

Introduction

Over the last fifty years there have been major changes in the physical landscape of many European cities as a result of successive waves of economic, social, political, technological and cultural change. In particular, many towns and cities are now increasingly developing entrepreneurial strategies to enhance or maintain their place within an emergent, and extremely competitive, global economy. Coupled with this change has been the establishment of new forms of urban governance as the relative role of the public sector in service provision has reduced with responsibility increasingly placed in the hands of new forms of public-private partnership. One of the subsequent results of this has been that the development of new urban landscapes and the conservation and/or preservation of historic environments. In general these restructuring efforts have become increasingly profit-driven and focused in the specific parts of the city that the property market will support.

As a result of such changes previous methods of landscape analysis, which largely focused on studying urban structure and morphology, have been commonly rejected in favour of approaches which attempt to analyse the relationships between wider structural processes, key urban managers and institutions. Accounts now attempt to move beyond viewing the urban landscape purely in terms of physical form and spatial arrangement and pay particular attention to the multiple human agencies responsible for structuring the way the city develops over time as well as the broader circumstances in which such individuals and institutions operate and make decisions. In particular, interpreting the urban landscape requires that attention be paid to dynamic relationship between local *and* global processes which take account of both underlying structures and the role of human agency in urban restructuring.

Because of economic globalisation and the local processes of institutional change the contemporary urban landscape in many cases now look very different from its predecessor. For example, the landscape of cities has become ‘the terrain where a multiplicity of globalisation processes assume concrete, localised forms’ (Sassen 2000, p.147)¹. Urban redevelopment has increasingly been related to, and in many cases dependent upon, market forces and consumer preferences and has most notably occurred in the central business areas of cities, urban fringe locations, as well as along previously under-utilised waterfronts and dockland areas such as East London and Rotterdam.

The landscape of the city, be it new-build or buildings of heritage value, is now increasingly seen as an advertising tool that manipulates the built environment pro-actively as it attempts to display a certain message to the urban audience. This is combined with expensive place promotion to embody a marketable image of success, growth and vitality.

The rest of this report will focus on a number of different situations in which the development or restructuring of urban landscapes has occurred. First, it will highlight how landscape changed has been brought about in urban areas in recent years, in particular, focusing on property and design-led approaches. Second, it will note how the urban landscape can be viewed as an identity resource. Third, it will exemplify how urban fringe locations are often viewed as an ideal location for new and exciting developments although with restrictions imposed by concerns about environmental sensitivity. Fourth, it will investigate mixed use locations in urban centres and how conflicting aspirations and visions serve to produce confusion about what the correct course of restructuring might be. Fifth, the report will look at what can be described as post-industrial areas where formerly industrial land is being rejuvenated as a contemporary space of consumption. The report will conclude with some more general ideas about how urban landscapes can best be developed so that urban and regional identity are maintained or enhanced and sustainability issues are met.

¹ Sassen, S. (2000) ‘*New frontiers facing urban sociology*’, *British Journal of Sociology* 15 1, 143-59

Landscape change through property development and urban design

In many European cities property led urban regeneration became the significant local strategy of urban renewal in the 1980s. A lack of suitable accommodation, (i.e. new buildings, suited to the changing needs of occupiers) was seen as an obstacle to economic development. The private sector lacked confidence to invest in the inner city which was seen by some as a market failure. As such government and private sector money was utilised to create a new business infrastructure commonly in the central area of cities and declining industrial areas such as water fronts. Property-led regeneration aimed to restore (pump-prime) business confidence in certain areas and 'attract private sector capital via financial support, infrastructure and site preparation'². In the UK for example, policy tools with significant grant assistance such as enterprise zones and urban development corporations, have through the 1980 and 1990s, fundamentally transformed the landscape of selective areas of many cities seeking to improve their economic competitiveness. In particular, in certain industrially declining areas of the country such as the North-East England, these policies represented the only realistic way in which any urban restructuring projects would get off the ground.

Despite the impact of such property-led strategies of improvement, problems with this type of regeneration regime have been readily apparent. *First*, private sector interest was commonly directed into certain profitable 'flagship' projects with vast areas of the city being omitted from policy intervention implying a disjointed approach devoid of an overall strategy. *Second*, the impact of national and global economies on local development strategies were overlooked. *Third*, some weaker regional economies were incapable of stimulating any private sector interest without massive public sector intervention. Sustainable urban regeneration thus became impossible in these locations. *Fourth*, the building of new business areas in one part of the city often caused relocation from another area to fill it. This was especially the case if the local economy is indigenously based, weak or focused around one economic sector. This had the potential to cause large scale vacancy in previous areas of activity. Alternative uses often failed to materialise for such sites. *Fifth*, the time scale of site development was often incompatible with infrastructural development. This resulted in outer-city and urban fringe regeneration areas being isolated from the central city.

The emphasis on property-led restructuring in isolation from social concerns has now reduced. However, the actual design of such development projects has been reinforced by a recent emphasis on good-quality and appropriate urban design. Traditionally the design of development schemes and refurbishment were considered a peripheral issue. Today it has become of critical importance as restructuring projects attempt to pursue integrated development. As a commissioner for the UK based Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has highlighted, '*good quality urban design stems from the understanding of what makes a good place unique, and seeks to reinforce those distinctive qualities*'. It is argued that this can be achieved through the development of a number of key skills³:

- Producing design briefs prior to development of strategic design options;
- Co-ordinating the procurement methods and competitiveness to deliver high quality design alternatives;
- The proactive use of the planning system to secure change;
- Involving the community in planning and implementation stages;
- Integrating the physical development programmes with urban management and maintenance, and other social land economic programmes;
- Assembling sites to create meaningful development opportunities;

² Jones, C. (1996) '*The Theory of Property-led Local Economic Development Policies*', *Regional Studies* 30, 8, 797-801

³ *Perspectives on Urban Regeneration* Urban Environment Today, issue 100, 2000

- Project appraisal, management and finance, including strategic planning, procurement, phasing, team working, and dealing with funding bodies and institutions.

Urban landscapes as an identity resource

This emphasis on the social and institutional production of cities places much emphasis on the creation of a shared urban vision, of which Barcelona is the celebrated exemplar. Such ideas attempt to translate development aspirations into enhanced economic competitiveness often through the transformation of the urban landscape by global developers. This shared urban vision is promoted through marketing strategies that try to consciously use publicity and marketing techniques to communicate certain images of specific areas to a target audiences be they mobile investors (multi-national corporations), consumers (tourists) and spectacles (sports and media events). In certain cases, as for example with many post-industrial urban areas, attempts have been made to completely re-image an area to remove negative features of its traditional identity. Perhaps the most extreme example of this in the NWMA comes from Belfast in Northern Ireland where the Local governing authority have attempted to change the image of the city that was considered to risky for commercial development in the 1970s.

As the relative threat of terrorism against Belfast city centre decreased during the 1980s and 1990s, urban planners sought to re-image the city in an attempt to attract businesses back. Reduced levels of security, redevelopment and pedestrianisation have subsequently helped to re-patronise central Belfast. These attempts have been made to shake of its image of terrorist violence. Furthermore, in the early 1990s the advertising slogan *Belfast is Buzzing* was coined which centred on normality, neutrality and consent. Further place promotion campaigns have also been used to re-image the stigmatised central Belfast area. These have often omitted the name 'Belfast' which was frequently replaced by Laganside (the futuristic dockside development scheme) or another development area name in a attempt to disassociate the area with its former past.

Overall, the process of 'place making' contains an essential paradox which results in similar economic development and marketing approaches being adopted in numerous cities in an attempt to model the success of other areas. For example, Griffiths (1998)⁴ when talking about the *Making of Sameness* in place marketing notes that as technology flatten differences between places whilst at the same time difference is increasingly needed to 'sell' the city. There therefore develops a tension between uniformity and difference. These tensions are similarly evident in the process of re-imaging through flagship architectural projects which aspire to provide the 'consumption orientated front spaces'. Specifically there is a need for architectural or design difference in order to develop a distinct identity is often conflicted with developer predisposition to model the restructuring ideas adopted in other locations.

As such contemporary urban vision's can have a number of unforeseen consequences. First, certain images are promoted whilst others are marginalized creating a selective imagining of the city's past, present and future. Second, the creation of a dynamic local culture linked to community identity is subsumed by the desire to compete globally. Third, money gets disproportionately concentrated in flagship projects which can exacerbate socio-economic inequalities. Finally, local entrepreneurial actions, and alternative pathways of development, are discouraged as tried and tested formulas are followed leading to a homogeneous urban experience.

⁴ Griffiths, R. (1998) *Making Sameness: Place marketing and the new urban entrepreneurialism*, in Oatley, N Cities, Economic Competition and Urban Policy

Urban landscapes as a part of the restructuring process

The rest of this report will highlight examples from across the NWMA where large scale landscape change as part of the restructuring process (and in particular through spatial masterplans) has been attempted with varying degrees of success. The case studies illuminated are examples of the way in which the landscape of towns and cities in the NWMA are changing at a time when their economies, culture and institutions are increasingly open to international influences.

The Urban Fringe

The Urban Fringe is perhaps the most sensitive area of a city due to the ease with which any development has the potential to dramatically alter the landscape. As such all restructuring plans, requiring a well thought out and environmentally sustainable approach.

This can be exemplified by the, considerable work done in the Dutch town of Gouda. Due to the densely built environment in Gouda, all available space is used for housing, business, retail and industrial purposes right up to the urban boundary. If further growth were to occur, land would have to be found on the urban fringe, necessitating development on greenfield land. Therefore it is vitally important that coherent and sustainable planning of this fringe is undertaken so as to preserve, wherever possible, the natural landscape whilst facilitating needed development in appropriate styles.

A number of development models were proposed and discussed with the neighbouring Municipalities and Regional Government. Subsequently the most agreeable and coherent spatial development model was put forward for further consultation and design. This model, showing “the town with 4 faces”, proposes to radically change the landscape, and therefore the identity, of the undeveloped fringes of the town and the social dynamism of the various town perimeter zones. Included within this plan were proposals for:

- Cultural history, including the relationship between cultural-historical land use and spatial planning;
- The national ecological network of protected areas and ecological corridors;
- Architecture and urban development;
- Archaeological and ecological-historic aspects;
- Land redevelopment of nearby polders
- Tourism, recreation and green space;
- Agricultural structure;
- Infrastructure;
- Envisaged types of nature;
- Spatial quality plans, city spatial development plans and governmental visions on the development of the city, structure plans, environmental impact assessments, regional schemes, (draft)zoning plans, water management plans, regional outlook reports.

The adoption and implementation of this plan would not only mean a change from natural to urban landscape, but a massive change to the environment of the area, accommodating reservoirs and water channels. However with the long term commitment to consultation with the public and related government bodies, the scheme has slowly progressed towards realisation. Redrafting and sustainable planning continues in the knowledge that the scale of change to the landscape requires both patience and stakeholder agreement before development can occur.

A further example of controversial urban fringe development can be found in Newcastle where the significance of the urban fringe landscape was made clear when over one thousand objections were made to an independent Inspector at the Inquiry into the Unitary Development Plan

(1994/5). This plan contained proposals to develop 2,500 houses and an 80 ha Business Park on a significant plot of greenfield land to the north of the city – the so-called Northern Development Area (NDA). The land was designated Green Belt in the 1950's, and has remained virtually untouched ever since given the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their permanence. However, this feature does not mean that the land will be forever conserved. Proposed changes would only be appropriate in exceptional circumstances, and these will have to significantly outweigh the potential environmental damage that will be caused by the proposal.

The proposals were evidence that the Council and the public have distinctly conflicting views of the urban fringe landscape. The Council was viewing the land as having economic potential, providing international investment, up to 14,000 jobs and high quality houses to attract and retain the taxpayers leaving the City each year. On the other hand, the massive outcry from the public was a combination of the local inhabitants' desire to preserve the tranquillity (and value) of their homes, and the more environmentally focused desire to conserve the natural landscape on the urban boundary.

From the evidence of the Inquiry, the Inspector was convinced that the lack of a prestige international business park was *“a severe handicap to Newcastle, one of the most important cities in Europe, and the sooner one is available the better.”* It was felt that it was not sufficient to simply look at land availability and use, the emphasis must be on quality and the type and source of economic development that is being pursued. The *“special characteristics”* of the NDA, and the type of firms attracted to it, would raise the profile of the Newcastle and the region as a whole. In this way the NDA was seen not solely for the use and benefit of the city alone, but as a valuable provider of jobs for people living outside the city as well.

The Inspector strongly supported the Council's strategy of development of the NDA, noting that its plan to attract high-tech businesses to the region should be *“vigorously pursued.”* He stated that if the city was to have any realistic chance of competing for mobile investment land should be clearly identified as an allocation in the UDP for a large scale, high quality international business park, *“as a matter of urgency.”*

In this case the development proposal to alter the landscape was successful, although restrictions to limit the development in terms of scale and design will guarantee that any alterations to the visual landscape are kept to a minimum.

A more detailed analysis of the case studies mentioned above can be found in the ReUrbA urban fringe report.

Mixed Use Locations

Inner urban areas are another example of recent restructuring where the old and new forms of development are located side by side, if not within each other through renovation and renewal. Restructuring in these locations has the potential to radically alter the landscape of these areas, and a balance between heritage (where appropriate), function, accessibility and the market forces acting in the area will have to be formulated. Changes that reflect the shifting urban policy have to be made if a city is to survive and grow in both social and economic terms, to provide living and service locations of an expanding urban population, and retain and attract investment for economic sustainability.

The example in this section is drawn from Utrecht in the Netherlands where massive redevelopment, dating from the 1960's, had created separated residential, leisure and work related locations, creating a congested traffic network within the modern city centre due to the number of necessary journeys, especially by private car. This contrasted with the ancient walled town district where there was a rich mix of building use and design in this traditionally student orientated city, with its medieval university, many museums, a vibrant yet compact nightlife and

other culture in the form of restaurants, music and film festivals. The range of uses gave the area a 24 hour feel which created a positive and sustainable image of the densely built and populated historic old town.

In Utrecht, major redevelopment was proposed for the modern city centre, adjacent to the thriving and sustainable old town, famous for its compact and mixed nature, filled with residential, cultural and leisure uses. This was the starting point for the ambitious restructuring project that proposed alteration to the landscape and use of the city centre to align it with the modern, sociable, popular and cosmopolitan image of its medieval neighbour. Called the Centrum project, proposals were put forward to provide a new public transport system, the redevelopment of the large Hoog Catherijne shopping centre in the heart of the city centre, renovation of a music hall, improvement of the declining public spaces, development of 1,700 dwellings, 360,000m² of office space, 30,000m² of retail space and accommodation for 21,000 bicycles and an extra 4,200 cars. The stated aims of the Centrum Project were:

- To increase the multifunctionality of the central area: a full scale expansion of the city centre with shops, housing and a wide range of night life;
- To create a good east–west connection: it ought to be possible to go from the old centre to the west side or via versa in an easy, pleasant and safe way;
- To improve public space by: building new squares and improving existing ones, greenery areas, and putting water back in the Catharinjnesingel and improving the infrastructure for cars, pedestrians and public transport;
- To improve the public transport interchange: rapid efficient and easy travel by public transport and good connections and other types of transport;
- To raise the economic potential of the area through a concentration of employment opportunities.

A vision for the future of Utrecht was delivered in a masterplan which included the various wishes and requirements of the various participants as well as the organisation, practical consequences and phasing of planned development. This masterplan was an attempt to manage the demand already in the area for commercial premises as well as perceived increases in demand the proposed high-speed rail link would bring.

The development of the project had several problems from the beginning. Due to the scale of the restructuring, the costs, were massive, and would take many years to complete. This was further hindered by the problems of multiple ownership. There were four key partners who were attempting to realise the scheme together. These were the city council, the Dutch railways, The owners of the Jaarbeurs exhibition centre and the owners of the Hoog Catharijne shopping centre. The idea was that the four partners would invest in their own projects and mutually in the public spaces

However, public opinion was negative, due to lasting memories of the previous redevelopment in the 1960's which had not been popular with the residents, and so, rather unfairly, the Centrum Project was treated with the same mistrust and negative feelings. In the end, the scheme was not realised due to this overwhelming public disapproval, which contributed to a change in local government and the rejection of the plans. In this case, the proposed changes in landscape, and more likely, the disruption to everyday life, proved too great for the inhabitants of the city. This shows that although the city may benefit from a improved and dynamic landscape, it is not always the most popular option with the citizens.

The lesson that can be drawn from this is to involve the public as early as possible, so that they are involved in the restructuring process at all phases from design to implementation. The urban landscape is obviously important to both the municipal leaders who view it as an advertising and marketing tool, and also the inhabitants who use the locations to live work and enjoy leisure time.

Therefore the decision making bodies need to take into account both the needs and requirements of the city as a whole, and the views of the people who will be using the facilities, be they historical or new ideas or simply suggestions.

Former Industrial Areas

A large proportion of Western European urban landscapes were built around the growth of industry in the 19th and 20th centuries. With much of that industry leaving the urban areas in the 1970's and 1980's it left vast areas of the city, not just the land but also the routes, the ports, and the waterfronts, without use or future. The potential options at this time, and still to some degree today, were to either abandon all the industry preserve some of it, or sanitize the areas and turn them to new, more appropriate uses, such as offices hotels, flats, and social and cultural venues.

At this time urban planning was facing another change in policy and direction as practitioners began to take note of the emergence of the global economy and the need for urban competitiveness on a world scale. The major cities began to quickly attempt to capitalise on this major opportunity for brownfield land redevelopment or risk losing falling behind competing cities. Therefore in the 1980's and 1990's many cities in the NWMA have undertaken restructuring programmes that have led to tremendous transformation of formerly industrial areas.

In the case of Newcastle, the riverside that had once been the thriving business and merchant district in the 18th and 19th centuries had deteriorated sharply by the mid 1980's. The National Government funded the creation of a Urban Development Company to oversee the renovation of this area in 1987, with funding available for the following ten years of the programme which has led to significant landscape change. The redeveloped Newcastle Riverside (or Quayside) thus incorporates a business park, hotel and office complex, restaurants, homes, leisure facilities and several refurbished historic buildings. Stretching along three miles of the city's river frontage, these developments have been integrated with each other and with the existing urban fabric by a network of walkways and civic spaces.

The Tyne & Wear Development Corporation's commitment to making Newcastle's riverside available to all is often held up as an excellent model of the successful implementation of urban design principles. The built environment surrounding the river it successfully employs traditional materials and pieces of public art to create a sense of place and to bond new with old. The attractive, cohesive and accessible public realm has been crucial to the success of the new commercial developments. A 'holistic' approach to regeneration following clear urban design principles has brought Newcastle's riverside back to life and created an urban area of the highest quality that is sort after by developers and occupiers alike. It has won awards for design, architecture, business development and public art that have brought regional, national and international recognition and publicity to further promote the sustainable growth of the area. However, there has been some concern that the economic benefits have far out weighed those experienced by the disadvantaged local communities. This is an area of concern that more recent regeneration plans are attempting to reconcile.

The most significant change to the Newcastle Quayside in recent years have been on the south side of the river - Gateshead Quay. More than £250 million is currently being invested in a regeneration program transforming Gateshead on the south bank of the River Tyne to match the refurbished Newcastle Quayside on the opposite bank.

The already world famous Millennium Bridge will operate like the lid of a giant eye slowly opening, forming an arch under which ships will pass. It is due to be completed in Autumn 2001, but already the bridge's development and build lifecycle has drawn the attention of visitors and internet users from all over the world. Approximately 36,000 people lined the banks of the River Tyne to watch as the structure was carried upstream by the world's second-largest floating

crane in November 2000. A live web cam transmitted the event all over the world. The modern, vibrant image that a project like this inspires will provide a long lasting impression in the minds of viewers and potential investors, showing that a change in the landscape can be a positive, forward step to long term economic and social growth. In the next few years the Millennium Bridge will be joined by other flagship development schemes such as the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (a renovated flour mill), a futuristic music centre at a cost of £60Million, an international hotel, as well as a variety of leisure facilities and public squares. Together these developments will form an integrated arts and cultural quarter.

Overall the Quaysides of Newcastle and Gateshead are set to be the centre piece of the joint bid for European Capital of Culture in 2008. This is being backed up by the creating of a high profile place marketing agency - the Newcastle and Gateshead Initiative.

Conclusions

Western cities are increasingly undergoing urban restructuring resulting in the development of new landscapes and the restoration of historical environments. In this process of restructuring cities all too often obliterate the very cultural and natural features, which give them identity and value and make them distinct and desirable places in which to live and work.

The interaction involved in the struggle to shape urban landscapes has a number of key features. This is tied up in the relationships between, local and global processes, design and architectural form, and wide range of stakeholders involved in planning decisions. Whilst it should be appreciated that socio-economic and political trends operating globally are often significant stimuli for growth, their effects should not be overstated. There is now an appreciation that only by studying the interplay of local and global factors can restructuring efforts be set in context.

In particular, increasing attention has been paid to the specific roles played by key urban managers in constructing new forms of institutional arrangements, governance and partnerships, which in turn serve to influence urban form and design solutions. In short, these different actors have a variety of different motivations, which affect what is built, where, and in what style. Commonly these different interest groups develop new forms of entrepreneurial governance alliances and public-private partnerships. However we must be careful not to view these developments as the solution that will regenerate our cities. There is little evidence as yet that such policies meet with a great deal of success and at best can be considered risky in investment terms.

Restructuring, particularly in historical or controversial locations, must be sensitive to local urban landscape, in terms of design and use. The dangers as well as the positive benefits of restructuring based on large scale property development must be realised with questions being asked about the extent to which money should be focused on flagship schemes at the expense of community-led and locally focused development. Any change in the view or structure of an urban area can have major effects on the residents, the traffic and the environment, so it is vital that development is continually consulted on, assessed and reviewed to determine both the physical, economic and social changes that will result from the scheme. However, if done properly, it will be possible to design and construct alterations to the landscape that will have positive impacts on all sectors of urban life, from social improvement to greater economic and cosmopolitan growth and for both internal and international investment.

Overall, it can be suggested that sustainable urban restructuring requires a number of conditions to be successful. There must be a stable subsidy regime linked to both development site and infrastructure provision and an overall city-wide strategy which co-ordinates the actions of both local and national development actors. This will help avoid the short term, and often piecemeal plans, that hindered past restructuring efforts in many cities. An effective marketing strategy and

an inclusive collaborative planning regime, where local stakeholder representatives have a say in the development of their region, are also vital. More recently the benefit of good-quality and appropriate urban design is seen as paramount to the success of restructuring schemes as is the ability to find appropriate development opportunities which fulfil both social and economic objectives. These principles can be summed up by the mission statement of the *Towards an Urban Renaissance* report written by the UK Urban Task Force (1999)⁵:

‘The Urban Task Force will identify the causes of urban decline in England and recommend practical solutions to bring people back into our cities towns and urban neighbourhoods. It will establish a new vision for urban regeneration founded on principles of design excellence, social well-being and environmental responsibility within a viable economic and legislative framework’.

⁵ The report formed the basis for the new UK Urban White Paper in 2000 entitled *Our towns and cities : the future*