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## China: urban migrations, new towns

*Dunia Mittner*

The essay's purpose is to verify if an important activity of new towns' promotion and construction responds to the intense phenomena of social, urban and territorial transformation occurring in today's China. Some of the most well known projects under construction, such as 'One city and nine towns' around Shanghai, seem to state the necessity to control the always growing dimension of the urban phenomenon.

In the time when many texts underline the existence of a continuous urban condition, the relation between national expanding economies and centralized management of the transition's phases towards the new social and productive order stands out. The assertion of a situation of growing urban continuity emerges, crossed in a varied way by flows of goods, people and informations.

### *New towns, criteria*

New towns' foundation can be relevant in relation to several reasons, from the investigation of the national policies lead by a big nation, during the Twentieth century engaged in the control of the consistency, number and life's condition of the population, to the questionings about the synthetic essence of the contemporary city compared with the historical one. It can be useful, in other terms, to ask in which conditions the geopolitical and economical will to proceed towards programs of foundation develops. In order to identify a phenomenical base to this research's field, it is necessary to openly take on the necessary and sufficient criteria allowing us to recognize which are the initiatives of foundation in progress.

The necessary criteria to the definition of a new town are mainly five: the existence of an overall project, the geographical and dimensional relations with the existing settlements, the internal articulation of the functional components, a minimum threshold of settled population and the actual construction (partial, at least) of the new towns. The first criterion, linked to considering materials favoring the overall urban dimension, is directly related to the second, requiring the clear prevalence of the new settlement in relation to the existing urban structures. In the case of Zhengdong new district, the relations with the existing metropolis (Zhengzhou), from the point of view of both the site and the dimensions, make the project appear as the addition of a big urban part rather than a new settlement. The towns around Shanghai are generally built from one or more old and small villages, fortified squares (Feng- jing), fishermen's villages (Gaoqiao), market towns (Luodian), traditional water towns, such as Zhujiajiao, taking on the role of points of reference of the several towns' nuclei.

The third criterion is relative to the presence of all the main functions which, mixing together, make a city such:

functions relative to work, to permanent residence, recreation and social life. Some towns take on the main character of industrial towns, as in the case of Gaoqiao new town and Lingang new harbor city, or of scientific and technological research centers, as in the case of Songjiang new city. The fourth criterion is related to a minimum threshold of settled population, identified with ten thousand inhabitants: a dimension which is referred to the project and not to the variations happened after the construction. The fifth criterion is turned to favor the projects which are realized, this takes to reject many cases, due to the still young age of the chinese story.

### *Reasons and stories*

In China, new towns' construction is mainly related to three types of reasons: industrial modernization, contrast of the unlimited urban growth, and constitution of poles for the research and innovation. In Shanghai, the need for industrial innovation and the attempt to face the intense urban and geographical development go on at the same time. During the fifties and sixties some industrial communities, with a dimension between 50.000 and 200.000 inhabitants, following the soviet model are built. In 1959 Shanghai starts to plan and build industrial districts and satellites cities close to its fringes, within a decentralization's policy aimed at developing new towns in the near districts. The 1959 Masterplan can be considered as a direct precedent of the 1980 and 1990 plans. In 1999, the Shanghai's Masterplan (1999-2020) is changed in relation to goals of further opening of the city towards a 'modern international socialist city', aimed at the integration between city and country within a polycentric regional structure. The general and clear goal is very ambitious, and wants Shanghai to go back to the status of international metropolis played at the beginning of Twentieth century.

In the same year the development plan named One city, nine towns (1999-2020), devised by the Municipality as a pilot project of the strategy '1-9-6-6', a hierarchical system made of a central city oriented towards the services' sector, nine new 'key towns' decentralized as administrative centers, one for each district-county (50.000-150.000 inhabitants) and 600 central villages (2.000 inhabitants approximately), is started. Contrary to what is often thought the One city is not Shanghai, but a new city thought as an extension of Songjiang, one of the seven satellites foreseen by the 1986 Plan. The idea is to build before 2020, beside the main city, nine new 'core towns', aimed at arranging 5,4 millions inhabitants (Songjiang new city, Luchaogang new city e Jinshan city) and six new towns bordering to municipal industrial properties (Chengqiao, Baoshan, Jiading, Qingpu, Minhang, Nanqiao). Differently from what happens in Shanghai, in Beijing the story of the new towns' construction is related to the creation of scientific and technological research poles. The Beijing regional director Scheme, drawn up at the beginning of the Eighties, foresees the creation of thirteen satellite cities located at a distance between twenty and seventy kilometers

from the city's centre, mainly addressed towards the development of science and technology and the attraction of foreign investments. The 1992 Masterplan foresees to locate within these settlements before 2010 more than one and a half million inhabitants over an overall built surface of two hundreds and forty square kilometers. Besides the most well known to western world cities, Beijing and Shanghai, to which the role of synthesis of a vast and not very well known country is entrusted, other stories of pilot-towns related to experimentation and innovation in different sectors, such as industry (Chongqing), international business (Guangzhou), work's contracts (Qingdao), financial reform (Shenyang), and four free cities, Shantou in the Guangdong province, Shenzhen, Xiamen in the Fujian province and Yi-Zhuang stand out.

#### Arguments

Many projects of chinese new towns send back to arguments of an ecological-environmental type, where the definition of prototypes for new urban environments paying attention to sustainability plays a first level role. Dongtan eco-city stands itself as an ecological town for 500,000 inhabitants, at the centre of one of the more rapidly growing areas of the world. The stated target is to become the first autosustainable territory-city in the world from an environmental point of view, but also social and economical. The second eco-city designed by Arup in China, Tangye new town, stands itself to transform its waste into fuel, to get energy from the sun and to give back water to the ground through natural systems of drainage and irrigation, besides the formation of a net of green corridors connecting the main public buildings, in order to boost biodiversity and ciclo-pedestrian movements. A second argument has something to share with the towns built following different western 'styles', and it is related particularly to the new towns around Shanghai. In order to make the new towns competitive with the cosmopolitan qualities of the central city, the idea is that they should play a symbolic function: the international architectural style of the urban centre will have to be extended to the suburbs with spatial and architectural qualities of western type and following international standards. In 2001, when the One city, nine towns development plan is adopted as part of the tenth five-year plan (2001-05), architects and urban planners coming from western countries are invited to take part to a certain number of international competitions, with the requirement to give visual shape to the identity and spatial quality of their countries of origin.

## The revitalization project on the banks of the Garonne: a case of urban, economic and social regeneration

*Assunta Martone, Marichela Sepe*

The complex process of creative transformation which is interesting Bordeaux during the past 16 years involves urban interventions and financial resources aimed at re-defining the identity of places, long linked only to wine production, and revitalizing the city's economy, to place it among the top twenty cities in France.

Grand Bordeaux is expected to become a sustainable city by 2030, with a population growth of 15,000 inhabitants compared to 2011 and new jobs in construction, tourism and creative industries. The city of Bordeaux is capital of the Gironde département and the Aquitaine region. Its economy is traditionally linked to the wine industry and wine tourism. The river port of Bordeaux, 50 kilometers from the sea, in the 1940s had a commercial function that today has been diverted to Le Verdon. The warehouses have been dismantled to create a series of public spaces on the waterfront and enhance the view of historical buildings, and the port has become a cruise harbour in keeping with the city's leanings towards tourist development.

The first concrete step in the regeneration strategy of Bordeaux follows two key actions, namely the implementation of the mobility project, especially the tram network, and the requalification of public spaces, especially in relation to the quais jardinés. The process started in 1995 when Alain Juppé, who was elected Mayor of Bordeaux and later President of the Bordelese Urban Community which administers the metropolitan area, promoted a new urban project and a tram network to support the integrated urban change.

In 1996, the Urban Pilot Project (PPU), Bordeaux les deux rives, funded by the European Commission through ERDF programme, translated the restoration project into strategies for development and revitalization of the area along the river. The program was implemented between 1997 and 2001 under the coordination of the public-private company Bordeaux Métropole Aménagement, of which the Urban Community of Bordeaux is the main public shareholder. In this regard, 22 actions were organized for the construction of the integrated urban regeneration, economic and social development, and cultural revitalization.

The actions consisted in interventions on the tangible and intangible heritage and included the following: the upgrading of the system of open spaces; reunification of the historical and contemporary city with the river; the lighting plan; the restoration of monuments and historic facades; and interventions on the built heritage. The program also provided for the construction of facilities and houses for a new residential centre located in the Bastide, a large area of public facilities, and areas for

sports and leisure.

With regard to mobility, new hubs and links were identified in order to rearrange flows of pedestrians, bicycles, and cars, and an extensive tram system was designed. Along its route interventions of open space design and placement of contemporary works art were planned, as well as interchanges with ecological networks. An interdisciplinary team of architects and landscapers took care of the tram system design so that its 44 km extension significantly modified the perception of public spaces. As regards the open space projects, an important point of reference is the Charte des Paysages de Bordeaux, approved in 2000, which reinterprets the tradition of Bordeaux or recreates a different one, in line with the identity of the places, around the thematic axis of the left bank, totally redesigned by Corajoud after reclamation of the industrial areas.

ZAC des Chartrons implemented the redevelopment of the abandoned industrial area and enabled the creation of a new neighbourhood consisting of homes and businesses, with a ripple effect across the whole area between downtown Bordeaux and the Historic Submarine Naval Base north of the city. In 2001 the Schéma directeur de l'aire métropolitaine bordelaise was approved for the period 2010-2020. The Schéma Directeur with SCoT value (schéma de cohérence territoriale) defines strategic planning and sustainable development in an area covering 91 municipalities and 820.000 inhabitants by 2020 with objectives: limit urban sprawl by concentrating development in the heart of city centres and peripheral areas; enhance and manage the natural structure of the landscape surrounding the city; define and structure the major economic centers of development in the city, promoting urban redevelopment and densification along the axes of heavy transport.

In 2001 Bordeaux obtained EU funding for the CIP (Community Initiative Programme) Urban 2 'Unités' for the period 2001-2007. This program maintains a cross-sectoral and integrated approach to the territory with the priority to both create a global project that allows sustainable development of all the neighbourhoods around the river and its banks, and emergence of a real centre of agglomeration. The territory interested by Urban2-Unités, located on both sides of the Garonne, includes three municipalities, Bordeaux, Cenon and Floirac. This was characterized - also for the presence of physical barriers (rivers, railways, motorways) - by problems of demographic, economic decline, high unemployment and poor social situations.

For 2007-2013, Aquitaine has set up a Regional Operational ERDF Program to increase competitiveness through innovation, promote the economy of the knowledge society and develop ICT, as well as enhance the environmental heritage. Bordeaux participated with the program 'Support to the sustainable development of neighbourhoods', to develop a plan for the northern area of the city and the right bank. Among the projects under development, 'Bacalan-Bastide' is of par-

ticular interest for the region which includes five priority areas (Bacalan, Benauges, Chartrons North, Grand Park and Lake) and has a high area potential.

The development program of Bordeaux from 2009 to 2030 was planned through the Charte durable pour une métropole 2009-2030, establishing a series of commitments to promote eco-construction, which include: attention of all new construction to its context; search for the most appropriate specific density; use of local materials for construction and native vegetation for open spaces; study of the terrain and climate conditions for the use of renewable energy sources; attention to create both functional and social mixed-use neighbourhoods.

The strategy aims at increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of a major urban centre while preserving the identity of living places, to combine the 'centrality' (scale of agglomeration) and 'proximity' (the life of the district), 'openness' and 'cohesion'. The success of the entire process of transformation taking place since 1995 led Bordeaux in 2007 to propose its historical centre (Port of the Moon) as a Unesco World Heritage Site and in 2010 to receive The European City of the Year Award from the Academy of Urbanism.

#### *Socio-economic revitalization*

The goal for Grand Bordeaux is that in 2030 the city will have 15.000 inhabitants more, with 20.000 passengers arriving or departing at high speed from the Gare Saint-Jean and 200.000 passengers by public transport. The PPU Bordeaux les deux rives was funded with three million euros by the ERDF, and the substantial community investment has formed an important basis to undertake all the actions of the city's transformation. The resources which are needed to carry out this complex process are public and private and a public-private company Bordeaux Métropole Aménagement managed the various interventions.

The allocation of funding to the project implementers was organized by the Municipality with parameters: depending on income for resident owners, rental agreement with tenants for owners with grants, and tax subsidies for owners of buildings. The contribution for Urban Pic 2 Unités 2001-2007 offered by the European Community was 9,66 million for the development of the Bordeaux/Cenon/Floirac area. Other contributions were offered by local and national government and the private sector for more than 16 million for a total of 26 million.

Six years later, almost 110 projects have been completed and 260 jobs created. The program supported both the structuring of transactions and the pilot actions mainly aimed at people in difficulty, and among several programs designed there is supporting the school and reopening the youth hostel. According to economic data, between 1997 and 2007, 11.200 jobs were created in Bordeaux (+14%) and 135.000 new jobs were created in Aquitaine (+23%). Bordeaux received additional funding from the European Community under the Aquitaine 2007-2013 regional program of 392 million euros for the



Bacalan-Bastide area. The attractive environment that is being created in Bordeaux is leading to the setting-up of creative and cross-organization projects which can bring out the creative nature in the Bordelais.

As regards, Bordeaux is projected to become a major tourist destination, not only linked to wine, and tourism data estimates over 2.5 million tourists per year, becoming a short-stay destination. Along with cultural and creative tourism, business tourism is growing strongly thanks to the quality of health centres and infrastructures (new convention centre, new hangars, and technology parks and an event of global interest will be held in 2015, i.e. the World Congress on Intelligent Transport Systems, 'ITS 2015', expected to bring about 8000 participants to Bordeaux.

#### *Participation*

The Bordeaux regeneration project involves people in each stages and levels, in fact the city is equipped with a series of guidelines and tools for integrated management of the regeneration, produced through a process of negotiation and consultation with the various actors involved (politicians, experts, businesses, residents, retailers, committees and associations). Reconfiguration of the system of open spaces has been designed to be in harmony with the place identity, so were set up different methods of participation, trying to engage the population through a code of behaviour that combines shared guidelines with quality projects to interpret the symbolic elements and urban culture of Bordeaux. Every space is enhanced or changed in use, inserting from time to time elements of communication to make clear sense of the operation; the course of the project was accompanied by open workshops conducted by a working group composed of representatives of the actors involved; several events and symbolic actions (e.g. lighting of the stone bridge) which aimed to communicate the current project and to further involve residents. Many organizations aimed at creating multi-level and creative districts overlap with the project of urban transformation. These include the Darwin Project with its objectives of collaborative and sustainable entrepreneurship, with the support of the Presqu'île company which holds regular consultation with the district, the population and the associations concerned. Also the construction of the Charte pour une métropole durable 2009-2030 leads in the direction of participation. Its goals include respect for the symbolic value of the site and its buildings, as well as customs, the living environment and privacy of the residents.

#### *Conclusions*

During the process of urban change there were important issues for the Grand Bordeaux, whose conversion of the port and the entire area around the two banks of the Garonne took place thanks to a unique plan and a strong desire for place identity renewal. The regeneration of the areas around the docks on the left bank, with the lighting plan and the renovation of facades and the

extensive tram network aimed at changing perceptions of places has greatly increased the attractiveness of these spaces. It was not so focused on building mega structures but a series of innovative infrastructures and medium-sized urban interventions aimed at connecting the different cultures and lands of both sides and to raise the quality of life.

During this long regeneration process people (residents and stakeholders) was involved in different manners so as to reach a shared vision and support. Economic development has linked to wine production for a broader international tourism, the restoration of the neo-classical facades, create new jobs in the construction and catering industries. The use of suitable policies, the right mix of public and private funds, a clear goal of transformation, the strong focus on culture and place identity, the population involvement planned in detail have begun to produce good effects. Furthermore, the 10 Principles for Sustainable Urban Waterfront Development - adopted during the 2008 Liverpool Waterfront Expo - were followed. A positive assessment of Bordeaux is based on: principles of sustainable development of the region, Charte pour une métropole durable 2009-2030, which aims at making any new construction sustainable in relation to the material and immaterial context, listing as a World Heritage site obtained from Unesco and recognition from the Academy of Urbanism. Furthermore, the interventions involve not only the area of Bordeaux but also that of Aquitaine, contributing to the economic redevelopment of the rest of the region. Design implementation, however, is very complex and the projects are ambitious. It will be necessary to maintain an overall view of the development of the city with a scheme that takes into account the different ongoing operations: not only those related to mobility, but also the transversal projects and the new districts such as the Darwin project, as well as the implementation of the Charte pour une métropole durable 2009-2030 and the Codes with Bordeaux métropole d'avenir activities. Thus the objective of competition and innovation will not obscure the identity of the places - from where the regeneration started - and the real boundaries of the metropolitan area. Finally, the project will also be careful to implement participation in several steps and ensure that this occurs following the execution times of the interventions. Tight execution deadlines are difficult to reconcile with the definitely longer times needed for consultation.

## Belfast: regenerate the city to rebuild divided identity

*Claudia Trillo, Gabriella Esposito De Vita*

'Urban regeneration in Belfast: Europe that looks ahead' is a project led by an international team and aimed to identify, through a critical reflection on urban transformations in Belfast between insiders and outsiders, possible approaches to sustainable urban regeneration in contested places, also applicable to other European contexts. It includes contributions from international experts, that have worked together on the Belfast transformation experiences, thus representing a systematic reflection on the role of urban design and planning in Belfast and promoting the dissemination of those experiences.

In fifteen years Belfast has completely changed, being able to exploit abandoned resources, like the riverfront, to retrieve contaminated and brownfield sites, identifying new activities and new markets, reinterpreting the public-private partnership, promoting participation. The city has ancient origins but started growing since the Plantation of Ulster by the English Kingdom, during the 17th century. Ulster became the Irish region with the most significant Protestant community, in conflict with the majority of rural and Catholic native people. In 1801 the Act of Union established the role of Ireland as part of the United Kingdom and the Irish Parliament was dissolved: in this era we can find the origin of the ethno-religious tensions.

In the last century the nationalist instances resulted in tensions between pro-independence groups (Ira) and loyal paramilitary or unionist groups. Hostilities were officially closed in 1921 with the division of the Irish island in two different countries: the independent republic of Ireland and the northern Ireland region as part of the UK. At the end of the '60s the so-called troubles started a new era of conflicts, a sort of civil war between paramilitary loyal forces connected to the British army and Ira. Belfast was divided, creating the 'no-go zones' and armoring the city center with a 'ring of steel'.

Even today, the areas in which the two communities share common borders are called 'interface areas', characterized by the presence of physical barriers (walls, fences, barriers in general), often in a state of neglect and decline. As administrative region, northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. The need to manage a dramatic conflict and a complex peace process led to a division of powers which does not facilitate a systemic approach to urban planning.

The regional Plan for northern Ireland in 1964 triggered a massive suburbanization process, especially due to the the protestant middle class, encouraged to move away from the city centre because of the scenario of violence and decay. Besides, in the '60s the construction of new highways encouraged urban growth towards the Northern side of the city.

With the start of the peace process in the late '90s, plan-

ning activities found new vitality with the commitments of the institutions towards the redevelopment of public housing (Northern Ireland housing executive), the regeneration of the port, the waterfront of the Lagan and the city center. Public-private partnership has accelerated the process of physical and social regeneration of cities through the Urban development corporation (Udc). The two major regeneration projects oriented to building 'neutral zones' and removing barriers between communities are the redevelopment of the Lagan waterfront and the redevelopment of the city centre.

Over the last fifteen years there have been significant investments and projects. The following collection of essays offers an analysis of the transformations completed or in progress in Belfast, through the theme of the effectiveness of implementation. 'Coordinating urban regeneration strategies: the planning framework' describes the strategic and planning framework within which specific actions have been coordinated by a systemic approach.

In "The implementation and management tools: the 3 P approach" Gerry Millar explains the role of a reliable legal framework in order to implement strategies for the synergic cooperation between private and the public. The materialization of the conflict is unfortunately still present, as confirmed by Ciaran Mackel, leader of the Ard studio and members of the ministerial committee of experts Mab. Tara Florence frames organically the main changes activated in Belfast, through a brief historical overview and Mike Smith, chief executive of the development company Titanic Ltd, illustrates the challenge of giving meaning to an enormous size area without relying on public support.

Saul Freedman and Patricia Golden, members of the development office of the Belfast City Council, underline the importance of the steering role from the public sector. Michael Hegarthy, by the privileged observatory Place, a northern Irish professional association which brings together architects, landscape architects, planners and urban planners, compares urban development in northern Ireland with some paradigmatic models of ideal city.

Alona Martinez-Perez, lecturer in urban design at the University of Ulster, tackles the issue of how to pursue high morphological quality in re-building the identity of Belfast. Gabriella Esposito De Vita and Massimo Clemente with Stefania Oppido resume the threads of a research project supported by the National research council of Italy (Cnr) and developed in collaboration with the University of Ulster, offering remarks that open new perspectives in the comparison between northern Irish and Italian contexts. Finally, Carmelina Bevilacqua, discussant of two conferences held on Belfast in Venice and Naples, suggests that the case of Belfast offers valuable insights to the Italian context.

## Coordinating urban regeneration strategies: the planning framework

Claudia Trillo

The relevant urban transformations of Belfast are framed in a comprehensive overall strategy. Current projects are incorporated in a metropolitan and regional strategy, in which individual actions reflect the implementation of a long-term vision. However, the planning system in northern Ireland is still very much influenced by the severe limitations to local authorities powers introduced at the time of the troubles. If the rest of the UK planning system can be seen as both a technocratic and democratic exercise, in northern Ireland the technocratic aspect is the prevailing one.

The northern Irish government has begun a radical process of reform and modernization of the planning system, which is part of the broader process of administration and political governance reform. The Reform of public administration, undertaken in 2007, aims to pursue a genuine devolution of powers, also by reorganizing the current districts system and transferring to them responsibility in fields such as planning, rural development, asset management, urban regeneration, housing, local economic development and tourism ([www.doeni.gov.uk](http://www.doeni.gov.uk)).

Meanwhile, the role of local activities in decision-making processes for the government of the territory is rather weak, and this makes particularly difficult for the City of Belfast to perform a strong role in guiding ongoing transformations. Currently, the planning metropolitan framework is represented by the Belfast metropolitan area Plan 2015 (Bmap), drawn in november 2004. The main objective of this plan is to reverse the economic and demographic decline began in the '70s in the urban area, thus recalling the strategies developed in the Regional development strategy (Rds document). The regional strategy, which launched the slogan 'Shaping our future', aims to define a shared vision for the region and to build an agenda that will lead to its achievement, through a process of consultations with the communities involved. ([http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/regional\\_planning.htm](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/regional_planning.htm)).

Key actions of the regional strategy are: creating prosperous rural area, preserving the environment, building new housing in northern Ireland, improving public transport and reducing car dependency as well as encouraging the compact urban development and promoting a functional mixité in order to overcome the separation of land uses.

For implementing the strategies shared in the Regional development strategy, the Bmap aims to contain urban sprawl and to promote the regeneration and redevelopment within the existing city, focusing on the revitalization of the sense of community. However, it is surprising the scarce attention paid to the 'peacelines', physical barriers, in the analysis and consequently in the

actions designed by the plan. Policies oriented to overcome the physical divisions within the city are considered mainly in the context of social policies.

There are different kinds of barriers that separate parts of the city: walls, fences, gates, cul-de-sacs. The main urban break is certainly the Westlink, a high-speed road that has literally cut off from the center conflicting enclave such as the district of Shankill or the Falls. Along the axis of the Westlink the urban landscape shows suburban features and disconnections in the pedestrian paths that hinder the use of public spaces.

Buffer zones, created in order to strengthen the division between communities in conflict, were made through the inclusion of mono-functional areas in semi-peripheral areas. Until now, the city of Belfast has been shown to be able to manage very complex urban transformations with pragmatism and efficiency; the challenge is now to complete the process of re-connection in the suburban fringe, with the same attitude to change shown over the past fifteen years.

## Implementation and management tools: the 3 P approach

*Gerry Millar*

The contribute deals with the 3 P approach (policy, practice, partnership) in the case study of Belfast underling the roles of public sector in urban regeneration processes. The first public contribution is the provision of infrastructure as even Adam Smith in the Wealth of nations, the premier to capitalisation writer of the role of the state in providing roads, bridges, harbours, docks, etc. Belfast City Council is not yet a big player in this because of limited functions and budgets but it is currently now looking at three new funding mechanisms for a major rapid transit system and it is involved in the removal of risk such as contamination on key sites. However the biggest role of the public administration has been in reducing institutional friction between the various agencies to allow things to happen in the city.

Policy involves a city master plan that sees Belfast as a regional driver. The city centre which drives the economy of Belfast and the need for a good looking, interesting shop window of a city centre that offers the retail, cultural and other experiences of a major european city that makes it worthwhile for investors to come to Belfast. Policies adopted in Belfast are informed by best practice form around the world eg. smart growth in the United States, Eurocities network, Brownfield Europe regeneration literature and so on. Practice is important for public administration, in terms of gaining credibility for a small organisation. It is necessary to deliver quality projects and show their add value to ensure partners such as national and regional government listen and private sector. It is also important to ensure full support to the community sector, through community engagement and planning activities, that it may play a role in processes of urban development.

Partnership is a way of life given the fragmented nature of governance in Northern Ireland and Belfast City Council works hard to be seen as the partner of choice. While planning is important, a key lesson we have taken from Barcelona is that projects change cities, not plans, and we are keen to ensure delivery.

Significant contribution in urban regeneration is provided by design. Belfast City Council collaborates with the local Riba and contributes to a city design centre Place, which among other things promotes the issue of good design. The public administration directly delivers projects, tries and pushes for good architecture or conservation and where its support is required from partners again it will use whatever influence to push the issue of design.

The Waterfront hall was a £ 30 milion pound investment in the early 1990's that provided the initial confidence to attract private investment to Laganside, a regeneration plan based on recovering the river and its frontage. It was delivered by the Laganside corporation on which Belfast City Council was a major partner and delivered £

1 billion pound investment and turned around a derelict waterfront.

The Gasworks is a good example of risk removal where the Council remediated a 12 hectare heavily contaminated former gasworks on the edge of the city centre creating a new business park of mixed use development. The city centre shop window idea is important with a need for major retail. The Council supported Dutch developer Mdc over other competitors to develop their Victoria square. Its support was in large, partly due to the sympathetic design which was not the usual big retail box and again we added a little of the original Victoriana with the Jaffe fountain.

The Council also chased retail for edge of town development and got the first Ikea in Ireland ahead of Dublin. The role of public administration in this was brokering a fast turnaround from planning and roads service and tying Ikea into a local employment agreement.



## Transforming Belfast

*Tara Florence*

Belfast has been recently heralded as an interesting case study by Italian urban renewal conferences, with a cross fertilisation of Belfast and Italian architects, academics and urbanists. The city has always been a conflicted area, with fissures along that have impacted the urban development. These cracks include the class divisions of a plantation town in the 17th century, the political and economic uprisings struggling to throw off British colonialism and the period known as the 'troubles'. There was not a single event or government programme from which the tide changed in Belfast, but rather some collaborative form of deliberate actions and serendipity as by means of explanation. The majority of the built fabric was the result of the historical thriving industrial city from the 1850's to early 1900's, characterized by an expansion in population and a commensurate growth in working class housing. In the 1960's the Matthew plan established a development stop-line for the city along with proposals for a number of new towns and growth centres, supported by both a transportation plan and the city's first development plan. A comprehensive housing redevelopment programme was initiated to address poor housing conditions and to encourage the transfer of people to the new towns and growth centres. During the 1970s and 1980s Belfast lost a third of its population. The city centre was cordoned off for security and surveillance with check points and gates in what became known as the ring of steel. As many of the government departments situated their offices within the city centre, for security from the IRA bombing campaign, it had the effect of a city core which operated within business opening hours but was a no-man's land after dark.

Since the introduction of direct rule by the Westminster government in 1972, and following the regional Stormont government being prorogued, all Departments in northern Ireland have been structured on the basis of safe bureaucratic practice. The first government initiative was the Making Belfast work (Mbw) in 1988, focused more on job creation and social infrastructures. The Belfast regeneration offices (Bro) were developed which as a part of the Department for social development (Dsd), for the implementation of a regeneration strategy aimed at addressing the most deprived wards around the city. The five Belfast area partnerships were created to provide a targeted urban regeneration strategy at a local community level as was deemed essential given the diversity of issues between communities.

In 1971 the Housing executive was established in response to strong accusations of discrimination towards Catholics. Following the failure of the high density housing development Divis Flats in the 1980's, the city's densification was accelerated as the Executive stamped a suburban solution in areas where a more imaginative,

bolder typology and programme might have intensified the social and residential richness. 1989 saw the formation of the Laganside corporation, as non-departmental public body charged with the task of regenerating 140 hectare area of inner city land, expanded to 200 hectares in 1996 to include the historic Cathedral quarter. The lessons learned in Laganside has led to improved public and private regeneration models. Retail led regeneration projects have by far been the most successful to date within the west and south quadrants of the city core. The transformation from the city with a curfew whose core was once walled off with security check points to an open all hours and walkable Belfast whose people now celebrate in the streets with arts and music festivals is astonishing.

## Titanic quarter: the private engine to build the future (starting) from the past

Mike Smith

Titanic quarter is one of Europe's largest urban waterfront regeneration schemes, transforming a 185 acre site on the banks of Belfast's river Lagan into a new mixed use maritime quarter with a mile of water frontage. The development consists of residential accommodation, office space, hotels, academic activities and leisure, retail and heritage space. A co-promotion between Titanic quarter Ltd and Belfast harbour, it is anticipated that over 20,000 people will work or live in the £ 7 billion pounds plus Titanic quarter development upon completion.

The site is centred upon former shipbuilding land from which vessels such as the Rms Titanic, Olympic and SS Canberra were launched. It will become a major social and business meeting place with galleries, theatres, parklands and water sports all easily connected to Belfast's thriving city centre and the George Best Belfast city airport. Titanic quarter will soon play host to one of northern Ireland's flagship tourist attractions, with 'Titanic Belfast' set to open in april 2012 to commemorate the construction of the world's most famous ship and Belfast's illustrious shipbuilding heritage. Opening 100 years to the month from Rms Titanic's maiden voyage in the north Atlantic ocean, the £ 97 million pounds Titanic Belfast is expected to attract over 400,000 visitors per year, 165,000 of whom will be new visitors to Belfast. The five-storey building will be shaped as a five-pointed star, reflecting the flag of the iconic White Star Line, and covers a three-acre site in sight of the slipway where construction work on the Titanic began. The facility's interior will include a range of themed exhibition galleries that will tell the story of Titanic and the wider story of northern Ireland's industrial, shipbuilding and maritime history. A Heritage Trail will bring visitors from the city centre, past the Nomadic, which brought first class passengers aboard the Titanic and her sister ship Olympic, and onto the Thompson Pump house and dock where the Titanic was fitted out. There will also be banqueting, retail and restaurant facilities, conference suites and a community resource centre. Long, somewhat Manne-rist, a three-storey office block in sandstone and brick was built in stages between late 1800s and 1919. The building was the hub of the Harland and Wolff empire which at its peak had over 50,000 employees in the UK, 30,000 in Belfast. Now owned by Titanic quarter Ltd, it plays a major role in the regeneration of the 185-acre Titanic quarter development site. The Paint hall, in Titanic quarter of Belfast, where the component parts of ships were once painted in climate controlled conditions, is a massive build-space – a fully functioning film studio. In 2009 a first foray into northern Ireland from the Hollywood powerhouse with the arrive of the Universal pictures for the set of the medieval comedy Your Highness. The Paint hall is currently home to the new Hbo original se-

ries Game of thrones, based on George R.R. Martin's best-selling novels. Belfast's newest Premier inn will open at Titanic quarter in november 2010, where there are plans for a further four hotels including a five star boutique hotel based in part of the famous former Harland and Wolff headquarters building, which includes the drawing offices. Titanic quarter's first major public artwork, entitled 'Kit', was unveiled during the Belfast festival at Queen's in october 2009. It is a dramatic site-specific light sculpture which is 13.5 meters tall and cast in bronze, depicting recognisable Titanic elements on an outer frame with the overall sculpture suggesting toy kits and Airfix models. Development across the wider Titanic quarter is ongoing, with construction completed at the new Public record office of northern Ireland and the first phase of the Titanic quarter financial services centre at the Gateway office. Building is well under way at the Belfast Metropolitan college campus, which is due to open in august 2011. Residents have started taking up occupancy in the Abercorn residential complex (Arc), which, upon completion in december 2010, will consist of almost 500 one, two and three-bedroom properties, including penthouse apartments as well as almost 30,000 sq ft of retailing.

## Cathedral quarter Belfast: public regeneration strategies

*Saul Golden, Patricia Freedman*

Belfast's Cathedral quarter represents a microcosm of the city's 400 year commercial and cultural history as it rose to become a regional mercantile centre and then endured decades of decline in the 20th century. Begun in 1997, Cathedral quarter's vision for the future is to build on the areas' culture-led regeneration. While other parts of the city pursued retail-led models, Cathedral quarter was established as a centre for culture and the creative arts (Laganside 2007) and aims to be Belfast's "focal point and leading destination for culture, enterprise and learning" (Cqsg 2011, 6).

Public and private investment started with the official designation of Cathedral quarter under the privately-led Laganside corporation (1997-2007). It entered a new phase in 2008, led by local and government stakeholders who comprise the Cathedral quarter Steering group (Cqsg). This article presents an overview of Cqsg's recently issued Cathedral quarter Five-year strategic vision and development Plan for 2011-15 with the background of important historical influences for the present as well as Cqsg's priorities for future.

While Cathedral quarter is relatively young in Belfast's history, the area is home to the city's original 17th century centre. The Quarter is part of the Cathedral conservation area (PlanningNI 2011), established in 1990 with approximately 20 historic buildings and historic streetscapes that reflect Belfast's mercantile and financial zenith of the late 19th century high-Victorian period into the early 20th century. Up until World war II, the area was an active industrial district serving the docks along the river Lagan.

In 1941, a Luftwaffe bombing raid destroyed entire city blocks at the north and south ends of the quarter. Afterwards, Cathedral quarter continued to suffer decades of socioeconomic decline due to ongoing postindustrial neglect and physical dilapidation. These problems were compounded from 1968 onward by northern Ireland's own thirty-year political and sectarian conflict, known as the 'troubles'.

In the late 1980s, UK government initiatives set-up to tackle urban decline reached Belfast through the establishment of the Laganside corporation, one of twelve privately-led Urban development corporations (Udcs) established with limited statutory powers in different UK cities. The Udc model was adopted from US examples for regenerating large-scale abandoned urban industrial areas, by combining private development with retail and cultural events-led approaches that adapted existing industrial buildings with new architecture and urban design.

Once established in 1989, the Laganside corporation was given control over a 141 hectare area along a mile and a half of Belfast's river Lagan (Doeni 1987). Early

projects hailed as successes by the mid 1990s led to an additional 60 hectares added to Laganside between the river and the city centre. In 1998 with its own statutory regeneration remit for a "dynamic and distinctive, mixed use, historical and cultural quarter" (Cqsg 2011, 58).

Since it was deemed too high-risk for private investment (Inherit 2007, 38) and was not cleared for the kind of tower-block social housing estates that can be found nearby, its historic buildings and street patterns remained largely undisturbed, albeit in a state of decay. The Cathedral conservation area offered some protection once property-development returned in earnest following the official cessation of the troubles with the 1998 Belfast peace agreement.

After 2007, Cqsg was setup to take regeneration forward. Working with local government and long established as well as newer stakeholder participants, Cqsg prepared its new five-year strategy around a 'heritage-led' approach and four overarching priorities: "arts and creative industries, a mixed-use economy, high levels of public participation and a supportive [civic] infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport" (Cqsg 2011). Cqsg's heritage focus expects new growth to adapt existing buildings and urban spaces, where possible, in a way that respects the area's historic and contemporary character with an appropriate sense of place and time (Lynch 1972). This core principle of creating urban places for people through sensitive growth and preservation was first put forward fifty years ago by activists like Kevin Lynch (1961) and Jane Jacobs (1961) in Boston and New York. These ideas have since grown into the 'place-making' or 'place-shaping' movements that are central to current urban development thinking around the world. For Belfast's Cathedral quarter, this means capitalising on its unique narrow streets as meeting places where casual uses invite chance encounters and overheard conversations. The new vision supports the activities of the Cathedral quarter's many local community and community-arts organisations throughout these spaces. Events like the annual Cathedral quarter arts festival, Festival of fools and others throughout the year bring activity and vitality, focusing on creative arts and cultural events as catalysts for both local participation and welcoming visitors and new businesses from outside Belfast.

The Cathedral quarter is also building important close ties with public and private organisations outside its boundaries, including institutions like the University of Ulster. Looking ahead, Cathedral quarter's success will depend on a continued symbiosis between the public realm, public activity and new privately created buildings and spaces. Integrating more quality of life will foster the area's sustained growth and its all-important sense of place.

## The physical manifestation of conflict on built form

*Ciaran Mackel*

In many ways, the conflict in the north of Ireland and the perceived threat, or fear, of violence over a period of almost thirty years, established a language of architecture. The urban violence in transforming the public sphere of urban social life accelerated the post industrial wasteland. It is beginning to conceive and express a new urbanity in terms of use and occupation of public spaces and streets. The new architecture strives for an expression of material quality and form that has evolved from the use of glass as the symbolic representation of openness and transparency that was the first iteration of new building towards the end of the conflict. There is now also beginning a release from the modernist orthodoxy that form follows function: a challenge that form might just be form and, without form, that surface might be representational of something else?

The issue of permanence in building or a belief in a more secure environment in which to build framed a shift in the language of buildings and architecture. Belfast, like other cities, has a legacy of walls and representations of immutable barriers that evoke an irrevocable past. The re-born city must address the symbolic form and material narrative to transform the public sphere of urban social life: it must challenge the spatial construct of the interface.

Pre 1969 Belfast allowed a weft and warp of connectedness for citizens wishing to traverse the city. It was possible to travel across the city: it was possible to know the whole city as a place of the kind that celebrated poet Gerald Dawe has described though, for many, not necessarily enjoy the opportunity of employment that the industrial city afforded.

The city was unwelcoming to many of its citizens as many neighbourhoods were then as unchartered, insular and exclusivist as those mapped and studied following the violence of 1969 and since the aftermath of interface walls and established 'no-go' areas changed the map of the city. The city once had an open grain and easy weave of streets that straddled the neighbourhood divides. During the 'troubles' (1966-96) there were people who never left their own neighbourhood to venture the few miles to the city centre. The entrance into the city core was fraught with the tension of entering through a security 'ring of steel' with the various body searches and checks that entailed. The paths of connectedness and separation were and still are very clear.

Few things map out the human drama, distinctiveness and brutality of the northern Ireland conflict more clearly than territoriality. The failure to agree the use of contested space finds expression in the language of identity, the physical environment and in routine activity patterns of daily life.

The coloured maps of the city charting the perceived and

actual green and orange neighbourhoods, initially identified by security personnel, have been often replicated to demonstrate the divisions in Belfast. In northern Ireland the state apparatus "from policing, incarceration, social welfare, and urban planning to public housing, conceived of governance in terms of counterinsurgency".

Brendan Murtagh in the *Politics of territory: policy and segregation in northern Ireland* notes how the Belfast Development office was established to implement urban policy and over time dominated strategic policy-making, key decision-taking and the delivery of major development programmes negotiated with selected interests and highly attractive financial incentives.

The voids in the city and the built architecture are crucial components of the emerging and changing urban experience of the city. Space as an ingredient of urban design is the creative construct that shapes our experience of architecture and permits participative communication and exchange. During the conflict the energy needed for imaginative and inspired creative activity may well have been syphoned by the immigration of talented and skilled designers and architects who could not find work at home in the eighties and early nineties or by the feelings of despondency engendered by the reluctance of investors to build in the city and by the apparent affliction, suffered by many, that we have to wait until something is tried and tested elsewhere, or that the axiom, 'that will do us rightly' is a principle of urbanism. That referral to a 'somewhere else' ... is the enemy of autonomous quality". Much of the building in the seventies and eighties was social housing and little public building. The new social housing provision was a low-rise solution to the problems of both large areas of poor quality housing (generally in inner city areas) and our (still) impoverished understanding of limited models of housing typologies of either two-up, two-down or slab and tower blocks. 'There is no good reason why Belfast ... should imitate or parody accommodation models provided by the south east of England; but it does'. Many of the houses built in that new build housing stock replacement programme provide pleasant homes and were built to high technical standards in the brick built aesthetic of the city but many are surrounded by walls and built as defensible spaces which provide little permeability or connection with neighbouring clusters of housing. Large areas of urban clearance still remain as blight in the inner city landscape. There was a feeling of despondency in the building sector throughout the nineteen seventies and eighties.

Fear from the commercial bombing campaign and from planning blight and the general lack of spending power resulted in little economic investment by the private sector and those who did invest and build were cautious in their tolerance of architectural licence. Architects responded by a reserved approach and a limited palette in the expression of material quality and developed an expertise in detailing seemingly shaped by a security agenda. Many buildings reflected the walls and secu-



rity barriers. Public houses were built with no windows affording an external view and twin walls and fences surrounded edge and isolated buildings.

Should we have expected a more rigorous approach to the detailing of material junctions and to the proportions of buildings and components? Should the lack of a major public works building programme have provided a fertile ground for entrepreneurial and creative architects wishing to respond to the particularities of place and culture in their regional city?

The ceasefires of 1994 did provide an impetus for a renewed interest in the built fabric of our cities and towns and the new atmosphere encouraged many who had left these shores to return and to offer their new skills and enthusiasm to prospective investors. The excesses of the late 1990s developments of private apartment blocks (at times financially assisted by public investment), some of which were thought would build shared space, now seem vacant vacuous follies for an affluent class that might no longer exist. A culture of public space has suffered at the expense of an engineered belief in privacy and security. Might such developments now be acquired for social and affordable housing and places of public recreation?

Jones and Brett in their book, *toward an architecture: ulster*, remind us of Adolf Loos' instruction to 'pay attention to the forms in which the locals build. For they are the fruits of wisdom.' (From *Rules for those building in the mountains*). Some respected architects and designers who remained here seeking to learn from our own place and wishing to hone their craft have now developed a matured sensitivity to place-making and to appropriate form-making in both the rural place and in the tight weave of the urban grain of Belfast. Architects, and others, in an increasingly engaged discussion on the city are keen to develop praxis in planning and in architecture rather than respond to policies of planning that have, in some instances, been advanced to expand the influence of powerful interests of capital in the shaping of the city. It is increasingly clear that the traditional working class-inner city communities are not sharing the dividend of a rejuvenating city and the planned, built and now empty buffer zones on the edges of many interface areas are now ripe for redevelopment. The concept of the city as a living entity rather than an accepted historic pattern of ownership, association and use might free the agenda for debate and discussion. In many instances the principal instigators of urban design, in the contemporary city, are shopping, entertainment and tourism and the control of key decisions on urban design has passed 'to advertising agents, corporate marketing departments, consumer focus groups and demographic profilers'. Architects are well placed to understand the forces and mechanisms that shape the city and are equipped with the skills to articulate a vision for the future. Many are passionate about the city and its people: love its darkness and light; love the lip of hills that hold us cradled in the mouth of flowing waters, and love the direct speech of fellow citi-

zens. They also desire a more socially inclusive policy agenda and seek the intellectual, emotional and physical space within which to make architecture.

## The cultural matrix of cities in northern Ireland and the new trajectory design

*Michael Hegarty*

In northern Ireland there are a wide variety of Government departments, public agencies, private companies and Ngo's that have roles in creating built environment. Until recently agencies acted in isolation to deliver only their own component of cities (housing, roads, urban regeneration and planning) besides a reactive planning system is not under the administration of Belfast City Council. But in the last few decades of conflict a very direct relationship between local communities and their elected representatives has developed.

Over the centuries the greatest human minds have created models of ideal cities and many of these have impacted in northern Ireland. The Healthy city is first explored by Plato in Republic: he depicts two cities, one healthy and one with 'a fever' (the so-called luxurious city). The citizens of the luxurious city 'have surrendered themselves to the endless acquisition of money and have overstepped the limit of their necessities'. The main character Socrates says that war originates in communities living beyond the natural limits of necessity.

The healthy or true city is sustainable, limiting its consumption to actual needs, while the luxurious city is not and is in a perpetual quest for more. While Leonardo da Vinci was living in Milan, much of Italy and the rest of Europe was struck by plague. Leonardo felt the high number of deaths was partially due to the dirty condition, densely populated cities where germs spread rapidly. He designed an ideal city based on two levels, the top for the foot traffic and the bottom for carts and animals, with wide streets, underground waterways carried garbage away and a paddlewheel system could clean the streets. A century after Leonardo's model, work began on Derry, the first planned city in Ireland conceived as a new town for London in 1613. The central square (the diamond) within a walled city with four gates was considered primarily to be a good design for defence. The main streets were wide and the buildings make visual reference to the renaissance. However the pre-existing landscape topography defines the city as much as the imposed plan. In 1898 Ebenezer Howard founded the Garden city movement, cities intended to be planned, self-contained, communities surrounded by greenbelts, with carefully balanced areas of residences, industry, and agriculture. Small estates in Belfast and Derry were inspired by this model. Le Corbusier devised numerous ideal cities and like Leonardo segregated the pedestrian circulation paths from the roadways but his ideas were less influential than his drawings. The systemised deck access housing constructed at Divis in Belfast and Rossville Flats, Derry were quick cheap attempts at slum clearance and housing provision by the 1960's Government. These systems soon proved to be a social disaster as elsewhere in Europe. Over the years

in north Ireland cities were built on whatever land could be purchased, retaining the field pattern and the twists in the landscape, translated into the urban form as a memory. This kind of growing, organic, self-repairing city fits into a view of architecture and urban design where intuitive decisions are valued as much as grand visions, where the specific place is more important than the general location. This view has been given intellectual rigor and structure by theorists like Christopher Alexander. Post conflict northern Ireland society has changed, inducing to repair and renew the cities. Global factors inhibit regeneration and local specific barriers to change include: approximately 30 Peace line walls still divide fourteen districts in Belfast and one in Derry, the most visible remainders of a conflict legacy; roads such as the M3 flyover and the Westlink separate the largely uninhabited city centre of Belfast from surrounding neighbourhoods; a public transport strategy is dependent on roads due to long-term underinvestment in railways. There are positive factors however in Belfast and Derry: the built heritage has remarkably been substantially preserved despite bombing campaigns, slum clearance and roads projects. Belfast is surrounded by mountains that create a special microclimate and it has over forty public parks. Since 2001 Dsd (Department for social development) and Belfast City Council have developed a number of cultural quarters, like the Cathedral quarter. Place has engaged with the developer to promote community participation. In parallel Planning is being reconfigured to frontload consultation and will soon be brought under the control of the municipal authority. The Gaeltacht quarter around the Falls road in west Belfast promotes and encourages the use of the Irish language. Dsd have developed a regeneration strategy for the adjoining area, Andersonstown gateway. Place is working with west Belfast partnership board and Dsd Belfast regeneration office to help redevelop the contentious former police barracks site for a community led regeneration project. Alex Attwood, NI Minister for social development said: "This will regenerate an area that witnessed the worst affects of inter-community conflict. It will be a venue to showcase the wider regeneration of west Belfast and a building that will set a new standard in terms of innovation and design". Place has launched a new project called 'Out of Place' to make city centres fun, interesting and vibrant places. Sammy Wilson, NI Minister for finance opened 'Out of Place' and said "The intention of this project is to bring life to parts of the city or other towns in northern Ireland, in areas that may be struggling to find tenants to fill all the shops ... it has a serious purpose in preventing a downward spiral of decline in once-thriving commercial areas".

## (Re) shaping Belfast

*Alona Martinez-Perez*

After over thirty years of 'troubles', the legacy of division and segregation in the city of Belfast left two catholic-protestants communities divided. The Good Friday agreement in 1998 was the beginning of the period of stability and peace for the people of northern Ireland. However the traces and aftermath of three decades of conflict do not just leave a separation in the urban fabric of the city but also a fragmented society and the challenge with a sense of urgency in urban regeneration and architecture for the shaping of a new city. Like other cities in Europe divided by political reasons or conflict, Belfast like Berlin had kilometres of peace lines or walls that were built over a period of time.

Can architecture and regeneration repair the urban fabric of a city with empty spaces, gap sites and peace lines? Is that the role of the urban planner or the architect, or is that the role of the citizen and the community? How can we do this repair while respecting the past, or has the past got to be removed from the city fabric for re-shaping the divided city? Does the loss of memory, or has memory got to be carefully maintained in looking at the future? These questions could be somehow not just into the context of Belfast, but any other European city that has suffered three decades of division, and political trouble.

Architecture and urban planning can offer some insights while looking at the forces that have shaped the city over the years but the answers to all these questions can not just be part of an architectural and planning discourse: the issues are far too complex to simplify, and the approaches and complexities of the task of shaping Belfast the way we see it today are too onerous. Furthermore maybe the question lies on planners and architects in re-shaping the city for a common shared future and not just dealing the urban fabric. In his essay the Abstract city the Catalan architect and urban planner Manuel Sola-Morales i Rubió argues in the context of the city that "Berlin is made up of distances. What counts in this city more than the repetition and continuity of the buildings is the repetition and continuity of the gaps. It is the abstract pattern of empty spaces in their linked forms that needs to be perceived as the image of the city". This is not dissimilar to the context of Belfast the buffer zones or empty spaces left as a result of the divide and the conflict, conform the city fabric that we know today, furthermore emphasized by the peace lines or walls that divide and separated the city and are still part of the legacy of the past. When we look at the last fifteen years the peace process was a key catalyst for change in Belfast, activating not just political recovery but activating a whole range of recovery projects and initiatives.

But a lot of work was carried out in the 1980's and early 1990 to regenerate the city. Fourteen years have pas-

sed by since the peace process, and as urban designers and architects we still have to contemplate not just the shaping of the city, but the re-shaping the future city in an inclusive manner. Great projects have come off the ground in the recent past, ranging from the Gasworks and Titanic quarter, the Laganside corporation work, the Cathedral quarter in the city centre, and Gaeltacht quarter amongst others but it is essential a strategy which looks at the overall city.

Low density suburban models were predominant during the 'troubles' as people escaped the city to the outer suburbs to leave behind the problems in the city. The 1964 regional Plan for northern Ireland encouraged the growth of existing towns in the periphery of the city, whilst the improvement of transport infrastructure with the construction of new motorways in the 1960's. The Westlink motorway in the city centre fractures the city in two and is a further cut to the urban fabric. The predominant suburban model and car-ownership has a direct relationship with urban sprawl which makes the city grow more following an American model rather than a compact European model.

If we are looking at the future of Belfast like in Berlin somehow is necessary a dialogue between the parts that divide the city and this also put a question into the neutral centre. Furthermore Sola-Morales establishes that "the possibilities of these urban elements could be pushed to the limit, but with a clearly distinguished syntax that would, through formal congestion, convey the image of the centre of a people's city". I think that is very important as the centre offers a civic platform for all citizens, and for all the people of Belfast to have a collective space that would not have any territorial divisions of urban space, but also has the civic nature of any other European capital. But those voids, and empty spaces and walls can also see a way to see the future in the urban fabric is also important to establish as urbanists how we can deal with them. Sola-Morales offers some ideas about this point "without nostalgia or escapism, but with the interest afforded by a city whose forma urbis is shaped, to a greater extent than any other, by the abstraction of its empty spaces and which the density of those voids is the richest theme of urban composition". It is important in any city, but in the case of the complexities that a city like Belfast proposed that as Sola-Morales suggests we work on 'the skin of cities' composed "of constructions, textures and contrasts, of street and empty spaces, of gardens and walls, of contours and voids". In this case we are dealing with an urbanity "that is different from the idea of 'urban structure' on which so much planning is based, or the notion of 'urban system' which is applicable above all to the interdependence of activities and positions, or from the 'functional areas' used for the classification and allocation of spaces". That is why we do not just look at shaping Belfast but re-shaping the city so we can as Sola-Morales emphasizes to operate in the 'skin of the city' is to "be constantly attending the way things are, and to questions about which things need adding,

removing or modifying, or how better to rearrange them. There is no way of finding out other than to plunge into the strategy of things, of urban things". Any successful intervention or strategy needs a holistic view that can involve not just the questions I set out at the beginning of this essay but also the way as urbanists looking at not just shaping the past city, but re-shaping the city of the next decades for a shared future looking at the layers that conform the different parts (quarters, neighbourhoods) that conform the bigger entity of the city. In Belfast like in Berlin, dutch architect Rem Koolhaas explains the potential for the wall into architecture "The Berlin wall as architecture was for me the first spectacular revelation in architecture of how absence can be stronger than presence. For me, it is not necessarily connected to loss in a metaphysical sense, but more connected to an issue of efficiency, where I think that the great thing about Berlin is that it showed for me how (and this is my own campaign against architecture) entirely 'missing' urban presences or entirely erased architectural entities nevertheless generate what can be called an urban condition". This analogy that he refers for Berlin is rather a beautiful one and could be easily be applied to Belfast where absence, missing urban presences, voids in the city can become aspects that offer a potential or re-shaping the city. But if we are looking ahead is also important to look at the immediate past, and at the work that has been carried out. It is clear that the peace process has not just been a catalyst for change and recovery but also a great case for success for the city. And what is remarkable is that a lot of this was already being made in the midst of the violent conflict. Two of the main projects were the Lagan side redevelopment and revitalising the city centre amongst other initiatives. The work of the Lagan side corporation, and Urban development corporation (Udc) which operated as a public-private partnership that managed and implemented the regeneration of all the sites along the river Lagan opening up the city to the waterfront, is not only important just in terms of regenerating the urban fabric but acting like a body which brought partnership between different departments and agencies and the key actors and local players. As architects the history of Belfast is not made of the lessons that show a successful example of urban design and regeneration, but also the will of a democratic society and a city looking at the future with confidence.

## Experiences of waterfront regeneration in Belfast: unifying a divided city

*Gabriella Esposito De Vita*

The multicultural society escapes classification and interpretation, breaking equilibria between the complexity of the multicultural demand and the inadequacy of the urban planning response. This could produce or exacerbate conflicts, marginality and decay. Tensions and conflicts between different social and cultural components in the contemporary city are changing the way in which people live and shape public spaces and the organization and forms of the urban pattern.

This contribution focuses on Belfast, which has been struggling for years with problems related to inter-religious sectarian conflicts. As urban planners, we have focused on the spatial and morphological interpretation of the phenomenon. Belfast had been a thriving port, a strategic market town, the leader in the production of linens and home to one of the most prestigious shipyards in the world, the Harland and Wolff shipyard, that built and launched the Titanic in the same area currently interested by the largest project of real estate development in the city, the Titanic quarter. The complex network of economic, cultural, religious and social conditions, that have characterized the loyalist or nationalist communities, triggered for centuries socio-political issues, reflected by urban transformation processes oriented to segregation. Population growth in the first half of 1900, together with the disposal of industrial and economic crisis, contributed to stress deprivation phenomena and the processes of expulsion and auto-segregation at the neighbourhood scale, paving the way for the explosion of the troubles of the 1969. The conflict produced visible traces in spite of the intense urban development produced by the beginning of the peace process. Fenced industrial areas, militarized police stations and infrastructure made by the public initiative as buffer areas to mitigate the conflict, even accentuate the physical separation and deter the pedestrian use of the routes. The redevelopment projects we discuss here are concentrated along the riverside and correspond to the brownfield areas from the former industrial age. Belfast is a place of dualities: conflict vs. peace process, deprivation in the working class neighbourhoods vs. development of the neutral areas, empty spaces vs. conversion projects, community planning vs. zoning, as well as politicized neighbourhoods vs. neutral city centre. The northern Irish main city is now hanging from both problems and opportunities arising from the peace process; it is now discovering its potential and is now being discovered by others in the tourist market. Belfast is renewing image and functions, by implementing strategic redevelopment projects: financial resources are now converging on key-areas along the urban riverside. At the same time community planning and engagement have been developed in order to manage conflicts in the deprived areas



of the city crown. The main projects on the waterfront are: the Laganside area, the Gasworks and the Titanic quarter. The first one has been the Laganside corporation project, involving Lanyon place with the Waterfront hall and Donegall quay with the pedestrian bridge and the real estate development of the inner area. Social and economic regeneration of an initial 140 hectare area of inner city land, straddling both banks of the river Lagan. This boundary has since been extended to 200 hectares to include the historic Cathedral quarter which lies close to the city centre. The second step has been the Cathedral quarter with the new signature building of the University of Ulster and the front street refurbishment of the existing buildings. "Following years of neglect and decline Belfast's waterfront has been transformed, becoming a focus for business, leisure and cultural activities and a place of opportunity for all" Laganside corporation (1989-2007). With this project the waterfront has become an integral part of the city centre. The second project has been developed in the former area of the Gasworks. Managed by the council, this 12 hectare site is home to a diverse range of organisations and modern businesses. It also offers public access to the Lagan towpath for walkers and cyclists. The site retains some of the original Gasworks bricks buildings and also has a number of public art pieces. One of Europe's largest waterfront regeneration developments regards the areas on the banks of Belfast's river Lagan, Titanic quarter is transforming 75 hectares of former ship-yard lands into a new focal point for Belfast. The first two phases of project cover a quarter of the entire site and will include around 2,500 residential units, over 50,000 square metres of workspace, 10,000 sqm of leisure facilities, two hotels, a tourism project to mark the birthplace of the Titanic, over 7,000 sqm of retail space and a further education college.

## Union and division in cities by the sea: sailing from Belfast to new horizons of research

*Massimo Clemente, Stefania Oppido*

Union and division characterize cities, by expressing urban history, collective memory, semantic richness through different languages and forms. Urban spaces and functions are defined by the union of homogeneous material or immaterial parts: architecture, people, relationships. But the city is also made up of divisions that underline differences, highlighting diversities and homogeneity.

The balance between union and division ensures dialectic between the parts and their identity interact in the synthesis of urban forms and functions. However, the division can degenerate into separation, social and spatial segregation and break up the city. In some contemporary cities, the urban form reveals traces left by an history of division and segregation, because different groups cultural, religious, political, have not been able (or willing) to transform the co-existence in cohabitation. The conflicts have generated urban configurations appearing as a physical transposition of divisions between people, where buildings and urban places have been modeled in relation to the complex political, social and cultural issues of segregation.

In peacetime, the urban regeneration processes are faced with the re-design of these separated areas through rehabilitation of existing buildings and project of new spaces, in order to repair and reconnect not only urban parts but, often, a fragmented community. Architects and planners can make their own contribution through projects that are able to transform urban spaces inherited from the separation, translating exclusion, segregation and division in inclusion, aggregation and union. Adequate urban regeneration strategies for a culturally plural and socially integrated city need to favor forms of inter-culturalism, facilitating mediation, interaction and integration between differences.

In this perspective, cities on water are an interesting field for experimentation because they always faced with diversity, interculturalism, meeting of people and cultures. River and coastal cities have historically been gateways, arrival and departure points of shipping, histories, cultures and religions. These cities represent emblematic case studies for realize 'inclusive' community, based on coexistence and integration. Maritime routes have always been bridges between nations and cultures, and maritime trade has not only connected the markets, but also men, societies and cultures. In river and coastal cities with an history of conflict, the border area between land and water can reaffirm its vocation of mediation and opening towards the sea and the other parts of the city, returning to be a place of relationships. In this perspective, the city of Belfast is an emblematic

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case study particularly in relation to the role assumed by the waterfront along the river Lagan in the process of 'mending' parts of town. The three decades of the troubles deeply divided the city, resulting from changes in the urban security reasons. The conflict generated significant impact on physical and functional organization of the city, characterized by fragmentation of the urban land design, physical implementation of the division between catholics and protestants. From the start of the peace process, the city has embarked on a path of urban regeneration identifying in the river path, which skirts the village, the physical element that can reconnect parts of the city in a systemic logic, through the renewal of disused areas, the development of productive activities, the rehabilitation of urban voids. Belfast may be considered a best practice and it is confirmed by the many reflections that the case study was able to inspire in recent years, this is proved by this publication and prefigures new scenarios of study in which the dialogue between the cities of the sea becomes maritime encounter between cultures and urban, innovative tool for achieving lasting peace and constructive.

## Learning from Belfast

*Carmelina Bevilacqua*

The case of Belfast, with specific attention to the key-role played by the private sector in the major urban regeneration projects, first of all those related to the Titanic quarter, allows to make some interesting reflections on the potential status of urban regeneration as innovative disciplinary apparatus in current urban planning theory. Moreover, it supports a new conceptualization of processes of production of contemporary urban design, by shifting from a regulatory-based culture of the public action, i.e. command-control oriented, towards an innovative approach more capable to emphasize the quality of urban design.

The transferability of good practices is a very challenging matter, because it threatens the complexity of the learning processes, typical of the context in which the so-called best practices have been applied. What is transferable becomes the root node of how to use benchmarking methodologies, knowing that the legal basis, the culture of the urban project, the trust that the public is able to establish with the private sector, the presence of some structural invariants are factors that can make 'transferability' a mere academic exercise, unless investigated on their ability to affect the applicability of good practices analyzed. While the urban regeneration policies were originally put forward to fight the decline of the cities, nowadays cities themselves are no longer virtuous basins of public investment, but places where the economic crisis strikes devastating effects, both in the quality of life and the composition of production of wealth for self sustainable scenarios of economic welfare. Not surprisingly, the simple urban renewal is not enough to curb these effects, the word 'regeneration' comes up because of need to involve all sectors from manufacturing to supply those services which regenerates the urban community, a community made up of entrepreneurs, public actors, families, people involved in the regeneration project for the abatement of the factors of conflict that placed the city out of economic and financial attractiveness circuits, circuits fielded by globalization. The city transforms by own: the urban limits less defined are a new market, the market of knowledge, where knowledge workers operate through negotiations and agreements for an image of the city more attractive as a whole, but increasingly urban fragmented inside. The urban contemporary project (urban design thereby) becomes the interpretive synthesis of the demand for urban transformation articulated within a general framework of strategic and structural coherence. This is what comes out in the analysis of case of Belfast: urban design as a formal expression of overcoming social conflicts. Similarly, you can learn the systemic connotation of urban design 'implemented' in Belfast in some key words 'transferable' as a conceptual con-

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struction of the transformation of urban public spaces, the existing recovery, relations-connections, landscape, mixité, investment management, managing change in the demand, sustainability management public-private partnership.