

Urban Regeneration Management

International Perspectives

**Edited by John Diamond,
Joyce Liddle, Alan Southern
and Philip Osei**



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John Diamond,
On behalf of the Editors.
Ormskirk,
Lancashire, UK
2008.

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Introduction

*John Diamond, Joyce Liddle, Alan
Southern and Philip Osei*

We had three primary aims in preparing this volume and inviting colleagues to join us. Firstly, we wanted to examine the perception that there was a 'global brand' of urban regeneration management and practice. In part, this has become a popular view shaped by what appears to be the mono-cultural experience of contemporary urban cites reinforced by the uniformity of shopping malls, airports and hotels. As we try to explore in what follows, this perception is far from being a 'mono-cultural' one. It is shaped, developed and promoted by Western advanced industrial notions of what the comfortable urban experience is about, and in its conformity of appearance, it also reinforces a particular set of ideas of urban regeneration.

Secondly, we wanted to reflect, ourselves, on the patterns and practice of urban regeneration management across a number of different sites and places. We are very well aware of how a particular 'model' of urban regeneration has become the norm, and we wanted to see if that was the case but also how, and in what ways do different places anticipate and plan for the processes of regeneration, including developing programmes of training and education.

Finally, we wanted to reflect upon and explore the responses of local communities and neighbourhoods to the arrival of the regeneration 'caravan' in their locality. Patterns of resistance or articulating different ways of effecting change are important to capture and explore. It seems to us that describing, interpreting, reflecting and providing a way of making sense of these patterns of resistance or collaboration are important for all of us.

We are very well aware too of the scale of the task and the risk that we might only partially achieve our aims. It does (and did) seem to us that there are some real and important ideas to explore and examine. The primary one of these is the idea that there is a 'model' of contemporary urban regeneration, and it is possible to describe its component elements and to assume from this that this model is transferable. Implicit in this notion of portability is that it is ahistorical and acultural. It follows from this set of

claims that the model is apolitical too. As will be clear in the parts that follow, all of the contributors are acutely aware of time and place. They, in their different ways, draw upon their sense of place and their attempts to locate the particularities of what they are examining in a chronology that seeks to include: space, time, place and the different and competing communities present.

We set out, in the first chapter, to give our view that the processes associated with urban regeneration and the development of a 'school' of urban regeneration management professionals are deeply political and challenging to a range of different interest groups. As a consequence we do recognise the need to reflect the different 'voices' or experiences present in any contemporary regeneration programme. We do not assume that regeneration initiatives are 'conflict free' zones—from a perspective that is seeking to examine the programme from within or from the outside and listening to the different voices of participants or those affected by the initiative.

In this set of chapters, what we are trying to do is locate that debate and the importance of listening and learning to a broader context. As you will see we devote a chapter to the attempt to link the global brand or sweep of regeneration practice to a local brand of listening and reflecting back the voices and views of those affected by the global march of the urban regeneration process.

The importance of critical reflection and the need to locate these processes within a context defined both by place (and time) but also of political institutions (and forms of governance and accountability) remains a central element or theme of what follows. We have attempted to identify a number of themes or cross cutting issues that we think will help provide a framework for what follows.

These themes or cross cutting issues include:

- The extent to which we can describe a North American approach to urban regeneration and what might constitute such an approach;
- The ways in which schools of management (or business) or public administration have responded to the proliferation of regeneration programmes and the extent to which there is an emerging 'school' of regeneration management;
- The competing, but inter-related, forces at play within a regeneration initiative and the extent to which those engaged in its management are able to act independently of these social, political and economic pressures;
- The extent to which liberal democratic institutions are 'fit for purpose' in the context of regeneration programmes and the implications this may have for local governance and accountability;
- The absence of debate or discussion on the theoretical and conceptual underpinning of regeneration programmes.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE CAN DESCRIBE A NORTH AMERICAN APPROACH TO URBAN REGENERATION AND WHAT MIGHT CONSTITUTE SUCH AN APPROACH

The ‘conventional wisdom’ of the 1980s and the 1990s might argue that it is possible to promote both the idea that regeneration initiatives reflected the North American experience and that we can identify the essential elements of such an approach. As Andrew E. G. Jonas and Linda McCarthy argue very powerfully in their chapter, this claim is wrong on several counts. In their chapter they set out very clearly the ways in which we need a more complex and sophisticated understanding of the ways in which US cities engage with (and learn from) regeneration experiences. They also describe and interpret changes in the role of city, state and federal agencies and the differences among states in terms of how regeneration initiatives are understood and implemented. They make the important point (which is a theme within this edited collection) that the idea there is ‘one’ model is both simplistic and wrong.

We do need, however, to rehearse the reasons why the perception that there is a US model developed in the UK (and to some extent across Northern Europe) persists. The idea is that current models of regeneration management and practice have been shaped by the American experience is also reflected in the debate within and between management practitioners and researchers.

As Chapter 1 illustrates we need to remind ourselves of the particular features of the North American experience—which may not have seemed special in that context—which have been picked up and promoted both by politicians and academics. It seems to us that there are a number of assumptions or elements that are present across a number of initiatives in the European Union and that have an intellectual as well as a practical home in North America.

These components include the need to ‘secure’ the revitalisation of older, urban and industrial parts of cities; the importance (and necessity) of securing public sector resources to “pump” prime such redevelopment; the view that local political institutions or forms or existing forms of governance were ‘failing’ and needed to be renewed, repaired or removed; the renaissance of urban cities would also need a coalition of civic organisations and agencies to promote the benefits of inward investment; and that such agencies needed to be a coalition or alliance of public/private and voluntary organisations.

What we are suggesting is that whilst the content, pace and structure of these regeneration programmes in North America has changed over time there are some core features that are perceived to be necessary pre-conditions for success elsewhere. As we try to show in the next chapter and the concluding parts of this set of chapters these are themes we return to.

THE WAYS IN WHICH SCHOOLS OF MANAGEMENT (OR BUSINESS) OR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION HAVE RESPONDED TO THE PROLIFERATION OF REGENERATION PROGRAMMES AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THERE IS AN EMERGING 'SCHOOL' OF REGENERATION MANAGEMENT

The response of the Academy to developing an analysis and critical reflection of regeneration initiatives illustrates some of the tensions and absences in the current debate. As we show through the subsequent chapters from colleagues outside the UK, it is not the absence of an informed exploration of specific projects or programmes that is the issue, nor is it an unwillingness to share experiences to inform practice or reflection that is the issue. We have (within the Academy) a number of influential (and well established) professional bodies and learned societies that actively promote the knowledge and understanding they represent.

Our concern, and why we want to explore this idea of how the Academy informs and sets new norms and values, is that ahistoric or apolitical approaches to contemporary regeneration management will miss out the specific and highly localised context within which change is taking place. Therefore, in the processes associated with curriculum design, accreditation and choices over content we can see a 'normalisation' of certain views and expectations. This, in a sense, reflects a short-term response to the 'market' (itself a reflection of change locally and internationally) and how that market is constructed, managed, understood and regulated. It is also a reflection of the impact of certain 'global' narratives associated with regeneration management. These narratives have become symbols, or indicators, of the potential success of local projects. We can see across cities in different nation states how there is a conformity in the discourse of regeneration: partnership (public and private); new forms of managerialism; stakeholder involvement and community participation are all essential ingredients.

We are also aware through our work across a number of regeneration programmes, collaborative research projects and through our own individual (and collective) writing, of the tendency towards separating academic enquiry and critical reflection from the skills or competency-based approach to undergraduate and post-graduate education. We have observed this process in a number of different contexts including across the international networks of higher education institutions and awarding or accrediting bodies.

In the chapters that follow, Philip Osei, in his exploration of Jamaica, Ann Marie Bissessar, with her study of Trinidad and Ismael Blanco's reflection on Barcelona examine the extent to which particular theoretical models of public management (especially 'new' public management) can be applied in their specific context. In doing so, they point to some essential questions, or points of reflection—especially the extent to which the specific case studies can point to the maturity of localised systems and structures of public administration—such that they can trace the journey to 'new' forms

of management and governance, and the extent to which the particularities shape the systems.

**THE COMPETING, BUT INTER-RELATED, FORCES AT
PLAY WITHIN A REGENERATION INITIATIVE AND
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THOSE ENGAGED IN ITS
MANAGEMENT ARE ABLE TO ACT INDEPENDENTLY OF
THESE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES**

The notion of 'independent' action and decision-making sits at the centre of a number of urban regeneration approaches. Whilst, there may be recognition that some of the external forces that shape (or reshape) localities are powerful and beyond regulation, there remains an element of expectation (or hope) that the transformative power of urban regeneration models can spill over across a range of sites of intervention. The common language and practice of urban regeneration management finds itself based in a set of assumptions: that there is a potential to affect positively the lives of individuals and families as well as the economic health of local communities and regions.

All of us are interested and concerned with how these notions of liberal democracy, or 'democratic' capitalism, have shaped the ways in which urban regeneration programmes are put together, the underlying assumptions that inform the selection of specific ways of developing a response to the urban crisis and the extent to which there is a shared consensus on the 'room for manoeuvre,' which local regeneration managers have.

In Karen Leeming's chapter on a housing project in Amsterdam and Hüseyin Gül and Murat Ali Dulupçu's discussion of regeneration initiatives in Turkey, we can observe the tension between these elements in play. Both chapters chart the attempts by local actors and/or regional agencies to develop responses to local needs and the extent to which they could act 'independently'.

We draw upon the issues raised in these chapters in the final part of the volume where we reflect upon the extent to which we can develop or construct a framework within which these experiences can be mapped against the literature.

**THE EXTENT TO WHICH LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS
ARE 'FIT FOR PURPOSE' IN THE CONTEXT OF REGENERATION
PROGRAMMES AND THE IMPLICATIONS THIS MAY HAVE
FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

One of the features of observing regeneration programmes across and within different continents is the extent to which it is in the structures and

models of governance that we can observe key differences. In one sense, we could reduce these differences to ones of regulation and authority. There is a marked tension between those places where institutions of local governance are relatively weak at regulating the free market or where there has been little opportunity to develop processes and forms of accountability and regulation.

John Shutt and his team's work in the Czech Republic provide a series of fascinating insights into the struggles between emerging political and administrative systems to assert their (relative?) authority and the need to address the pressures for economic and industrial restructuring and the need to reconcile the decisions taken with the requirements of the European Union. In a very real sense, this chapter captures the dilemmas of those seeking to use regeneration programmes as a means of promoting social and economic justice. Joyce Liddle and Ioannis Oikonomopoulos, in their chapter on regeneration practice in Greece, illustrate very effectively some of these questions. In particular, they provide an additional set of experiences with which to explore the impact of the EU on the authority and autonomy of the nation state. The extent to which supra-national agencies can (or cannot) influence national governments is a real and political issue. But it also opens up the examination of the relationship between 'local' institutions and national or supra-national ones too.

Whilst Andrew E. G. Jonas and Linda McCarthy remind us that we need to focus on both the detail of regulatory systems and the structures of local governance and democracy. Thus, the US model provides an interesting comparison for all of us in that there is a rich evidence base of how local regeneration programmes can be put together with a wide range of partners and be subject to local scrutiny but that outcomes may not always meet local needs.

In each case we need to look at and reflect upon how systems of governance emerge and are themselves products of social and economic processes—and that the concept of 'fit for purpose' may not sit easily with all the major interest groups. We are back with the importance of placing individual regeneration initiatives in a context that is much broader than the particular industrial or economic problems it has been assumed it will address.

THE ABSENCE OF DEBATE OR DISCUSSION ON THE THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT TO REGENERATION PROGRAMMES

In Graeme Chesters' chapter on the relationship between the significance of the social movement literature and theoretical debates and regeneration initiatives, we see what we hope will be an important synthesis of ideas. We do think that it is important to rehearse the intellectual debates/rationale