

Box 7: Brian Thom McQuade*The Cycle of Regeneration: a study of urban community in Govan***My Research**

In June of 2006, I was asked by the Centre of Human Ecology to explore the evidence for an elemental connection with place in Govan. I wanted to investigate whether this can help build deeper community of place and thereby form a key element of community cohesion and regeneration in Greater Govan. Put another way, could there be an elemental consciousness lying at the core of the psyche or 'soul' of a community like Govan which can be drawn upon as a resource for the regeneration of an area that has fallen on hard times?

My Findings

I have lived most of my life in Govan and I am involved directly as a volunteer worker with four Govan charities and indirectly with a number of others whose aims are tied in with the regeneration of Govan. My research approach was to interview the staff, volunteers and helpers of these organisations. I used no questionnaires but simply talked to people and let them tell me about their lives, how they became involved with issues of regeneration, why it led them to Govan, why they felt that what they were doing there was important to them, and finally, what their hopes for the future were. Through this method of investigation I found that people 'bared their soul'.

Almost all of the 59 people I spoke to told me that they became involved with community groups because they felt that they didn't 'fit in' elsewhere or that

Box 7: Brian Thom McQuade (continued)

they were misunderstood and ultimately, were disappointed by or let down by society at large. Most of them also felt 'driven' to join the organisations that they did because they felt that there, they could do something really worthwhile – for themselves and for the communities they served.

I also found that after some time spent in these groups, my interviewees felt that there was a general feeling, almost an obligation, to give something back to the wider community – even though about three-quarters of the people I interviewed did not come from Govan originally. When I asked a number of them why they felt obliged to do so, most replied with the statement, "Well, you just have to, don't you?" I think that this driving force is the elemental spirit of Govan where people who have found something worthwhile in their lives wish to share it with others. My research suggests this to be a 'Cycle of Regeneration' taking place in Govan right now.

Next Steps

I have been down to the Oxfam headquarters in Oxford to present my findings. I continue to be involved in Sunny Govan Radio, the GalGael Trust and other community groups in Govan.

[Brian is pictured here undertaking his pioneering research on early photographic plates, published in monograph as Brian Thom McQuade, *Sir John Lavery and his use of Photography at the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1888*, TH.A.H.M. van Asperen – The Glasgow Art Club, Glasgow, 2006, ISBN 978 0 9552290 08.]