. (CSCB, 2008<sup>22</sup>).
18. The first inquiry was conducted in 1979 and was concluded with both proposals (one from the developer and one from the Action Group) being rejected, hoping that a compromise proposal could be subsequently developed (Beaten, 2009). Apparently, no

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<sup>19</sup> Baeten, Guy (2009), *op cit*.

<sup>20</sup> This zoning was restated in the 1962 Initial Development Plan for London, and the 1969 Greater London Development Plan.

<sup>21</sup> Waterloo Community Development Group website: <http://www.wcdg.org.uk/> , retrieved on December 1, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Coin Street Community Builders (2008) *Coin Street Community Builders – a very social enterprise. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*

compromise had ever been reached. The Greycroats and Commercial Properties joined forces and formed Greycroats Commercial Estates Limited to propose a revised development plan, again primarily consisting of a row of office towers along the river bank. The battle was resumed and the second inquiry was conducted.

19. At the conclusion of the second inquiry, both proposals from the developer and the Action Group were accepted in March 1982. While the Greycroats could have proceeded with their proposal on the part of land that they owned, the Action Group had been continuously successful in delaying the granting of construction permit to the developer. Then the slackening demand for offices in London crept in, and the Greycroats finally decided in 1984 to give the whole proposal up and sold its holdings to the GLC<sup>23</sup>. In turn, the GLC sold the 13 acres of land to the newly formed Coin Street Community Builders<sup>24</sup> (CSCB) for £1M. The CSCB was an incorporated company limited by guarantee established by the campaigners in the Coin Street Action Group
20. While some argued that this was a generous offer (Jeffrey 1997<sup>25</sup>), the then Chair of the GLC Planning Committee, George Nicholson<sup>26</sup>, argued that it reflected a reasonable market value because of the down turn of the real estate market and that the “brown field” site<sup>27</sup> only had derelict buildings, temporary car parks (CSCB, 2008<sup>28</sup>), and settlements of homeless (Baeten, 2009<sup>29</sup>). The purchase was partly funded by a loan from the GLC itself and partly from the Greater London Enterprise Board<sup>30</sup> (GLEB), i.e. £1M was practically wholly financed by the GLC directly and indirectly (Bibby, undated<sup>31</sup>). It is very clear that without the political support from the Lambeth and

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<sup>23</sup> According to Tom Dyckhoff (Times Online, August 3, 2004, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article465053.ece>, retrieved on July 1, 2009), Greycroats sold their part of land to the GLC for £2.6 million. We also noted that in the same article, the amount that the GLC sold to the CSCB was £750,000 instead of £1 million as spelt out in various CSCB documents. According to Dyckhoff, this act of the GLC was a political revenge from the then GLC leader, Ken Livingstone, for the plan of Margaret Thatcher to abolish the GLC.

<sup>24</sup> CSCB is a company limited by guarantee. Board members were elected by CSCB members and only local residents can become CSCB members.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey, Nick (June 20, 1997) “Coin Street Yields a High Return” in *New Statesman*, Vol 126.

<sup>26</sup> George Nicholson was also the Hon. Treasurer of the CSCB during the time when interviewed by the Researcher in July 2009, £1M was a reasonable market value because of the down turn of the real estate market and the “brown field” site only had vacant industrial buildings and desolated wharves.

<sup>27</sup> A “brown field” site is any land, which has previously been used for any purpose and is no longer in use for that purpose.

<sup>28</sup> Coin Street Community Builders (2008), *op cit*.

<sup>29</sup> Beaten, Guy (2009) *op cit*.

<sup>30</sup> The Greater London Enterprise Board was also formed by the GLC in 1982. It is currently known as the Greater London Enterprise and wholly owned by the all the 33 local authorities in London. Its initial capital came from the GLC and later from the participating local authorities after the GLC was abolished in 1986. Its major function is to help make economic regeneration through borrowing, lending, investing and managing funds and assets that underpin the improvement agenda for London (Ref. official website: <http://www1.gle.co.uk>). It provides access to funds for SMEs and entrepreneurs unable to raise finance elsewhere.

<sup>31</sup> Bibby, Andrew (undated), Coin Street – case study, retrieved on December 1, 2008 from

Southwark boroughs and the GLC, the “sale” would never be feasible.

## Regeneration of South Bank under the auspice of Coin Street Community Builders

### Financing of regeneration

21. As noted earlier, the starting capital of CSCB came from the GLC and the GLEB. The GLC was abolished in 1986 and the CSCB had to find alternative funding support. Tapping onto existing public funds, such as funding from the Housing Corporation<sup>32</sup> to finance building of social housing, and generating revenues from commercial operations were apparently the major sources.
22. There are currently four housing co-operatives<sup>33</sup>, Mulberry in 1988, Palm in 1994, Redwood in 1995, and Iroko in 2001 in the Coin Street site operating social housing available at affordable rents to 220 families in housing need.
23. The other major source of revenue was generated from commercial operations. The initial source of commercial revenue was generated from the operations of car parks. The opening of the Gabriel’s Wharf Market<sup>34</sup> (1988) generated important rental revenues. It was a mix of retail craft workshops, pub and riverside restaurants, performance space,



Figure 6: Gabriel’s Wharf

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<http://andrewbibby.com/socialenterprise/coin-street.html>.

<sup>32</sup> The Housing Corporation was the national government agency established in 1964 to fund the building affordable housing and to regulate housing associations in England. The Housing Corporation was dissolved on 30 November 2008 and evolved into the Homes and Community Agency to carry on with the funding and support to help build better homes and stronger communities and the Tenants Service Authority to carry on with the regulating functions. (Retrieved from <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/> on July 1, 2009)

<sup>33</sup> Housing cooperatives are fully mutual cooperatives with the tenants being shareholders in the cooperative that owns the lease on the building. Each cooperative elects its own officers to represent its tenants and to manage the properties, to collect rents and to select new tenants. As the leasehold is owned jointly by all cooperative members (i.e. tenants), each member do not have the right to buy their own homes and the housing units remained available at affordable rents. However, we should note that housing cooperatives constituted only 0.1% of the total housing stock in the U.K (Confederation of Co-operative Housing (2000) *Submission by the UK Co-operative Council to the Co-operative Commission on the development of the housing co-operative sector*, retrieved from its website: <http://www.cch.coop/docus/coopcomm.html>, on July 1, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Urban Space Management, [http://www.urbanspace.com/gabriels\\_wharf.html](http://www.urbanspace.com/gabriels_wharf.html), retrieved on July 1, 2009.)

weekend market and low-cost promotion. The initial plan was to exploit the site as a short-term project that would pay off in no more than four years prior to eventual redevelopment. From planning to the opening ceremony, it took only 3 months and as it has been so successful, it is still there after two decades (Urban Space Management, undated).

24. The flag-ship of CSCB is the Oxo Tower wharf project conceived in the early dates of CSCB<sup>35</sup> but completed in 1996. The whole project cost £20M, and only £2M could be raised initially to enable essential structural repairs and only after 1991, bank loans could be obtained to complete the project<sup>36</sup> (CSCB, 2002). By the time of completion, the £20M capital was funded by a mixture of bank loans, CSCB' equity, Housing Corporation grant and funding support from English Partnerships<sup>37</sup>.



Figure 7 The Oxo Tower Wharf

25. The Oxo Tower Wharf was a building used by the Liebig Extract of Met Company since the late 1920s to manufacture its brand product of OXO beef cube. Now, it is a mixed use development with the ground and first two floors for retail design studios, shops, catering and gallery, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> floor with 78 flats for the Redwood Housing Co-operative to provide affordable housing, and a restaurant and public viewing gallery



Figure 8 The CSCB logo

on the top floor. Oxo Tower Wharf won for the CSCB the Royal Fine Art Commission/BSkyB Building of the Year Award for Regeneration in 1997. This building is now taken as an icon and forms part of the logo for CSCB.

### The development of local partnership

26. In examining the regeneration of South Bank, we noted that party politics and changes

<sup>35</sup> Bibby, Andrew (undated), *op cit*

<sup>36</sup> Coin Street Community Builders (2002) *Social Enterprise in Action - there is another way...*

<sup>37</sup> English Partnerships was the national regeneration agency legally composed of two independent bodies set up under separate statues. One was the Commission for New Towns set up in 1961 and the other was the Urban Regional Agency set up in 1993. It was merged with the delivery functions of the Housing Corporation and parts of the Department for Communities and Local Government to form the Homes and Communities Agency on December 1, 2008.

in government, apparently, had an impact on the approaches in urban regeneration. For instance, the then Labour-controlled GLC approved the Waterloo District Plan influenced by the Waterloo Community Development Group that favoured more housing than office development in 1977. Yet, when the GLC changed hand from the Labour Party to the Conservative Party after May 1977, office development on the South Bank was favoured. After the Labour Party regained control over the GLC after the 1981 election, the support to housing in the South Bank was resumed. However, after the GLC was abolished by the Thatcher administration in 1986, one major source of support from the GLC on financing and policy was gone. Furthermore, the financial support from the Community Area Policy was cut off after the Conservative Party had dropped this policy (Baeten, 2009<sup>38</sup>).

27. The Conservative Government under John Major (1990-97) changed the funding for urban regeneration to a more competitive bases and partnership in planning was preferred. This had significant impact on the power relationship and working relationship among various players in the community including the local authorities, voluntary sector, the private sector and community groups. The CSCB started building partners in the community, noticeably the South Bank Employers' Group (SBEG) and later on the forming of the South Bank Partnership.
28. The SBEG brings together the private sectors, such as the Shell International and IBM which own land and have buildings situated in South Bank and had an interest to make their immediate environment better for their employees and business visitors. Together with other stakeholders in the South Bank area, including the CSCB, the King's College London, South Bank Centre, a hospital trust and the National Theatre (SBEG, website<sup>39</sup>), the SBEG began to meet in 1990 and employed staff since 1994 (CSCB, 2002<sup>40</sup>). The SBEG is registered as a company limited by guarantee. Basically, it is a non-profit organization, or in current terminology, it is a social enterprise.
29. As one step further, the South Bank Partnership was formed in 1995, with secretariat support from the SBEG, bringing together the SBEG, Members of Parliament (MP) of Vauxhall (wholly within the Borough of Lambeth), and North Southwark and Bermondsey (wholly within the Borough of Southwark), local ward councilors, representatives of local traders and other agencies. The South Bank Partnership and its quarterly South Bank Forum for local residents was co-chaired by the two MPs, Kate

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<sup>38</sup> Baeten, Guy (2009) *op cit*.

<sup>39</sup> Information retrieved from the SBEG website: [http://www.sbeg.co.uk/members\\_list.htm](http://www.sbeg.co.uk/members_list.htm), retrieved on July 1, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Coin Street Community Builders (2002) *op cit*.

Hoey<sup>41</sup> and Simon Hughes<sup>42</sup>. We noted that the stability of political leadership of Kate Hoey and Simon Hughes in the past 2 decades within the South Bank might have contributed to sustainability of partnership in the community and the political support for the plan and programmes initiated by the CSCB and the SBEG.

30. In 2001, a Waterloo Project Board and Waterloo Community Regeneration Trust was formed to administer a £19M regeneration programme (CSCB, 2002<sup>43</sup>).

## Other related features in the regeneration

### Opening up the river front

31. The Nelson's Wharf was demolished in 1985 to make way for the Bernie Spain Gardens to open up the views of the Thames, St. Paul's Cathedral and the City on the northern bank.



Figure 9 Signage at South Bank  
(Source: SBEG (2004) *South Bank Streetscapes Design Guide*)

32. The South Bank riverside walkway was completed in 1988.

### Transport and Signage

33. The SBEG in its Urban Design Strategy (1994) identified the need to improve pedestrian environment and public transportation and in its first project, the 'spine route' serving all riverside businesses and arts organizations was started. An area-wide signage system<sup>44</sup> was also introduced.

<sup>41</sup> Kate Hoey is a Labour Party MP for Vauxhall, in office since 1989. Vauxhall situated within the Borough of Lambeth.

<sup>42</sup> Simon Hughes is a Social Democrat MP for North Southwark and Bermondsey within the Borough of Southwark since 1983.

<sup>43</sup> Coin Street Community Builders (2002) *op cit*.

<sup>44</sup> On November 24, 2008 a new scheme using 3D representations to give people a quick sense of their bearings and help them locate shops, parks, hotels, landmarks, toilets, Tube stations and other amenities was announced. The project was led by the Mayor, Transport for London, Cross River Partnership and the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark, together with the area's business organisations, South Bank Employers' Group and Better Banksia (Transport for London website, retrieved on December 1, 2008: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/media/newscentre/archive/10498.aspx>).

34. The CSCB and the SBEG promoted and launched a riverside bus service linking Covent Garden, South Bank, Bankside and the Tower of London.

### Festivals

35. The CSCB organized an annual Coin Street Festival in the Bernie Spain Gardens. The last one was held on June 14, 2009.
36. The CSCB began organizing an annual Mayor's Thames Festival since 1997. In 1998, a Thames Festival Trust was incorporated to raise fund and to coordinate events of the Festival. It became a charity in 1999. In 2009, the Festival would be held in September 12-13.

### Social Enterprises

37. With the current popular use of the term "social enterprise", both the Coin Street Community Builders and the South Bank Employers' Group did consider themselves as social enterprises. The revenue generating activities of the CSCB had helped to finance further urban regeneration programmes and also enable CSCB to provide community services to the local community.
38. The CSCB's Coin Street neighbourhood centre provide standard nursery services, support services to family carers and a range of service for children<sup>45</sup> to old persons.
39. The CSCB also provided employment support, training and business support to individuals and organizations in the local community, currently with emphasis on development and sustainability of social enterprises.
40. To create sufficient funds to develop the Coin Street site and to subsidise on-going costs for a proposed public swimming and indoor leisure facilities, local community programmes, the CSCB was working on a Doon Street<sup>46</sup> development project<sup>47</sup>. The proposed project was a mixed development with commercial, residential, community, office and art elements, including a high rise (43-storey) and a low rise (6-storey with ground level shops) residential block, community facilities (swimming pools, sports hall,

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<sup>45</sup> The Coin Street neighbourhood centre is currently the designated Children's' Centre for London's South Bank and Bankside areas. Designated Children's centres received support from the Department for Children, Schools and Families under the "Every Child Matters" programme.

<sup>46</sup> The Doon Street site is adjacent to the National Theatre and is currently used for car parking and other temporary uses.

<sup>47</sup> The planning consent for the Don Street Site proposal was obtained in 2008.

studios, gymnasium, etc.), one office block (8-storey high with ground level shops), and the headquarters for the Rambert Dance Company<sup>48</sup>. This project in its planning stage and public inquiry prior to the planning approval had received criticisms from the local community such as the Waterloo Community Development Group accusing that there would be no affordable housing in this project and that the development is a block long with a tall and large tower<sup>49</sup>.

### **Key characteristics of the South Bank Regeneration**

41. To summarize, the regeneration of South Bank has four major characteristics
- Mixed regeneration: creation of a significant cultural cluster, (e.g. the South Bank Centre, the BFI, etc), followed by a small and yet significant cluster of businesses (e.g. Shell and IBM), and then a mixture of commercial, residential (affordable housing) and festival developments by the CSCB.
  - Comprehensive redevelopment: active re-use with substantial structural modifications (e.g. Gabriel's Wharf and Oxo Tower Wharf), demolition (e.g. Nelson's Wharf demolished for the Bernie Spain Gardens), and reconstruction of affordable housing (e.g. the housing cooperatives)
  - Community led planning (CSCB) and local partnership (SBEG and South Bank Partnership).
  - Mixed financing: public funds, bank loan and revenue generating activities.

### **Key success factors**

42. The regeneration of the South Bank in the past half a century involved the development of a significant cultural cluster (e.g. the South Bank Centre and the BFI), followed by a small and yet significant cluster of businesses (e.g. Shell and IBM), and then a mixture of commercial, residential and festival developments by the CSCB. This mixed regeneration of the South Bank is usually regarded as a successful case in urban regeneration. There are several key success factors that can be identified.

### A "brown field" experience

43. The exit of industries from the central London and the damage caused by bombing in the

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<sup>48</sup> Rambert Dance Company can be considered as the Britain's flagship contemporary dance company formed in 1926. It is a registered charity.

<sup>49</sup> BD (Building Design) "The Architects' Website" (29 August, 2007) "Does Coin Street's tower compromise its principles", retrieved on December 1, 2008, <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=3094148>.

World War II gave rise to the need of regeneration of South Bank and provided an opportunity for comprehensive redevelopment. The 1951 Festival of Britain cleared basically the last housing estates, with the aim of clearing the way for businesses to move into area. The Coin Street site was basically a vacant space with derelict buildings, i.e. a “brown field” that enables regeneration with numerous possibilities and without any relocation or compensation considerations.

#### Initial public efforts in relocation of cultural facilities

44. A significant cluster of public and cultural facilities being relocated to the South Bank had given a head-start though not yet a sufficient push for urban regeneration. These relocation efforts had at least brought more tourists, visitors, and cultural activity participants to cross the river from the northern bank off the Westminster.

#### The double-edged planning results

45. The designation of South Bank as an area for comprehensive development of commercial and offices has led to the clearance of last housing estates in the 1951 Festival of Britain, i.e. completing the “brown field” formation. Though this planning intention had never been quite realized, it had at least attracted some of the key players, such as the Shell and IBM, which formed important strategic partners with the local community in urban regeneration in later years.
46. The proposal of the developers to build huge office developments had sparked off the formation of the Coin Street Action Group in the local community which later was developed into the Coin Street Community Builders, the social enterprise that enables the community participatory planning approach to become a reality.

#### The facilitation due to public policies

47. The Labour Government policy support to community development and empowerment of local communities had paved the ground work of community activism in the 70’s and 80’s. On this fertile ground, similar to the Covent Garden regeneration case, the local community organization in the South Bank became the leading force in community driven planning efforts and later on the formation of the Coin Street Community Builders.
48. The Conservative Government policy support to partnership development as a tool to

regeneration had led to the alignment of power relationship in the community among the public sector, private sector and local communities. Benefited from this policy preference to partnership, the South Bank Employers' Group and subsequently the South Bank Partnership were formed in this policy environment. While some might criticize that these partnerships might compromise the original ideal of community based planning and regeneration, recognizing that local businesses and local political players (local authority and local MPs) as important parts of the local community, these partnerships can be considered as making local community participation more complete.

49. Common interests create opportunities for collaboration. Ownership in terms of freehold land by the members of the South Bank Employers' Group including the Coin Street Community Builders and their common interest in the vitality, provision of employment opportunities, and security in the area drew them together to form strategic partnership. Support from the local MPs and local authorities had been very crucial to its development. Tri-partite partnership was apparently one major key success factor in the whole process of regeneration.

#### Access to financing

50. Financing can be considered as one of the major challenges for community organization such as the CSCB. This funding problem was initially solved by financial (loan) support from the GLC. Subsequent provision of affordable social housing was enabled by the funding support from the Housing Corporation. The Coin Street regeneration was initially financed by public loan (for its first £1M), later on by many different pockets of public fund (e.g. housing, community development, urban regeneration, specific programme funds such as the "Every Child Matters" programme).
51. With the investment funding from the Housing Corporation, the CSCB was able to develop several housing cooperatives providing affordable housing. The increase in population in the area not only gave more vitality in the area it also provided a source of local labour supply.
52. The initial and quick success of the Gabriel' Wharf regeneration gave the CSCB a good track record and also future streams of rental income. Though bank loans appeared to be less forthcoming in early years, with initial success and track records, private funding became one important source of financing.
53. Apart from the revenue generated from its own commercial activities, the access to the

different sources of public funding as well as private financing is perhaps one of the key edges of a social enterprise, i.e. CSCB in this case.

#### Location of the site

54. The last and definitely not the least factor is the location of the site. Being at the bank of the major river Thames running through London, right opposite to the key political and tourist site of Westminster, the location of the site is a key advantage that gives rise to opportunities that have been sitting there waiting for realization.

#### **Concluding remarks**

55. This case, as any other possible case, is unique in terms of opportunities (opened during different historical periods of time), site location, political structure and political dynamics, related public policies, community dynamics, etc.
56. This case is directly relevant to “brown fields” in Hong Kong such as the old Kai Tak airport and sites with vacant industrial buildings. Furthermore, how the water front has been utilized in the South Bank and how the connectivity can be improved both in terms of traffic and pedestrian facilities can be good examples for the future regeneration of the harbor front of Hong Kong.
57. For urban regeneration in older residential areas in Hong Kong, the relevant lessons learnt from this case would be related to the mixed approach (active reuse, opening of public space, reconstruction, revitalization projects such as festivals), mixed development (commercial, cultural, public facilities, and residential), the community mix with affordable housing for the working class, and the development of social enterprises that would have access to both public and private funds.
58. However, for the above lessons to be applicable to Hong Kong, it still requires facilitating factors to be present in Hong Kong, including public policies that enable the empowerment of local communities, the funding preferences that encourage partnership, the financial and policy making power of local authorities (i.e. district councils in the case of Hong Kong), the availability of different pockets of public funding (in particular, the funding for social housing development and local regeneration efforts), land use policies that would enable affordable housing after redevelopment to be available in old urban areas in Hong Kong where redeveloped residential flats are becoming more and more unaffordable.

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## **Appendix: Visits and interviews conducted in the study**

1. Attendance in South Bank Forum
  - Held on December 11, 2008 at Coin Street Community Centre
  - Organized by the South Bank Partnership
  - Chaired by the local MPs (Kate Hoey and Simon Hughes)
  - Attended by approximately 60-70 local residents discussing various issues of local concern.
  - Informal discussion with local residents and organizers of the forum
2. Meeting with academics of King's College London, Dr. Mike Raco (Senior Lecturer, Department of Geography), Prof. Robert Imrie (Professor of Geography and Director of Cities Group), and Ms Emma Street (Ph.D. candidate studying the case of urban regeneration in South Bank).
3. Interviews:
  - Mr. George Nicholson, Hon. Treasurer of Coin Street Community Builders and previously Chair of the Greater London Council Planning Committee
  - Mr. Ted Inman, CEO, South Bank Employers' Group (together with Miss Emma Street, Ph.D. candidate of King's College London)