"NEW POLICY CHALLENGES AND THE FITNESS FOR PURPOSE OF THE NEW POLICY APPROACH"

Alan Murie
University of Birmingham

Abstract:

The background to this contribution is the welfare state and housing market restructuring of the 1970s and 1980s. This will have been referred to earlier in the conference and will only be outlined very briefly.

The body of the paper will argue that the changes introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, in combination with demographic, economic and planning changes, have left a distinctive legacy (some of it intended and some unintended). The legacy includes new patterns of social and spatial polarisation, segregation and changing demand for housing. The new policy agenda of government in the period since 1997 purports to address the new patterns in regions, cities and neighbourhoods. It includes continuing or distinctive approaches to social exclusion, housing policy, urban competitiveness, regeneration, sustainable communities, urban renaissance, affordability and housing supply. The paper will outline the new policy agenda and the tasks government has identified. Initially the paper will argue that the policy agenda falls short of engaging with key issues and there are a number of unresolved issues. The paper will highlight tensions (probably referring to some or all of: growth agendas in different regions; the impact of continuing approaches to private housing and housing supply; tensions associated with regeneration and gentrification; the limitations of the social exclusion agenda; and the development of thinking towards social rented housing).

The final section of the paper draws conclusions. These will relate to emerging themes about asset based welfare, differentiation within the owner occupied sector, increasing segregation and the restratification of cities, what happens next to the social rented sector and the sustainability of neighbourhoods. Some comments will also be made about the problems that are likely to emerge in the next phase of development in different parts of the country distinguishing between cities and regions with different characteristics.