# Middlesex University Research Repository

An open access repository of

Middlesex University research

This version is available at: https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/10726/

**Rachel Granger**
Principal Lecturer,
Coventry University,
Coventry, UK

# What now for urban regeneration?

R. Granger MSc, PhD, MIED, MeRSA

**It is against recent experiences of virulent neoliberalism and commodification in UK urban environments that regeneration practitioners and core professionals must confront assumptions about the impact and purpose of recent renewal strategies. Over the last decade, urban landscapes have been reinvigorated through intense design and renewal and a massification of private investment, which have come to characterise a new urbanism. Urban regeneration – the broad banner under which much of this change has occurred – has been encouraged by many localities to the extent that it has been beyond reproach by political and critical analysts. This paper makes use of the current respite in urban renewal, which has been brought about by changes in financial markets, to revisit the policy principles and impacts of existing renewal projects as well as the strategic aspirations of several urban areas. It is hoped that this paper might stimulate debate about the future form of urban regeneration and consideration of the need for changes in policy design.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

UK towns and cities – like many others in the western world – have been enjoying something of a renaissance, both economically and physically. Declining global growth and the onset of the banking crisis in 2008 has punctuated, for many urban areas, what has been more than a decade of uninterrupted growth, investment and economic buoyancy that has led many cities out of structural decline but which is now presenting new problems. While it is unclear to what extent the current recession will be transitory or localised, the present economic climate provides an opportune moment to reflect on the extent of recent growth and urban change and assess the integrity of the 'urban renaissance'.

This paper argues that much of what has taken place in recent years in urban areas has been renewal rather than regeneration, given its physical rather than economic or social nature, its exclusive design and its limited impact on addressing existing needs. While the longer term sustainability of towns and cities has been eclipsed by short-term gains in wealth, the current recession provides an opportune moment to recreate the space for debate around the future form and priorities for urban regeneration in the years ahead. In this respect, this paper serves to re-ignite debate around policy perspectives by illuminating

some of the negative aspects of urban renewal vis-à-vis the conceptual basis for urban regeneration, namely:

(*a*) changing demographics and socio-economic cleansing
(*b*) exclusive developments
(*c*) gentrification
(*d*) mono-functionality of land use
(*e*) continuing deprivation
(*f*) the uncontrolled private-led assault on the function and ownership of urban areas.

The paper does not purport to be exhaustive or to draw on extensive primary data, but is intended as a policy piece and calls for a fresh approach to regeneration policy. As such, this work seeks to provide an overarching review and critique of urban regeneration over the last decade (something that has thus far eluded the literature and mainstream policy evaluation) and to provide a space for rehearsing older debates about the political basis of regeneration and the impact of capitalism when unleashed in a contemporary context.

## 2. ENTREPRENEURIAL URBANISM

Since the start of the millennium, cities have been the subject of concentrated investment in construction, redesign and amenity development, the likes of which have not been seen since the Victorian age. As a result, it has been argued that towns and cities are entering a new era or paradigm underpinned by theoretical notions concerning their role as nodes in a global competitive network, centres of creativity and places of consumption. Reflecting on this new urbanism, this paper considers whether urban areas have improved beyond flagship and amenity developments and new retail centres and waterfronts. In other words, is urban renewal, which is captured in its most explicit form in construction works and aesthetic investment in city centres, leading to actual lasting change or resolution of problems in those localities?

Regeneration in its most basic form can be understood as 'action to address need', where need refers to the need to resolve problems as a result of market failure and subsequent job loss and disinvestment. The UK government has defined regeneration as (DCLG, 2008: p. 6)

> A set of activities that reverse economic, social and physical decline in areas where market forces will not do this without support from the government.

While the government's composite approach to regeneration inherent in its identification of 'economic, social and physical decline' reflects the multi-faceted need that results from market failure, it also signifies the ambiguity of its 'third way' policy paradigm. This is because, while traditional regeneration strategies have emerged as politically framed policy responses to market failure in the form of either demand- or supply-side policies, the more recent third way policy approach has legitimised myriad interventions by diverse stakeholders. Thus the New Labour government has simultaneously sought to promote trade, investment and enterprise through ministerial departments and regional development agencies, while also tackling the vagaries of that same free-market approach through social welfare programmes. The corollary is that while regeneration was once the focus of intense and focused policy debate, this has given way to a more general understanding about area improvements. This has reduced regeneration to the everyday vernacular of policy-makers and strategists – a catch-all for diverse interventions in the urban environment and, with it, a multitude of political intentions. Lamb (2003: p. 159) notes

> Redevelopment, renewal, revitalization, regeneration: all are buzz-words for the government policies aimed at reversing the urban blight and decline that has continually plagued the once thriving cities of the United States and the United Kingdom.

As regeneration has evolved into increasingly spectacular and sometimes banal flagship projects, so cities have become more open to rapid shifts in private capital and ownership. The effect has been one of a dulling of regeneration design, with strategies shifting from traditional, corrective, public sector responses to local needs to bold and proactive private-led urban investments to maximise economic returns that do not necessarily have connection with empirical needs. This paper argues that the downgrading of regeneration in this way – from the resolution of problems to competitive area improvements combined with proactive and entrepreneurial approaches – has led to a disjointed and incoherent redevelopment of several urban landscapes resulting in renewal, not necessarily regeneration.

## 3. CITIES AS PLACES OF COMPETITIVENESS, GROWTH AND CONSUMPTION

The wider movement towards the massification of private, and to some extent public, investment in towns and cities at the heart of entrepreneurial urbanism has been driven by two key changes.

(*a*) The twin processes of de-industrialisation and internatio-nalisation have created a need to attract mobile capital into cities and for civic authorities to adopt a more entrepre-neurial outlook. As a result, there has been a shift from managerialist to entrepreneurialist forms of governance in many western cities.

(*b*) There has been changing recognition of cities as a resource for the future, drawing inspiration from North American civic boosterism strategies and consistent with Logan and Molotch's (1987) portrayal of the city as a 'growth machine'. This has meant that where cities were once depicted as areas of decay and as outcomes of the past (with the inner city being the most pejorative expression of this), recent years have seen more proactive attempts to view cities as sites for economic growth and experience.

Cities have witnessed a concomitant reframing of their space using re-imagining or visioning strategies based on the conspicuous consumption of place such as the commodification of the urban realm and urban assets, the development of the urban offer, and the growth of economic consumption such as bars and leisure. This proactive commodification of cities has been a key plank in New Labour's modernisation agenda (Law and Mooney, 2005) and evokes the emphatic pro-growth stance captured in a number of policy pieces of the early New Labour years (e.g. DETR, 2000; Robson *et al.*, 2000; UTF, 2000) and the launch of urban regeneration companies (now totalling 19). Such confidence and optimism about urban areas was buoyed by the visible success of ambitious redevelopment programmes already underway or recently completed. The flagship projects of urban development corporations and extensive redevelop-ments in cities such as Birmingham (around the Baltimore-inspired Brindley Place), Glasgow (the GEAR project in the East End) and Manchester (post-terrorist redevelopment) undoubt-edly acted as key demonstration projects that spawned waves of investment in urban aesthetics and firmly established a free-market physical-led urban strategy as a viable approach.

Publication of *The Rise of the Creative Class* (Florida, 2002) provided further impetus for investment in places, amenities and flagship developments based on the established link between the growth and competitiveness of a city and that same city's investment in amenities and assets. While Florida's work has been the subject of strong rebuttal as a result of the perfunctory basis of his research, his work on the commodification of place and changing place demographics has permeated many urban strategies. As a result, once blighted industrial areas have joined the global elite of locations with ambitious transition strategies based around the construction of well-designed spaces, iconic architecture, flagship projects and new amenities that enable them to compete for the same mobile (financial and human) capital. As Fainstein (2005: p. 6) notes

> Whereas once the city developed organically primarily in response to local forces, now all cities are caught within the web of global exchange and display similarities resulting from impulses within the global economy and development strategies that are widely shared. Previously urban centers and inner-city neighbourhoods typically were characterized by multiple ownership and small lot sizes. In contrast, the scale of recent developments tends to be vast and driven by imitation. Shopping malls and office buildings look the same the world over, taking on somewhat different forms depending only on whether they are in central cities or the outskirts.

In the context of urban regeneration, entrepreneurial urbanism, public–private coalitions, city reframing, cultural capital, the creative class, amenities, liveability and urban design have all entered the vocabulary of regeneration practice in recent years, predicated on cities' changing demographics. National priorities for UK regeneration have been in generating added value and productivity through tackling worklessness and promoting innovation and a high-skill economy (DCLG, 2008). However, at the local level, regeneration has comprised expensive renewal projects driven by wealth in the pursuit of wealth. In other words, cities have invested heavily in the type of expensive projects that appeal to young professionals with high disposable incomes in an attempt to compete with other cities for the same footloose capital. For cities, they represent the prototype creative class for whom private investment is not only viable but

is also highly lucrative. This is reflected in examples of urban renewal over the last decade such as the £70 million Sage building in Gateshead (2004), the £40 million Selfridges store in Birmingham (2004), the £20 million Middlesborough Institute of Modern Art (2006) and West Bromwich's £52 million art gallery The Public (2008). Investment in such flagships along with prestige apartment complexes, anchor retail developments, art galleries, marinas and casinos reflects a speculative investment in a demographic not yet residing in the city.

To illustrate, Birmingham's investments in designer apartments (Figure 1) and prestige shopping centre The Mailbox (Figure 2) appeal to a new demographic but are incompatible with the acute unemployment and deprivation faced by residents in the adjacent Ladywood and Lozells estates. They also offer little by way of economic recompense to the city's ailing car manufacturing base. Yet Birmingham's approach to regeneration typifies that of many UK cities, which could be described as a proactive socio-economic reframing of a city to increase wealth but at the same time representing urban renewal not for local consumption. As the construction of West Bromwich's infamous art gallery The Public illustrates, the introduction and massification of private investment in urban projects and increasing private ownership of urban land constrains a town or city's influence over the nature of the renewal taking place, since private capital now holds considerable authority. The Public was created despite widespread opposition and in the face of overwhelming local support for a much-needed but ultimately less prestigious swimming pool. Flagship projects thus often entail opportunity costs. While at local level they can create local wealth through the relocation of new incoming residents, at national level they connote a duplication of effort as urban areas effectively compete with one another, therefore producing a zero sum game.

## 4. GENTRIFICATION
The most marked depiction of the gap between urban renewal and actual regeneration is expressed in urban spaces where traditional neighbourhoods have been rehabilitated by middle-class professionals in a process known as gentrification. Lees *et al.* (2008) have indicated that London in its entirety is now either gentrified or in a state of gentrification, with mounting evidence that this is now also the case across much of the UK's urban space. While the language of gentrification has been used frequently in regeneration practice to denote successful positive change in an area through reinvestment, it remains a negative spatial expression of capitalism, and specifically, an 'expression of class inequality' or 'class revanchism' (Lees *et al.*, 2008). This is because, although gentrification is consistent with the idea of urban renewal, it precludes the type of lasting change for all needed to qualify as regeneration. There is thus a considerable difference between the revival or 'unslumming' of neglected neighbourhoods associated with urban renewal and the deliberate, often revanchist, attempts to commercialise cities, raise land values, change land use for higher ground rents, and create middle-class enclaves – all of which are emphatic attempts to create a changing demography for economic return. In this respect, gentrification could be seen as the inevitable and resounding conclusion of capitalism when unleashed in urban areas.

From a regeneration perspective, there are several impacts of gentrification that compromise the sustainability and quality of life of an area or city.

(a) Gentrification results in a loss of diversity in a community or city as residents are displaced through rent increases and changes in housing tenure. In this way, land prices in areas can compromise the very vitality of urban neighbourhoods through a 'destruction of diversity' and a 'return to unnatural urban spaces' (Jacobs, 1961) that can destabilise the social fabric of a city. If Rousseau (1762) is correct that 'it is citizens that make a city', what kind of city is created from the socio-economic cleansing of a population?



Figure 1. Advertisement for designer apartments, Birmingham, UK

Figure 2. The Mailbox, Birmingham, UK

(b) Gentrification is not confined to one neighbourhood. It spreads to adjacent areas as over-demand in one area leads to rising demand and prices in another. Changing occupancy and investment in one neighbourhood can therefore produce a ripple effect throughout a whole city in a short space of time.

(c) Housing can quickly become a commodity for investment as economic returns exceed those in other circuits of capital (Harvey, 1978). This creates further interest and investment from speculators, effectively creating a housing spiral.

(d) The loss of affordable housing creates barriers to living in a city for some residents. Those on the lowest incomes are disenfranchised, key workers are excluded, and disposable income and standards of living are reduced as households spend more on housing.

## 5. IMPACT OF URBAN RENEWAL – DEMOGRAPHIC AND LAND USE CHANGE

In looking for empirical signs of gentrification as a result of recent urban renewal, the prospect of demographic change, changing land prices and land use change warrants further examination in relation to centres of major urban renewal. Just as the UK's largest towns and cities were disproportionately affected by industrial decline during the 1970s and 1980s, so the largest towns and cities in the UK now appear to be changing as a function of recent economic growth. While data from the 2001 census appear to be too recent to capture the extent of some of these changes, they do presage longer-term patterns in urban change and, specifically, limited social mixing.

In the 10-year period leading up to 2001, UK cities were still adjusting to structural changes imposed through de-industrialisation, much of which is reflected in the sustained population loss of several key cities comparative to the UK as a whole. Yet, by 2001, population growth was manifest in several of the larger urban areas of the UK in which urban renewal had been firmly established (Table 1).

In cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, Liverpool, Newcastle and Bristol, population growth of the young has been highly notable (in some cases involving a doubling or trebling of growth among young professional age groups (29+)) while total population has continued to decline. It seems likely that in these cities, urban renewal has had a substantial and tangible effect by enhancing place appeal and in turn stimulating demographic change among younger age groups, lending support to Florida's thesis about the appeal of well-invested cities to young professionals (Florida, 2002). On the other hand, the marked difference in growth between 16–29 and 30–44 age groups coupled with actual decline of managerial and professional economic groups over the same period does tend to undermine Florida's work and implies a disconnection between urban renewal and the sustainability (e.g. affordability) of those same redeveloped areas. Taking land value as an alternative proxy of change in an area, it is possible to detect other changes occurring in UK cities as a more direct consequence of urban renewal. Changes in house prices reflect wider changes in the demand for city living, as well as changes in supply arising from residential developments and reuse of industrial buildings. Land Registry data confirm that UK cities have been the subject of vigorous increases in house prices over the last decade reflecting changes to both demand for city living, and to supply from urban renewal.

In 1998, the largest UK cities were home to below-average house prices (Figure 3), reflecting the economic and physical decay of cities at that time and their declining appeal and population. Within just 10 years, many cities witnessed significant price increases, commensurate with the scale of urban investment

| | Total population | | | Young (16–29) | | | Young (30–44) | | | Managerial & professional socio-economic group: % | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1991 | 2001 | % change | 1991 | 2001 | % change | 1991 | 2001 | % change | 1991 | 2001 |
| Blackburn | 136 607 | 137 457 | 0·6 | 29 035 | 25 278 | −12·9 | 27 679 | 29 789 | 7·6 | — | — |
| Birmingham | 961 044 | 977 987 | 1·8 | 210 828 | 200 982 | −4·7 | 187 016 | 208 341 | 11·4 | 28·0 | 21·2 |
| Bradford | 457 354 | 467 665 | 2·3 | 95 542 | 88 833 | −7·0 | 94 630 | 100 214 | 5·9 | 32·7 | 22·2 |
| Bristol | 288 677 | 380 635 | 31·9 | 63 342 | 87 301 | 37·8 | 59 980 | 85 416 | 42·4 | 35·2 | 28·1 |
| Burnley | 91 148 | 89 542 | −1·8 | 18 108 | 14 981 | −17·3 | 19 232 | 19 459 | 1·2 | 26·8 | 20·2 |
| Cardiff | 279 044 | 305 450 | 9·5 | 60 743 | 72 432 | 19·2 | 58 496 | 66 233 | 13·2 | 38·9 | 28·6 |
| Coventry | 294 403 | 300 848 | 2·2 | 64 713 | 63 302 | −2·2 | 57 674 | 64 199 | 11·3 | 29·5 | 21·5 |
| Dundee | 165 891 | 145 663 | −12·2 | 34 181 | 30 151 | −11·8 | 33 531 | 30 586 | −8·8 | 30·9 | 20·1 |
| Edinburgh | 418 879 | 448 624 | 7·1 | 94 227 | 102 731 | 9·0 | 92 079 | 106 131 | 15·3 | 44·7 | 33·2 |
| Glasgow | 662 885 | 577 869 | −12·8 | 147 122 | 102 707 | −30·2 | 131 640 | 136 976 | 4·1 | 27·6 | 20·9 |
| Hull | 254 109 | 243 589 | −4·1 | 57 558 | 47 825 | −16·9 | 50 941 | 53 227 | 4·5 | 21·2 | 15·8 |
| Leeds | 680 739 | 715 402 | 5·1 | 145 364 | 148 420 | 2·1 | 141 623 | 157 259 | 11·0 | 35·0 | 25·6 |
| Leicester | 270 502 | 279 941 | 3·5 | 62 363 | 64 204 | 3·0 | 54 009 | 60 847 | 12·7 | 25·0 | 18·0 |
| Liverpool | 452 455 | 439 473 | −2·9 | 96 412 | 93 708 | −2·8 | 90 545 | 95 196 | 5·1 | 23·7 | 18·6 |
| Manchester | 404 880 | 392 819 | −3·0 | 95 213 | 102 762 | 7·9 | 76 554 | 83 473 | 9·0 | — | — |
| Milton Keynes | 176 327 | 207 507 | 17·7 | 39 344 | 38 861 | −1·2 | 44 870 | 51 677 | 15·2 | 38·7 | 32·5 |
| Newcastle | 259 571 | 259 536 | 0·0 | 55 736 | 58 281 | 4·6 | 53 913 | 56 214 | 4·3 | 32·9 | 22·6 |
| Nottingham* | 127 177 | 266 988 | 109·9 | 30 722 | 68 915 | 124·3 | 25 128 | 57 292 | 128·0 | 25·2 | 19·4 |
| Plymouth | 243 363 | 240 720 | −1·1 | 53 949 | 45 687 | −15·3 | 53 810 | 53 457 | −0·7 | 24·9 | 21·3 |
| Portsmouth | 174 705 | 187 601 | 7·4 | 40 647 | 41 255 | 1·5 | 34 875 | 42 662 | 22·3 | 30·4 | 25·5 |
| Preston | 126 064 | 129 633 | 2·8 | 27 943 | 27 299 | −2·3 | 24 964 | 28 383 | 13·7 | 32·9 | 23·1 |
| Sheffield | 501 217 | 513 234 | 2·4 | 106 486 | 103 231 | −3·1 | 100 728 | 112 382 | 11·6 | 32·9 | 23·1 |
| York | 98 730 | 101 894 | 3·2 | 22 368 | 36 241 | 62·0 | 20 142 | 39 920 | 98·2 | 32·0 | 27·3 |
| UK total | 54 888 844 | 57 103 927 | 4·0 | 11 356 509 | 9 513 996 | −16·2 | 11 662 917 | 12 290 469 | 5·4 | 16·0 | 26·8 |

*Caution should be taken in the interpretation of census findings for Nottingham due to the adverse effect of the poll tax on the electoral register and the 1991 census return
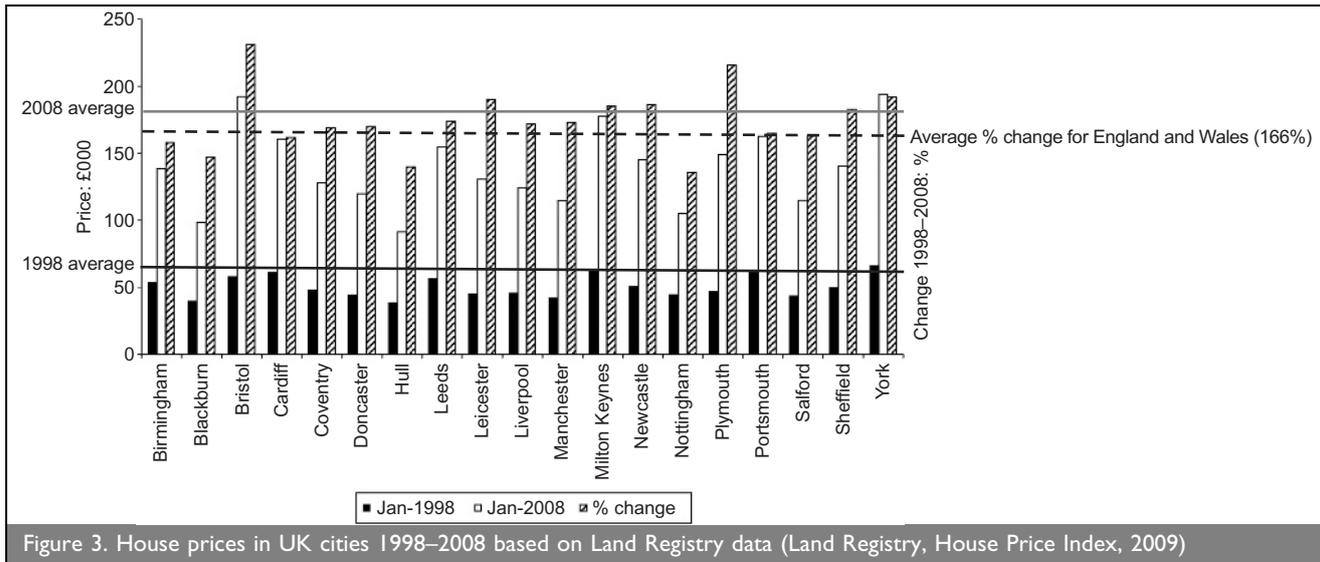
Table 1. Demographic composition of a sample of UK cities 1991–2001 (ONS Census, 1991; ONS Census, 2001)

targeted in those same areas. This was particularly pronounced in cities like Bristol (240% increase in prices), York (190%) and Plymouth (215%), which have been transformed into major centres of consumption and professional services, while other cities such as Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield have been eclipsed by extensive changes in the tenure and type of housing on offer to residents (i.e. to private single-occupancy apartments).

The growth in house and land prices in UK cities throughout the last decade tells several stories. It can be used as tangible proof of the revival and optimism about UK cities and the catalytic effects of urban renewal. It can also, however, be seen as an obstacle to achieving urban regeneration because of the impact that price spikes have on the affordability of housing and business premises for some key groups such as low-income residents, 'micro businesses (NFASP, 2008) and very young professionals. This is a development the Barker review goes some way to acknowledge, estimating the urban market to be deficient by at least one and a half million affordable homes despite sustained investment in urban environments (DCLG, 2004).

Urban renewal and housing developments combined with subsequent gentrification have begun to alter the land use patterns of many towns and cities. For example, Birmingham's historical concentric land use, which evolved from changes to the city's economy from the seventeenth century, has been altered by urban renewal over the last decade. The distinct concentric land use, which emanates from the city centre with its historic gun and jewellery quarters (Briggs, 1952) draws parallels with other ex-industrial cities (Figure 4). Yet Birmingham's land use has been transformed by recent changes in the role of the city from that of production to a place of mass consumption, with a core area now devoted to the leisure on offer at Brindley Place and the adjoining Mailbox, the theatre district, the music and library amenities of Centenary Square and the retail spectacular of the Bull Ring. Surrounding this core lies a ring of new residential use targeted at young professionals from Birmingham's financial district in the West End and new creative industries in the East Side, comprising prestige residential complexes such as the V Tower and the Cube (800 apartments) along with the redevelopment of former industrial warehouses such as those at Typhoo Wharf, Castle Cement and the former Birds custard factory. The scale of Birmingham's urban renewal has been spectacular. It has enveloped the centre of the city, resulting in major land use change (Figure 5). As a result, Birmingham has created a privileged space around the core of the city – a space dedicated to the consumption of commodities and prestige residential use that is serving to stimulate gentrification in adjoining areas such as Moseley to the south.

Figure 3. House prices in UK cities 1998–2008 based on Land Registry data (Land Registry, House Price Index, 2009)

## 6. THE FUTURE OF UK CITIES

This paper has illustrated how land use change led by urban renewal can compromise the longer term regeneration of a city. In areas where local authorities (as significant land owners in urban areas) have sold land to private developers initially to raise finance for city renewal projects but later for the explicit purpose of raising land values and producing new neighbourhoods, there is significant risk of irreversible residential and commercial gentrification of those same areas. Where authorities have accelerated private ownership and investment, often by demolishing social housing estates to make way for private housing (e.g. Little London and EASEL in Leeds) or issuing compulsory purchase orders to local residents and businesses (e.g. East Side, Birmingham), it could be argued they have acted negligently. At best, it could be said they have not acted in the interests of all local residents in a process that Atkinson (2008) describes as 'socially selective withdrawal from a city' but which is tantamount to socio-economic cleansing.

Local authorities have a duty of care for their residents.



Figure 4. Industrial land use



Figure 5. Post-industrial land use
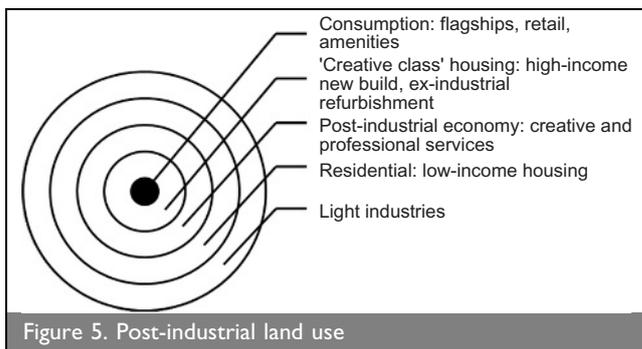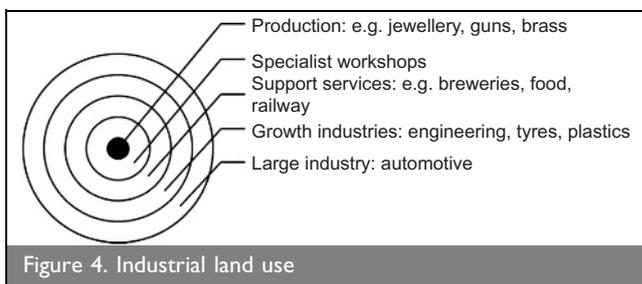
However, in the case of Leeds, for example, where only four out of 102 postcode areas (or sectors) have affordable housing (Hodkinson and Chatterton, 2007) and Birmingham where 20 000 new high-income dwellings are being constructed, it is difficult to see how municipalities have acted equitably in urban renewal. Leeds City Council's £3·2 billion investment in mega-construction skyscrapers during 1997–2007 and commitment to a further £7·2 billion until 2010 (LCC, 2007) and Birmingham's commitment to a further 900 ha of new developments (68% of which are private ownership) allude to the 'escalating contradictions' of renewal (McLeod, 2002) – a term that conveys the contested nature of renewal and the divisions it creates throughout a city. While it is possible that the current recession may reduce or halt such commitments, this scale of prestige flagship and residential developments has dominated urban renewal in recent years. In the case of Leeds, it is interesting to note that the empty apartment complexes at the heart of recent renewal initiatives (Hodkinson and Chatterton, 2007) have failed regeneration of the city by:

(a) failing to address local needs for affordable housing
(b) saturating local markets with a limited range of property
(c) reinforcing the mono-functionality of the city.

Similarly Birmingham's residentialisation of the inner city core will see ten new major residential complexes in the city centre over the next 5 years, while employment space is directed to outlying areas. The commitments made by Birmingham and Leeds speak of a failure to address real local (employment) needs and a type of uncontrolled urban renewal in which private capital drives irreversible changes in land use in the pursuit of economic returns at the expense of local issues.

The second major problem is the social gaps (or 'disconnect') that have arisen as a result of the renewal work already underway. This disconnect might be described as a type of 'class revanchism' or a heavy-handed approach that marginalises lower-income groups in a more explicit way. Law and Mooney (2005) reflected on Glasgow's apparent success story around its city of culture status. Gómez (2002) noted the vigorous place marketing and prestigious art, culture, architecture and retail investment linked to Glasgow's cultural status, which has served

to widen the gap between rich and poor in the city. Mooney (2007: p. 337) states

> The 'Glasgow Model' has contributed to worsening levels of poverty and deprivation and to deepening inequalities that characterise the city today. It has done this primarily by constructing Glasgow's future as a low paid workforce – grateful for the breadcrumbs from the tables of the entrepreneurs and investors upon which so much effort is spent attracting and cosseting – and by marginalising and ruling out any alternative strategy based upon large-scale public sector investment in sustainable and socially necessary facilities and services.

Again, commenting on Glasgow, Kirk (1990: p. 361) notes

> Something like £500 million has gone into this area in ten years, and one lesson has clearly been learned – that such inner-city problems cannot be resolved on the basis of modest temporary financial aid bringing about social and economic well-being.

Throughout the last decade, prestige projects have been presented as an essential means to solve cities' problems. However, the effectiveness of this formula is doubtful. These projects stimulate gentrification and increase land value, leading to housing spirals in adjacent neighbourhoods that in turn destabilise social cohesion. At the same time, the benefits are often localised or private: many of those living near regeneration zones have not benefited even by way of employment. Instead, 'newly built centres have been set amidst continued deprivation' (APUDG, 2008) with improvements in certain urban areas impacting minimally on the most needy neighbourhoods. This is reflected in England's official deprivation indices: three quarters of the worst performing districts (i.e. the worst 10%) in 1998 were still the most deprived in 2007. As noted by the All Party Urban Development Group (APUDG, 2008: p. 6)

> A good example of this polarisation can be found in Birmingham. Over the last 15 years, Birmingham city centre has experienced significant physical and economic renewal with the creation of 50 000 jobs. However, 22 per cent of the working age population (129 000) claim worklessness benefits in Birmingham, and Ladywood, a ward adjacent to the city centre, has the highest child poverty rate in the country.

It is clear that local needs such as wealth, employment, housing and health have not benefited from the assumed trickle-down from recent urban renewal. It seems that much on offer as a result of recent renewal strategies could be viewed as a contested relationship between the post-modern urban spectacle of a largely contrived aesthetic and real needs, disputes and politics. This therefore raises significant questions about the real impact of renewal programmes and the continued buy-in of the same renewal models. It also raises very pertinent questions about who owns a city and the very nature of the decision-making process that drives urban renewal. In theoretical terms, this might be framed as a question about the degree to which urban renewal under capitalism constrains 'rights to the city' (Harvey, 2003; Lefebvre, 1996) to warrant its continued use as a regeneration tool.

While most cities have stemmed the decline of population and economic disinvestment and are becoming locations of concentrated economic activity, they also continue to be locations of concentrated poverty and unemployment. Significant sec-tions of the population continue to live in urban areas that provide poor education, have high crime rates and in every respect offer a markedly diminished quality of life from that enjoyed by the UK overall. As such, civic authorities might consider reclaiming authority over city renewal programmes and revisit the conceptual and political basis of renewal strategies: in particular, to draw on the empirical work of urban sociologists such as Jane Jacobs (Jacobs, 1961) and call for cityscapes based on diversity and multiple uses (i.e. physical and social heterogeneity). Under the auspices of the third way, policy-makers might usefully draw on Jacobs' work to intervene in the urban environment to limit uncontrolled renewal by large-scale private development and to promote greater diversity and equity in urban neighbourhoods.

Where authorities have ceded ownership of large areas of land in cities through land sales – and indicate that drastic land use change is now out of their control – there are various ways in which they still can exert influence and bargaining power to regulate the market. With statutory functions and as holders of public money, local authorities and regional development agencies might seek to regulate the renewal activities of the private sector more closely through a series of hard and soft interventions. Planning frameworks can reduce the land made available to prestige initiatives and enforce local conditions for social developments, while also instructing authorities to release greater land for specific purposes such as affordable housing. The UK might replicate the practices of other cities and countries – see example of Rotterdam by McCarthy, (1998) – where it has been possible to achieve physical renewal such as office and apartment complexes while also achieving social regeneration through planning intervention and minimum quality thresholds.

As a final point, in their roles as centres of consumption, cities in the UK – like those in mainland Europe and North America – appear to be changing as a function of middle-class wealth. The transition to a post-industrial city necessitates a shift in urban land use from factories to service centres with a corresponding rise in professional groups. Yet the use of urban renewal in the UK to accelerate land use change and to fuel land prices and changing demographics through residential and commercial changes, prescriptive planning and targeted marketing campaigns, can quickly compromise the very sustainability of urban environments. Urban demographics, social mix and land use change go right to the heart of perennial issues about the type of cities we want to inhabit in the twenty-first century. The tension between rapid and (perhaps) uncontrolled expansion and renewal and the urge to conserve things as nebulous as quality of life, diversity and sustainability should be a constant concern for all municipalities. The lessons that need to be learnt in realising urban regeneration lie in the adoption of a more interventionist role within the public sector in order to facilitate equitable developments that are sustainable and socially responsive and which achieve the right balance between commercial enterprise and equitable and lasting change.

## REFERENCES

APUDG (All Party Urban Development Group) (2008) *Building Local Jobs: Ensuring Local Communities Gain Employment from Regeneration.* APUDG, London.

Atkinson P (2008) Gentrification, segregation and the vocabu-

lary of affluent residential choice. *Urban Studies* **45(12)**: 2626–2636.

Briggs A. (1952) *History of Birmingham*, Vol. 2. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) (2004) *Barker Review of Housing Supply. Delivering Stability: Securing our Future Housing Need*. The Stationery Office, London.

DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) (2008) *Transforming Places; Changing Lives: A Framework for Regeneration*. The Stationery Office, London.

DETR (Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions) (2000) *Our Towns and Cities: The Future*. The Stationery Office, London.

Fainstein S (2005) Cities and diversity: Should we want it? Can we plan for it? *Urban Affairs Review* **41(1)**: 3–19.

Florida R (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Basic Books, New York.

Gómez MV (2002) Reflective images: the case of urban regeneration in Glasgow and Bilbao. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* **22(1)**: 106–121.

Harvey D (1978) The urban process under capitalism: a framework for analysis. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* **2(1-4)**: 101–131.

Harvey D (2003) The right to the city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* **27(4)**: 939–941.

Hodkinson S and Chatterton P (2007) Leeds: an affordable, viable, sustainable, democratic city? *Yorkshire and Humber Regional Review* **17(2)**: 24–26.

Jacobs J (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Random House, New York.

Kirk M (1990) Regenerating the inner city. Glasgow's experience. *Population Studies* **44(2)**: 361–362.

Lamb K (2003) Revitalization from the inside out: the attempts to move towards an urban renaissance in the cities of the United States and the United Kingdom. *Connecticut Journal of International Law* **19**: 159–164.

Land Registry, House Price Index (2009) http://www.landregistry.gov.uk (accessed 25/01/2010).

Law A and Mooney G (2005) Urban landscapes. *International Socialism* **106**. See http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=95&issue=106 for further details. (accessed 22/01/2010).

LCC (Leeds City Council) (2007) *Leeds Economy Briefing Note*. LCC, Leeds, Issue 31.

Lees L, Slater T and Wyley E (2008) *Gentrification*. Routledge, London.

Lefebvre H (1996) *The Right to the City, Writings on Cities*. Blackwell, Oxford.

Logan JR and Molotch HL (1987) *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.

McCarthy J (1998) Reconstruction, regeneration and re-imaging. The case of Rotterdam. *Cities* **5(15)**: 337–344.

McLeod G (2002) From urban entrepreneurialism to a 'revanchist city'? On the spatial injustices of Glasgow's renaissance. *Antipode* **34(3)**: 602–624.

Mooney G (2007) Cultural policy as urban transformation? Critical reflections on Glasgow, European city of culture 1990. *Local Economy* **19(4)**: 327–340.

NFASP (National Federation of Artists' Studios Providers) (2008) *Creative Industries Being Priced Out of London Olympics Development*. NFASP, London.

ONS (Office for National Statistics) Census (1991) *Total Population*, *1991 Census*. Office for National Statistics, London.

ONS (Office for National Statistics) Census (2001) *Total Population*, *2001 Census*. Office for National Statistics, London.

Robson B, Parkinson M, Boddy M and Maclennan D (2000) *State of English Cities*. The Stationery Office, London.

Rousseau JJ (1762) *Du Contrat Social, Principes du Droit Politique*. Rousseau, Geneva.

UTF (Urban Task Force) (2000) *Towards an Urban Renaissance*. Spon, London.